



## Simplifying Cost Effective Green Practices For Indian Budget Hotels

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper intends to address small sized budget hotels that how they can use simple green practices enabled by human efforts and can become green as well as cost effective. The reason for addressing budget hotels is because in India unorganized/small budget hotels account for around or more than 75% of the total hotel industry of India. Also these small/budget hotels have the constraint of finances and thus they are not able to invest in better technology or green technology to become green. The paper explores the need and benefit of using human efforts in an organized manner to save water, electricity and manage the solid waste to help the environment and save lot of cost simultaneously.*

**KEYWORDS :** Green practices, human efforts, budget hotels, green technology

Tourism has been recognized as one of the most important and biggest industry. It has been recognized so because of the huge potential of this industry. People have to travel a lot because of business and because of the changing life style people want to travel around and experience. Adventure sports have also added spice to it.

The role of Hotels towards eco consideration has been recognized for long and many of the major players have already taken big steps to become green. Many of the big hotels are religiously implementing green programmes and practices and are contributing to this cause. In India also the hotel industry is growing very fast but one of the challenge for environmentalist is, that this industry many of the times (knowingly and unknowingly) is doing lot of damage to environment and is disturbing the nature. In a country like India more than 75% of hotel industry is dominated by small players ie budget hotels who have scarcity of resources, lack capital, lack awareness and because of this they are not able to use better technology/green technology products to make their hotel green. Some very simple ways, involving almost no additional technology/cost have been listed down. Before this the hotel management should have very strong conviction on the following things.

- A genuine responsibility towards environment
- Making the operation more cost effective & increase profits
- Use it as a competitive strategy
- Move towards purchasing better technology with this cost saving and become green in long run

Once the hotels have understood the benefits of using simple human efforts, its cost saving advantages, the competitive advantage and the contribution towards environment conservation, now the hotels have to make a step by step plan of becoming green. The step by step plan is given below.

1. Appoint a Green Coordinator – Make a green team and appoint 1-3 people as required for water management, energy management & waste management.
2. Make a self audit check list (Written format)
3. Find the gaps (separately for water, energy and waste)
4. Make goals
5. Make an action plan
6. Train /Educate employees and customers
7. Monitor the performance against goals
8. Set standards/ Benchmarks

### Appoint a Green Coordinator

The very first step for a small/ budget hotel is to appoint a green coordinator. This coordinator can be a senior manager/ manager. The

green coordinator then can make small teams of 1-3 people putting one senior person as supervisor for water management, energy management & waste management. The small teams could be supervised by supervisors who would in turn report to the green coordinator and this green coordinator will report to the general manager or the stake holder.

### Make a self audit check list

The green coordinator should make a self audit check list in the form of a written document. There can be three different check lists. One for water management, the other two for energy management & waste management. These check list typically should have lot of questions to be asked to the concerned department/ yourself on parameters like water, energy & waste. A small sample of check list is given below:

1. Is the hotel working on achieving a reduction in the usage of water/energy/waste?
2. Is separate staff dedicated for water/energy/waste reduction/ management?
3. Is your staff trained to spot over use/wastage/leakage?
4. Find out areas/ department that use maximum water/energy/ generate waste.
5. Do you educate your guests on green practices?
6. Have you set up goals for water/energy/waste reduction

Now this kind of questionnaire should be made for all the cost parameters separately ie a separate questionnaire for water/energy/waste.

### Find the Gaps

Now the next step is to find out the gaps. The self audit questionnaire is a very important tool in the hands of the Green Coordinator through which he can find out the gaps. This can be done better by understanding the potential of people practices with existing infrastructure, knowing the financial constraints of budget hotels. The hotel has to understand the potential of saving water, energy and waste reduction and find that where they stand so that they can find out the gaps. Once we get to know the gaps, our dedicated teams of water/energy and waste management can start working on bridging the gaps with the optimum utilization of available resources.

### Make goals

Once we find out the gaps the next step which the green coordinator has to do is to make a goal. The goal will be to reduce the usage of water, energy & waste management. The gap identification exercise will contribute to this as it will tell us that where do we stand and where we want to go. The rights goals can be set, based on the size of hotel, number of staff, occupancy and the other resources which the

hotel owns.

### Make an Action Plan

Now once the gaps have been identified and goals have been set it's time for the hotel to make an action plan. The action plan should be simple and doable or practical. Now if the action plan consists of simple and doable kind of steps, the hotel staff will also take interest and is motivated towards taking small steps. These small steps collectively can bring about big difference. Simple, specific and attainable action plans are surely much easier to execute, control and monitor and can bring about good savings in the operational cost of the hotel.

