



GREEN HOTELS: A STEP TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

Indian hotel industry is rapidly growing and providing services of international standards. This growth of hotel industry is seen to be benefiting stakeholders at some undeserved cost of the environment. The use of resources in hotel industry is unavoidable due to the nature of its products and services. The present paper attempts to understand the environmental sustainability concept related to hotel industry and the measures for controlling misuse of natural resources through well developed and managed environmental programmes. The study also encompasses related studies conducted and identifies evaluation and certification techniques to be beneficial for industry specific. More empirical studies are recommended to benefit Indian hotel industry and would be an addition into current literature.

KEYWORDS : Hotel Industry, Sustainability, Evaluation, Certification

Introduction:

Indian hospitality industry is a growing very fast and this market sees a positive growth with respect to occupancy in hotels. The Indian hospitality sector is been showing cumulative annual growth rate of 14 percent yearly adding significant amounts of foreign exchange to economy (Ministry of External Affairs, 2014). The occupancy rates have a marginal increase of 58.9 percent in 2014 than 2013, an increase of 1.9 percent (HVS, 2014). But, the increasing growth of tourists can trample the environment, deplete natural resources and emit hazardous gases that contribute to global warming or climatic change. This threat is demanding destinations and hotel properties abiding by sustainable practices. Hotels and environmental sustainability are becoming naturally partners. Sustainability is the form of development that believes in meeting current needs without compromising for future generations. Sustainability involves accounting for three main factors: environmental, economic and social considerations. Environmental sustainability studies the impact on natural resources, climate change and waste and the related measures to protect the same.

Sustainability in Hospitality industry has been widely recognized since 1987 and there was a tremendous increase in the awareness within the global hotel industry of the sustainability of green hotel issues (Cater 1993). Butler, (1993) demonstrated that many hotels were preparing their own training and action plans for their environmental and sustainable initiatives. Environmental sustainability makes sense by reducing energy, water and waste consumption in an organisation and at the same time benefiting the organisation by saving money, minimising climatic change, enhancing business image, new customers, preparedness for new legislation, competitive advantage, improved customer and employee satisfaction. Now-a-day's the hotel industry has become more aware of the green concept and the related benefits. The clients before booking a hotel property look into the green efforts of the properties. The customer enquires of sustainable practices adopted by these properties to save energy and carbon emission. The guest's feedback covers all the areas of the hotel ranging from in room recycling program to remarks about using liquid soaps.

Literature review:

Teng et al., (2014) established attributes of an environmental management system for the hotel industry in Taiwan to create an instrument to help green hotel auditing. Further, the study provides managerial implications for government, hoteliers and consumers. Dutta et al., (2008) in a comparative study found that the consumers in the United States have a higher degree of involvement in environmentally and socially responsible practices in restaurants, which have the most significant effect on consumers' willingness to pay up to 10% or higher on menu prices for green practices. On contrast, Indian consumers were found to be more involved in health and visibility, being

their driver for paying higher 10% or more on menu prices or green practices. Further, Kabir, H (2011) revealed that there are no mandatory regulations in Swaziland requiring companies to practice social responsibility and the Environmental authority is trying to encourage hotels to show social concern. Moreover, Gohnaz et al., (2013) indicated that the majority of the respondents were aware of the green concept in Malaysia but very few of these respondents purchased green product. Education and age of the respondents showed a positive relation with intention to go green. Jacob and Jolly (2012) revealed that hotels are willing to gain edge in the green market by providing environmental friendly products and services. The behavior and attitude of the consumers is green centric through their willingness to pay higher for such products or services. Moreover, they are cutting down on extras and wasted materials and turning their operations into more efficient towards green practices. Furthermore, Wouter (2014) discussed how environmental certification schemes provide knowledge to hoteliers in London and helps against claims of greenwash. In same vein, Jose et al., (2015) revealed that quality management and environmental management improve competitive edge in both costs and differentiation.

The synthesis of review of environmental sustainability indicates that more research needs to be conducted on the issues, challenges and implementation of such practices. Thus considering the significance of environmental sustainability present study has been designed to provide an input.

