

GREEN HOTELS- An eco-friendly transmission in Tourism Industry

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Abstract

The word "Green Tourism" has emerged as a feasible option for conserving natural and cultural heritage and helps to contribute sustainable development realms.

Hospitality industry plays a significant role in the sustainable development of a country. As accommodation is the necessary pre-condition for any tourism activity and is the face of further booming expansion, its impact on society is becoming increasingly visible. And this implementation makes the property more marketable and profitable. Moreover today's hotel guests have become more conscious of environmental problems and have started considering the environment in their accommodation choice. The development of eco-labels is thus helping tourists with their choices. Without cutting on clients', efforts can be made in the backstage by the hotel management industry through the application of best available practices and technology innovations.

Besides this, it was argued that guests are the most powerful external factor that has the ability to influence and demand practices, since government control and legislation are mostly absent in the industry. Therefore, the research calls for more attention by different organizations as well as guest and work on environment friendly practices to find stronger incentives for going green.

This study is conceptual in nature that would provide the impacts of cleaning chemicals and eco friendly chemicals on human being and environment; different eco- friendly practices followed by hotels and put forth a new proposal which can create a positive impact on the environmental condition.

Keywords: Green tourism, eco-friendly practices, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry always plays highly significant role in the sustainable development of a country. As accommodation is the necessary pre-condition for any tourism activity and in the face of further booming expansion, its impact on society is becoming increasingly visible. And this implementation makes the property more marketable and hopefully, more profitable. Moreover, hotel

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guests are more conscious of environmental problems and have started to consider the environment in their accommodation choice. The development of eco-labels is thus helping tourists in their choice. Without cutting on clients', efforts can be made in the backstage by the hotel management industry through the application of best available practices and technological innovations. The hotel industry is now conscious of this new trend and has set policies in this respect. However, the main involvement of the project concerned the highlighting of different scope of using eco friendly chemicals and methods, and its impact on the human being and environment.

"Ecotourism is a segment of the travel industry which appeals to the environmentally conscious and has low impact on the surrounding area while contributing to the local economy" (Freedman, 1995). But lots of authors don't agree on the precise definition of ecotourism. To summarize, it is a sustainable option to group tourism that shows concerns to travelling to a natural place which has a traditional culture, involves local people and increase awareness of environment conservation among locals and tourists with tourist education, that allow tourists to go to an undisturbed natural areas (Valentine 1992, 1993, Fennell 2001, 2003, in WTO, 2002; World Conservation Union, cited by Lindsay, 2003). TERI, a not-for profit organization working in the field of sustainable development defines green buildings as, "a design, construction and operation for enhancing guest comfort ability and productivity with minimal impact on environment" (GRIHA, 2008).

The study on eco friendly practices has experienced an explosive interest from last so many years. (Ito, 2007) However, little research has been done on commonly used chemicals for cleaning different surfaces. Accommodation is the necessary pre-condition for any tourism activity and in the face of further booming expansion, its impact on society is becoming increasingly visible. And implementation of eco-friendly practices makes the property more marketable and profitable.

Tourism provides a significant potential for poverty reduction, economic growth and development. For many developing countries, and particularly the least developed ones (Laces), the small economies and the island developing States, tourism offers real opportunities. Eco- tourism not only provides material benefits but also generates cultural pride, a sense of ownership and control and, through economic diversification, reduced vulnerability.

According to Graci (2009), every hotel, even its individual department has its individual brunt on environment. Starting from administration or technical services to operation of any property makes its direct contribution toward energy and resource consumption. Moreover technical services like water treatment plant, Air conditioning, lighting, swimming pools, greenhouse, mice and insect extermination, repairs and maintenance impacts environment diversely. So in the nick of time, steps have to be taken with a bang to be green and eco friendly.

Why eco concept required? Acknowledging the concept of ecotourism, is not only the eco-social responsibility of hotel industry but also deliberate on guest demand; competitive advancement; governmental pressure (Singh 2013)-e.g. pressure by different committees or boards, as Central Pollution Control Board-CPCB, Ministry of Environment and Forest-MoEF, the National Green Tribunal-NGT or implementation of regulations/acts by CRZ regulations, Green Hotels Guidelines etc; and technical diversity (e.g. use of fuel cells; Hasek 2010),too.

