

A Study of Sustainable Innovative Practices in Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

This research makes an attempt to give an overview of the various innovative sustainable practices used in hospitality industry and concluding with a brief outlook on the future prospects of these practices, purely on Qualitative method of research paper.

Sustainability has been a major concern for all of us and plays an important role in academia, society, organizations, governments, especially for a developing country like India. Innovative, sustainable practices are the core for businesses to perform better while satisfying all three Ps: planet, people, and profit. By combining innovation and sustainability in hospitality industry, one can create added value for all stakeholders while concurrently reducing environmental impact. It enables the hospitality industry to adopt novel ideas, improve service processes, enhance operational efficiency levels, meet customer needs, achieve profitability and maintain competitive advantages in rapidly changing markets.

Hospitality companies are aware of the importance of innovation and a proactive environmental approach for building their brand value. Consequently, hospitality organizations are striving to be eco-friendly while maintaining their competitive edge financially. To keep the hospitality industry flourishing in 2019, we need to focus on innovation to cater to the various needs of the present tech savvy Millennials.

The research paper is an attempt of exploratory research, based on the secondary data sources such as books, publications, journals and news articles were relied on in order to enable a thorough overall interpretation.

Keywords: Innovation, Sustainability, Hospitality, Environment

I. INTRODUCTION

World Commission on Environment and Development, (1987), defines Sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. “Consisting of three pillars, sustainable development seeks to achieve, in a balanced manner, economic development, social development and environmental protection”. In 1992, the international community gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to discuss means to operationalize sustainable development. During the Rio Earth Summit, world leaders adopted Agenda 21, with specific action plans to realize sustainable development at national, regional and international levels. This was followed in 2002 by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which adopted the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The Plan of Implementation built upon the progress made and lessons learned since the Earth Summit, and provided for a more focused approach, with concrete steps and quantifiable and time-bound targets and goals.

Sustainable development has since become the basic principle on which economies, businesses and the world, in general has based their growth strategy. All over the world, people are realizing the long-term fruits to be gained by incorporating sustainable development in their agenda. Sustainability means the ability to be, supported, upheld, or confirmed. Environment Sustainability for a firm means including concern for environment along with the profit motive as their prime objective. Sustainable Development has been defined as “economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources”. Businesses all over the globe are identifying the potential benefits of incorporating environmental sustainability in their strategic framework. The hospitality industry and specifically hotel industry are also making an attempt to reap the benefits of inclusion of these initiatives in their organizational objectives. Established chains of hotels like ITC, Marriott and Hilton have long back included policies and procedures for encompassing environmental concerns in their strategic frameworks. In 2011, Starwood Hotels & Resorts became the first corporate partner of Clean the World, Soap Saves Lives. The Orlando, Florida-based social enterprise and global recycler collects and recycles soaps and bottled amenities. The soaps and cleaning products are sanitized, re-packaged and distributed within 60 days to children and families in the United States, Canada and more than 40 countries. Recycling of bio-degradable waste, Recycling of liquid waste to stop contamination of natural fresh water bodies, supporting local school groups in environmental education activities and utilization of non- conventional energy resources could be example of such initiatives.

Objective of study

1. To comprehend the importance of the innovative sustainable practices in hospitality sector.
2. To study certain innovative sustainable practices used in hospitality industry