### Train and Educate Employees/Customers

In order to achieve success in making a hotel green and reduce the hotel's operational cost simultaneously it is very important that the green objectives should be incorporated and integrated with employee training. All the employees should be made aware of the green initiatives and its benefits. The training should be an organized training which may be conducted by a senior Manager/General Manager of the hotel and it should become a regular phenomenon and should be incorporated in employee inductions also. The volunteers/employees with environmental interest can become the initiators/leaders. Employees should be encouraged to come out with good ideas and should be incentivised for the same. Employees should be given fair wages and should be treated with dignity as motivated and happy employees deliver better guest services and take newer initiatives. Apart from training the employees the hotel can also educate the guests towards green practices. If this education is done in a decent and responsible manner, customers would willingly cooperate with the hotel management and there will be better relationship building with the customers. For example the customers can be educated/requested to switch off the unwanted appliances when not required, use more of day light during day time, linen and towels if not dirty can be cleaned on alternate days, recyclable materials like papers, plastics, aluminium can be put in recycle bins.

### Monitor the performance against goals

Now the big question is how to monitor the performance against goals. The green coordinator has to ensure the monitoring with the help of supervisors of water management, energy management and waste management teams. Regular checkups, supervisions and surprise checks can be used to check the deviations and monitor the performance. During surprise checks the good deeds should be appreciated and the improvement areas should be noted down and communicated later to the concerned staff.

### Set Standards

Once the hotel is able to put these green initiatives into regular practice then the standards can be set and benchmarking of these practices can be done. After setting the standards, the good practices can be put across in the written policy and can be practised for best results. This process can help the hotel to become more environmentally responsible, become greener and also can reduce the cost of the operation of the hotel. This exercise can also be used as a marketing strategy to gain competitive advantage at market place.

Few of the initiatives taken by some hotels which have resulted in cost saving along with environment consideration with no additional investment in technology are given below. Also it has been found that 75% of the hotels environmental impact can be directly related to excessive consumption. (Bohdanowicz, 2006)

Six senses hotel and resorts operating in Thailand has dedicated three people to see the green initiatives. An environment analyst, an engineer and a social and environment coordinator.

Damai Lovina Villas in Bali (Indonesia) has made lot of cost saving by decreasing the energy and water usage.

The Sheraton Auckland hotel found that daily washing of towels, sheets, and table cloths accounted for 35% of energy consumption in laundry, while drying consumed 65%. The hotel simply changed the temperature of the wash from 85° C to 65° C. This change saved \$ 2000 in energy cost in first 3 months only.

ed a food waste reduction programme by appointing the head chef to monitor the food inventory. This resulted in 20% reduction in food waste. This resulted in total saving of \$ 323.25/ month.

### Integrating all the Resources and Stake Holders

Now we have understood that with very simple human efforts the Indian hotel industry, which is dominated by unorganized and budget hotels and contributes to around 75% of the total Indian hotel industry can save lot of cost and can become green as well as can help the environment and society. For this to take place at its full potential it is very important to integrate all the available resources and to bring all the stake holders together. The various stake holders are

1. Government
2. Hotel industry associations
3. NGO's
4. Environmental agencies

Now all these stake holders have to come together and ensure by various ways and means that the planned objectives are achieved. All these stake holders have to ensure that green coordinators are appointed, regular self checks and audits are done, gap analysis is done, goals are set, action plans are made and implemented, employee training programmes are regularly conducted, customers are educated, standards are set and goals are achieved. This can be achieved with the collective efforts of all the stake holders.

### Conclusion and Discussion

As we have seen that specially the budget and unorganized small hotels who lack the finances to invest in green technology, better appliances and equipments can use simple human efforts to reduce the consumption of water, electricity and ensure solid waste management practices (reduce, reuse and recycle). These efforts virtually involve insignificant cost but can do a good saving as well as can make the hotel more environment friendly. The optimum saving can be to the tune of 15 to 20 % in the operating cost of the hotel. For example if the operating cost of a budget hotel is 10 L/month. An average reduction of 15% in the operation cost results in a saving of 1.5 L/ month. Annually the saving of the hotel is 18 L. This amount is a good amount which the hotel can invest in purchasing better technology products that can make the hotel greener and environment friendly and the small budget hotels can achieve sustainability in long run.

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The totem Pole restaurant at Thunderbird hotel (Bloomington) start-