Keeping such responsibilities and pressure in mind there are various properties that have opted this concept either through up-gradation, as per market demand or as their latest USP on cutthroat market need.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is undoubtedly a great need for education and increase in environmental awareness among the general public. Hotels have the potential of becoming significant venues of such education as they are exposed to the traveling public, a rapidly increasing portion of the world's population (Bohdanowicz, 2003). Hoteliers do have environmental knowledge and most of the hotels have started measures that can be taken to save our mother earth and are profitable for the organizations but still they need to put more efforts. Only meetings related to the environmental issues will not help in saving our planet but strictly have to follow the practices. No doubt it's very tough to change the operational practices that will turn costly in the beginning but in the long run the environment friendly practices will reap good profit. Let us follow the example of the valuable role models, such as Uppal's Orchid, Kempton Hotels and Restaurants who have shown that eco friendly practices are profitable. Even now all countries have woken up; summits like Copenhagen have proved that it's now time for action rather than talks so why not the hospitality industry should contribute to saving our planet.

Thrust to travel around more, consequences in expenditure of natural chattels. This natural cost can be cut-off if accountable planning and vigilant supervision of existing facilities and resources transpire. To endorse "green" sustainability, some of the practices which either have to be adapted by the hotels or already on trial or tested phase by many properties, are use of faucet aerators, low-flow systems, shower heads, shower heads in washrooms, using in-built bulk soap/ shampoo dispensers in showers, preferring recycled paper tissues and stationary, opting non-toxic, eco-friendly cleaning products and linen reuse programme in guest rooms, planting

native plants(Gale Norton), preferring grey water for gardening and wash rooms, and also preferring recyclable and reusable amenities in guest rooms (Bohdanowicz & Martinac , 2003) & (Chen et al., 2009).

Properties recognized green as a rule of thumb: For achieve competitive growth and guest changing demands hotels are taking a step toward the green execution in their organizations individually. Few of the renowned examples of properties taking green initiative for minimizing the carbon foot prints are The Park Hotel Hyderabad (India's first fully operated eco-hotel), Uppal Orchid, Mumbai (Asia's first hotel winning Ecotel certification), Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces (initiated green program called EARTH), ITC hotels (established concept of RESPONSIBLE LUXURY in there all properties), Carlson's group of hotels (introduced GREEN GUIDE for initiating green practices), Rambagh Palace, Jaipur (received GOLD CERTIFICATE from EarthCheck Certifications, for its eco practices), Uppal Hotel, New Delhi (received GREEN TECH ENVIRONMENT EXCELLENCE AWARD), and many more can be enlisted in this.

Also in 2012 Ms. Sushmita C. Agarwal had done a survey for top favorite green hotels in India, which was published in the Economic Times. She included The Raintree Hotel, Anna Salai, Chennai (generates 100% energy for its consumption with the help of their own windmills); Nameri Eco Camp, Nameri, Assam (have ethnic cottages and thatched tents that help them to keep the cottages free from heat); Floatel, Kolkata (applies 3-R motto- reduce, reuse and recycle waste daily); The Fern Gir Forest Resort, Gujarat (uses organic, home-grown food, utilize domestic wood to make furniture and follow water & energy conservation drive); Shaam-e-Sarhad Village Resort, Kutch, Gujarat (owned and operated by the local villagers); where guest can perform his part toward environment without exhausting resources.

But still there is a vast ridge which has to be ironed by the concentrated compliance of the whole hotel industry toward the acceptability of Green hotel guidelines which promote the relativity towards water and energy conservation, waste reduction and environmental protection.

Harmful Effect of Synthetic Chemicals: Going green with green chemicals reflects positively in the minds of guests and can actually reduce operational costs associated with hazardous material removal (Siebel, 2009). Most of the hotels realize the problems of chemical-based products and have switched to environment-friendly cleaning agents. What is required is an increased level of attentiveness, and even though it might seem as a high investment proposition, in the long run it has other benefits. Normally the chemicals used at commercial level contain hydrochloric acid, a highly corrosive irritant to both skin and eyes that damage kidneys and liver; and hypochlorite bleach, a corrosive irritant that can burn eyes, skin and respiratory tract. If came in contact with other chemicals may cause chlorine fumes which may be fatal (Siegel, 2008).