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Since the early 1900's the concept of sustainability has attracted increasing attention in political, media and investment circles. In Ernst and Young and the Greenbush Group's (2012), recent review of trends in corporate sustainability strategy, for example, it was argued that 'over the past two decades corporate sustainability efforts have evolved into a complex and disciplined business imperative focused on customer and stakeholder requirements.' In a similar vein Kahn (2010) argued that 'green consumerism' is 'an opportunity for corporations to turn the very crisis that they generate through their accumulation of capital via the exploitation of nature into myriad streams of emergent profit and investment revenue.' While the size of the world's hotel industry is not easy to quantify (Hotel Analyst 2012) it has grown rapidly in during the last quarter of a century and it is now widely recognised as a global industry (Papiryan 2008). Goldstein and Primlani (2012) have traced the origins of hotel sustainability back to the 1960's suggesting that 'the past several decades have seen a growing awareness amongst hoteliers and investors regarding the environmental and social impacts of hotel development and operations.' However over a decade ago Pryce (2001) argued that 'the hotel industry could benefit from addressing their environmental and social impacts in a more systematic way and thus make the first steps toward corporate sustainability.' Some years later Chen, Sloan and Legrand (2009), for example, suggested that 'for many hospitality managers the daily agenda still focuses on priorities seen to be more important than sustainable business management including cost control, profit maximization and shareholder value.' However Chen, Sloan and Legrand (2009) argue that in 'the context of globalization, emerging sustainable development concerns and priorities increasingly cut across all areas of management interest and responsibility' and that 'owners, general managers and line managers cannot ignore these developments.' More recently Parrie (2012) has suggested that 'the hotel industry is in the midst of a sustainability awakening.' In a similar vein Kahn (2010) argued that 'green consumerism' is 'an opportunity for corporations to turn the very crisis that they generate through their accumulation of capital via the exploitation of nature into myriad streams of emergent profit and investment revenue.'

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research paper is an attempt of exploratory research, based on the secondary data sourced from journals, magazines, articles and media report. Apart from collecting primary data from people whose opinion matters, valuable research work, secondary data sources like books, publications, journals and news articles were relied on in order to enable a thorough overall analysis and interpretation.

IV. FINDINGS (ANALYSIS):

Sustainability is attracting increasing attention within the global hotel industry but there is marked variations in the volume and the detail of the data and information. Although the majority of the leading hotel chains claim strong commitments to sustainability several of them also recognize, either explicitly or implicitly, that they are at the beginning of what may be a lengthy and arduous journey and as such a range of issues merit discussion.

ECO-CENTRIC: MANAGING WATER, WASTE, ENERGY:

Substantial quantities of energy and water are consumed in providing comfort and services to guests. The efficient-use of these resources is relatively low, gradually resulting in environmental degradation. Again, the large quantities of waste products generated in hotels may pose further environmental threats. Due to this there is a general need for environmental protection. There is a need for general awareness and environmental awareness among the general public. On one hand, the need for green hotels is increasing on a large scale. On the other hand, the road to environmental sustainability is too luxurious to be undertaken particularly in current economical unstable and risky times.

Hotels undertake a variety of environmental activities. They may include brochures of water and energy conservation displayed in hotel rooms, donation of left-over good quality food to local charity organizations. Installing energy-efficient lighting equipment in hotels may be one of the key solutions. Among the towel, water saving events and linen reuse program are already well-established practice in most of the European countries. This helps to not only save water but reduce the usage of detergents and prolong the life of the material. The use of environmental friendly chemicals and detergents and contracting an external company for laundry services are also some of the green measures. Water saving fixtures is most common in Sweden. The avoidance of waste generation is a beneficial solution both environmentally and economically. Waste sorting and recycling materials is stressed upon to a large extent in today's hotel scenario. The installation of soap and shampoo-dispensers in guest bathrooms instead of individually packed toiletries should be practiced. Waste management by composting kitchen and garden wastes to be used as organic fertilizer was not implemented in most of the resorts due to that fact that it involved a complex technique that had to be mastered. Recycled paper to produce brochures was not used in any of the resorts due to the fact that it cost a lot more than normal paper. A few resorts do conserve or care for wildlife in some way due to that fact that it was a form of promotional tool to increase occupancy among animal lovers. When decomposed in the anaerobic conditions typical of landfills, food waste generates methane CH₄, a greenhouse gas with a global warming potential 25 times greater than that of CO₂. Many landfills capture and destroy or utilize the CH₄ generated by organic wastes. Landfills occupy large areas of land and require specialized environmental management over extended time periods. Food waste contributes radically to the space requirements of modern landfills. Landfill, incineration and advanced thermal technologies are used throughout the world to affect the disposal of typical Municipal Solid Waste. MSW is the everyday type of mixed waste that is produced by households and businesses such as restaurants and hotels. Food waste is known to represent an important portion of Municipal Solid Waste. Landfill is the most widespread Municipal Solid Waste disposal system in New Zealand.