Methodology

It is argued that environmental sustainability is inextricably significant, but ought to ensure that learners have the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives on the phenomenon they are studying. The literature consulted so far shows some traceable links to empirical studies that address the possibility for introspection of environmental sustainability constructively and offer alternative approaches for future. Thus, the interpretive methodology adopted to identify the challenges faced by hotel industry in India and to provide insight of how these could be managed in the future.

Sustainable steps for hotels:

Looking at the risks associated with environment and the related benefits of environmental sustainability practices, the extensive study states implementation of certain practices which may be fruitful in terms of cost reduction and getting a competitive edge in the market. Infact, the following criteria may be followed to achieve environmental sustainability.

Obtaining management commitment towards environmental sustainability:

The most important step to be taken is to obtain senior management commitment. Moreover, it's important to publicly record sustainable

practices for annual recognition and measurement and let stakeholders be aware of your actions. Further, it is important to continually review and update the sustainability commitments as it becomes part of organisational culture.

Record current and historical usage:

For a hotel to progress and realise savings, it is necessary to know the resource usage history and current usage. Information regarding, energy usage (gas and electrical), water usage, waste disposal and transportation may be gathered.

Establish baselines, benchmarks and targets:

When the hotel gathers data related to historical and current usage it is important to establish baseline. Baseline indicates the amount of resources a particular hotel uses to meet its operations and is used to compare and monitor future progress against industry best practice standards. Further benchmarking may be done against industry average to determine potential saving opportunities. Key performance indicators may be identified for quantifiable measurement and would reflect progress of a hotel towards meeting sustainable goals.

Audit:

It is important to have a check over the types and amounts of resources being consumed and generated in your business. Hence an audit of key resources and the complete system should be done to identify efficiency of the system followed by the hotel property to determine opportunities for savings.

Prioritise action plan:

When the audit is done, it becomes important to delineate the savings and efficiency potential or goals. And this action plan will be the practical guide for achieving resource conservation targets.

Monitor and measure:

Regular monitoring and measurement of progress will determine the effectiveness of the programme and identify areas that would require any improvement.

Staff engagement:

To make any programme successful in an organisation, it's important to engage staff for efficiency and effectiveness. The cooperation and involvement of staff members will determine the success of organisation and the related sustainability program.

Selected Environmental Programmes Relevant To The Hospitality Sector (Figure 1)

Following programmes represent only a small fraction of existing certification programmes.

Type of program	Name	Organisation
Environmental Certification Programs Specific to Hospitality	Green Key Global	Green Key Global, Hotel Association of Canada, LRAWorldwide, Inc.
	Sustainable Tourism Eco-Certification Program (STEP)	Sustainable Travel International
	Green Globe Certification Standards	Green Globe International
	Earthcheck Assessed and Earthcheck Certified	Earthcheck
	Ecotel	HVS
	Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
Green Building Certification Programs	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)	U.S. Green Building Council
	BRE Environmental Assessment Method	Building Research Establishment (BRE)
	Green Globes	Green Buildings Initiative (U.S.) and BOMA BEST / ECD Jones Lang Lasalle (Canada)
Product-Specific Standards and Certification Programs	Energy Star	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
	Green Seal	Green Seal
	Green Tag	Ecospecifier
	Greenguard	Greenguard Environmental Institute

Source: HVS, 2012 *Current Trends and Opportunities in Hotel Sustainability*

Conclusion:

Tremendous changes and innovations are taking place in hotel industry, which may pose challenge or threat to the internal and external environment. The modern and the existing hotel operators should understand the significance of environmental sustainability and show their concern by implementing sustainable programmes or practices, and not only save resources but even get upper competitive edge in market. It is recommended that the hotel operators should provide staff training related to environment protection and may motivate employees through rewards and recognition for the cause. The studies show not only consumers but all stakeholders keen towards sustainable practices and highlight its importance in present context. The current study was an attempt to understand and analyse current sustainable literature and related cases. Moreover, evaluations and environmental certifications will certainly play pivotal role in identifying and setting targets to be achieved. Finally, this paper argues that hotel operators and management need to look towards environmental risks and related benefits. Implementing sustainable environment practices will benefit in hotel operations and will meet need of future generations. Further, empirical studies may be conducted to understand operational practices adopted by hotels and be able to compare those to industry specific.

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