The chemicals which are used on the high rate in the industry are very harmful for the human being as they contain ammonia and some corrosive alkaline substance which can affect the respiratory system and can act as a skin allergic substance (Siegel, 2008). With this, cleaning products available in the market contain chlorine in a dry form that is highly concentrated and are harmful for mankind (Beach, 2009). Chlorine present in drinking water, swimming pool and many more is harmful for human body, if used above the concentration of 0.2-1mg/liter (WHO, 1996). Bleaches (sodium hypo-chloride) used for water purification are an eye and lung irritant, and if mixed with ammonia or acid-based cleaners; it releases chloramines gas, exposure to which may cause serious respiratory problems (Express Hospitality, 2008). Also most of the cleaning agents used in laundry contain phosphorus, enzymes, ammonia, naphthalene, phenol and sodium nitrilotriacetate which can result in rashes, itches, allergies and sinus problems, if used on a regular basis. Moreover polishes used to provide shine to different surfaces in hotels have nitrobenzene (furniture and floor polishes), petroleum distillates (metal polishes) and ammonia (glass cleaner) which can be carcinogenic and can affect the skin and lungs. Not only cleaning chemicals but disinfectants preferred can cause diarrhea, dizziness, and kidney and liver problems as they contain corrosives elements. These chemicals are not only affecting human being but also disturbing the environment and play the major role in extinction of various species.

Advantages of Eco Friendly Cleaning:

Towards Environment: Green cleaners are safe for the environment as they don't contain or release harmful matters such as VOC (volatile organic compounds) in the air, causes less harm to skin, lower in toxicity and can easily biodegrade in the environment.

Towards Human Being: Artificial chemicals causes harm to the health of the person using it, as they contain chemicals which cause irritation to the skin and eyes. Thus environment friendly chemicals which are made up of organic have no side effect. They are effective, help in improving indoor quality and reduce air and water pollution which is directly proportional to the brunt on mankind. While opting for eco friendly practices, organizations will ensure good health and a better environment for both employees as well as guests. It will not only help to lower down the pollution level but also gives a contribution to the life cycle.

Towards Business: Kim Carlson, CPM and Owner and founder of cities Management, a property management company said

“There is a whole wave with the green movement right now”. “I think guests are expecting today. It turns out to be an expectation rather than a downy do-gooder thing ”(Gunderson, 2007). Demand for green products and the awareness about the environment making guests to opt hotels following environment friendly practice.

Environment Friendly Cleaning Agents: There are various alternatives which can improve cleaning and working efficiency and also help in protecting the environment. Widely and vividly using examples of green cleaning agents are Vinegar is a fermented ethanol and is preferred in bathroom and kitchen cleaning, or can also be used as fabric softener in laundry and if used with warm water than can be the excellent cleaner for glassware and window. Lemon juice is a very good toilet cleaner, smells fresh and is free from airborne toxins. It can be used against hard water marks and deposited soap scum or to clean metal and wood surfaces. Lemon peel can also be used as a very good and natural air freshener. Baking soda is white crystalline sodium bicarbonate and acts as a best abrasive cleanser and deodorizer, and is preferably used in the kitchen. It is low in toxicity and forms a "detergent" which reacts with grease and oil. Borax is a naturally occurring mineral also named as sodium borate, which dissolves in water easily and is a wonderful cleaner too. It helps in dissolving grease and removing stains and also works as disinfectant, deodorizer and inhibits mould. It can also be used as a water or fabric softener. Soap flakes are pure translucent flakes of vegetable oils and purified water and are biodegradable low toxic and unlike detergent, do not contribute to algal blooms in rivers. Eucalyptus oil and tea-tree oil is naturally scented disinfectants- add to hot water but can also be used neat as they are good for removing sticky goof off surfaces. Washing soda contains sodium carbonate (moderate alkaline) which is useful in the kitchen for removing heavy grease stains and also acts as water softener.