To give an example, “Kingfisher Bay resort and village” located on the west coastline of Fraser Island, Australia, represents a typical example of a resort that was built to strict environmental guidelines to achieve a high level of environmental integration with the very sensitive ecosystem in which it is located. This resulted in buildings and roads that were planned around trees and using materials that blends in with bush-type atmosphere. As an alternative air-conditioning in most areas of the resort natural convention currents are used to control air temperatures. Exact measures guarantee that waste water and other types of waste do not disturb/pollute the soil and vegetation of Fraser Island.

In India in 2006, independently owned and manage, award winning eco-resort in south named Our Native Village is the best example for their sustainable operating practices in all aspects of energy, water, waste and architecture which clearly demonstrate the resort’s complete dedication to a holistic environment. A consistent sustainability policy generates demand and loyalty from guests who seek products that resonate with their own values. (ONV) is like other hotels in its need for energy resources and consumption but is unique in self-sufficiency and low carbon footprints.

V. SUSTAINABILITY AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR TRANSFORMATION

Sustainability is undoubtedly growing trend. Sustainability operating practices in all aspects of managing waste, water and energy should exhibit the hotel’s absolute commitment to a holistic environment. Hotel sector possibly will make a major positive contribution to the environment by taking some measures to reduce energy consumption which will in turn decrease pollution and resource exhaustion. Therefore, while the hotel sector consumes a big proportion of electricity as compared to other tourism sectors, hotel owners as well as managers still have a chance to implement energy saving campaigns and environmental management systems. A program instituted by the Muse Hotel in New York City has installed designer recycling bins for guest rooms so they can be functional as well as fashionable. Guests can recycle glass, paper and plastic and this will allow the bins to merge into the decorations in the guest rooms. Hotel guestrooms are unoccupied approximately sixty percent of the time. This means that for sixty percent of the time the hotel can be in control of the high temperature and lighting of a guestroom and manage how much energy is being used during that time without interfering with the guest’s comfort. Installation of new gas dryers can result in the drying up of the fabric more quickly and with less energy use. The other new system is a heat recovery unit that can save the heat from the old water cycle in the laundry and transfer the heat to the clean water being used in the next cycle. Both of these options are creating new ways to conserve energy, but not changing the actual process of doing laundry. If the appliances use less water money will be saved from smaller consumption in the beginning. Also less waste water would be released into the environment. This can be used in addition with a linen reuse program. While most of the hotels have instituted a towel reuse program for years, the latest trend is to not change sheets every day unless it is requested.

There is an implication to create more environmental awareness and strengthen organizational monitoring systems to control green practices. In addition to linen and towel reuse program installing low flow shower heads, faucets as well as low water dimensions toilets has attracted much attention from hoteliers as one of the most efficient water saving measures because they can be implemented through a relatively low level of modification and financial investment.

VI. FOCUSING FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF GOING GREEN

The Financial savings are one of the most important concerns for any organization that influence the implementation of environmental initiatives in a hotel. This is especially valid for hotel businesses that operate in a tremendous competitive market and where the cost of water, energy and waste dumping are high. Hotel operators that can take full advantage of their efficiency and reduce waste will be more cost-effective than their competitors. For example a hotel can bring down its energy consumption by twenty to forty percent without adversely affecting its day to day set standard of performance. Despite the setup costs and the long return on investment associated with environmental initiatives the economic benefits usually outweigh the cost of implementation. Starting with less capital intensive projects and practices can definitely lead to substantial cost savings. Therefore hotels with business models that revolve around green practices will have the strongest opportunity to achieve a competitive advantage by being ahead of the emerging sustainability curve. Hotel web sites play an important role in disseminating the necessary information. They are used as an online channel to inform customers about services and products and also as an electronic platform to enhance profitability.

Other green products such as green cuisine and eco rooms are additional innovative creations of the environmental endeavor of these hotel companies. IHG’s network site has a specific link entitled green hotels for green hotel reservations to respond to the growing market of green customers. Environmental based certification provides a mechanism to encourage environmental management practices. To maintain these recognition hotels must pass regular re-evaluations to ensure continued compliance with the requirements and maintenance of proper operational standards. The Eco-marketing orientation is a new underlying business philosophy to supplant the sales, production, marketing, and entrepreneurial orientations commonly discussed in business education curricula publicize the authors. A company with this orientation should meet society’s demand for corporate ethical responsibilities while fulfilling customer needs profitably.

Following are some of the sustainable practices followed in the hospitality industry

- Low energy lighting - all lighting on site is now either low energy or LED from farm flood lights to wedding barn fairy lights. The carbon saving is approximately 0.75 tonnes
- Under floor heating has proven an excellent source of low energy heating for a large space like the hay barn since a lower water temperature required than the use of radiators
- Using Solar Energy for cooking has reduced oil usage by 30-40% and saved approximately 2.5 tonnes of carbon. An induction cooker also helps save energy and costs
- The windows are double glazed and has wooden window shutters are used to keep rooms cooler.
- Environment friendly cleaning products and recycled paper products are used.
- There are recycling and composting facilities for guests and all farm waste. Since on-site recycling and composting started the quantity of un-recyclable waste has reduced.
- The motivating guest to plant trees.

VII. CONCLUSION:

This exploratory review of the sustainability in global hotel industry reveals that there are marked variations in both the volume and the detailed content of the information on sustainability. While these commitments cover a variety of environmental, social and economic issues, they can be interpreted as being driven as much by a search for business efficiency gains as by a genuine concern for sustainability and the maintenance and enhancement of natural ecosystems. As such the global hotel industry would seem to be following a 'weak' rather than a 'strong' approach of sustainability and the lack of independent external assurance, mentioned earlier, certainly calls into question the transparency and credibility of the reporting process.

A number of future academic research agendas can also be identified across the canons of hospitality management. In marketing, for example, interest might include market research designed to explore what sustainability means to customers, holiday companies, travel agents and consultants, if and why such stakeholders think it is important, on the characteristics of consumers that care about sustainability and on the extent to which such consumers are willing to change their patterns of hotel patronage. Research might also focus on how sustainability issues are managed with hotelier/supplier relationships and on the locus of and impact of power within such relationships. Research into stakeholder perceptions of the relative importance of external factors, for example, statutory regulation, global economic change and reputation, and internal factors, for example, efficiencies in operating costs and the desire to recruit and retain creative and talented employees, would be valuable in helping to more fully understand the development of the leading hotel chains' commitments to sustainability. Such research might be profitably complemented by investigations into the factors influencing, and the challenges facing, those hotel chains which have, to date, made limited commitments to sustainability.

While the exploratory nature and tightly defined focus of this paper does not provide a basis for policy development it does offer a mirror in which the leading hotel chains and the hotel industry at large might reflect on their current approaches to sustainability and on public perceptions of those approaches. If the leading hotel chains are looking to strengthen and extend their approach to sustainability then they will need to undertake, or commission, research to investigate the most effective ways that they can utilize marketing communications to make more determined efforts to keep customers informed of progress in meeting sustainability goals. At the same time the hotel chains may wish to explore how they might more effectively develop their approach to sustainability and enhance the transparency of their commitments and achievements throughout their supply chains.

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