Process of Stepping Forward For Being Green: For retaining their brand value and portraying them as the best contender in the market, hotels have to step forward. Huge investment or restore existing market significance or experimenting with traditional practices or revitalizing stereotype standards and employees are very tedious and intellectual stride for any management.

For ceaseless-effective establishment of green practices in any property first and foremost thing is to identify the necessary set of plan of action toward green practices, which will be the necessary step to achieve green goal, setting green standards and formulating green strategies and polices. Later identify and create a green team and a program coordinator (Graci & Kuehnel, 2010) and then establish their duties and responsibilities toward a sustainable environment, guest and property. After establishing any standard for the company and employees, frequent tracking system and audit programme has to be graphed. The result of such audit assures the conformity of the operational standards and effective process implementation in operation areas to contribute in organizational efficiency (Saud & Marchand 2012).

Then eco friendly policy statement has to be drafted as per the requirement of society, environment, guest and company and should be communicated to the staff and guest with the help manuals, training; hotel brochures, information bulletin of hotels and rooms, company websites etc; respectively. And later on all the policy and procedures has to be monitored authentically and doing further prospects as per the needs of the amendment or demand of the market.

CHALLENGES

Financial Crunch: Environment friendly practices adoption leads to huge costs. The infrastructure cost will increase in relation to ten to fifteen percentages. Even the green certification cost is very high in order to get eco-certification. Thus in order to overcome the high cost, hotels and resort should implement low cost, simple projects, (Oppenheim, and Webb, 2008). Green certified products emit less volatile organic matters and add to the improving air quality by dropping release of toxic substances, but the cost is too high. Thus, the cost of staying at the hotel will also be high because certain hotel raises their rates to meet the eco-certification expenses. Certain guests who are conscious about the environment will go an extra mile to pay more, to support the hotels green initiative/ cause, but there are guests who don't want to pay more while selecting hotels (Pizman, 2008). The result is that revenue per customer (RevPAC) will raise but decreases the occupancy (Stark, 2009; Brown, 1996; and Houdré 2008). Thus, this is a big challenge for the hotel managers as without guest cooperation they cannot execute such measures. In this regard hotel must encourage environmentally responsible attitude to their guests and let them believe that the combined efforts are good for everyone. The balance between guests and green practices will be benefitted.

Lack of Knowledge: Hospitality sector is far behind other industries in terms of following green practices and the reason is lack of knowledge and awareness. Hotels are accredited with very less number of eco-certification programs. Lack of evolving environmental regulation, guest demand and satisfaction, managements concern with moral philosophy and maintenance issues, financial barriers are some of the issues that hotels crackle with (Doody, 2008). Both employees and guests are unaware of such programs. Employees are unaware because of lack of training or induction at the time joining hotel. Guests are unaware since there are very less or no advertisements from the hotel side who adopted eco friendly practices. Thus hotels must show case their eco friendly certifications at reception or at hotel website, so that guests can view at the time of making reservation from hotel website or at the time checking in/

registering in the hotel. While advertising, hotels should show a brand with different standards which will change the viewpoint of guests looks at the place where they want to stay (Bergin, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined the impact of cleaning chemical on the environment, eco- friendly practices following by the hotels and a new initiative which can create a positive impact on the environmental condition. There is undoubtedly a great need for education and increase in environmental awareness among the general public. Hotels have the potential of becoming significant venues of such education as they are exposed to the traveling public, a rapidly increasing portion of the world's population (Bohdanowicz, 2003). Green practices will help hotels to save lots of money and can increase their occupancy as today guest demand "green alternatives" that makes hoteliers motivated and willing to take steps towards greater environmental responsibility. Hoteliers do have environmental knowledge and most of the hotels have started measures that can be taken to save our mother earth and are profitable for the organizations but still they need to put more efforts. Only meetings related to the environmental issues will not help in saving our planet but strictly have to follow the practices. No doubt it's very tough to change the operational practices that will turn costly in the beginning but in the long run the environment friendly practices will reap good profit. Let us follow the example of the valuable role models, such as Uppals Orchid, Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants who have shown that eco-friendly practices are profitable. Even now all countries have woken up, summits like Copenhagen have proved that it's now time for action rather than talks so why not the hospitality industry should contribute to saving our planet.

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