

ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY PRACTICES FOLLOWED BY CHANDIGARH HOTELS: A STUDY OF LUXURY CHAIN HOTELS' WEBSITES

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Abstract -This paper studied literature to find out the major factors which influence the hotel guests and the websites of the luxury chain hotels located in the Chandigarh region. The threat to the environment is ever increasing due to increased energy consumption and ozone depletion. Due to 24 hours operational nature of the hotel, the responsibility of the hotels is much more than the any other segment of the hospitality industry. The earlier researches conducted in this field suggested that concept of ecotels is rising and the traditional hotels are also pressed in by their guests to employ environment friendly practices and the governments around the world have pushed up with regulations. This study however found that these practices are not a major factor of attraction for the guest while choosing for a hotel to stay but may result in dissatisfaction if not existing. Non existences of such practices result in customer dissatisfaction which on the other side is not a motivator for selection of hotel. This study also found out that though the hotels may only follow the legislation and regulations set up by government but going beyond that provides them with a competitive edge.

Keywords-Hotels, Environment friendly, Customer satisfaction, Ecotel, Guest satisfaction, Competitive advantage, Chandigarh, Save earth

1. Introduction

The environment, as of today, has become a global phenomenon with the increased awareness of the impact of the society and the businesses on it. Global warming, ozone depletion, air pollution, over usage of non renewable resources poses a serious threat to environment. These threats have grown and worsened with the growth of the population and by ever increasing demand for already shrinking resources to fulfill it (Chan and Wong, 2006). Global tourism has shown an upward growth and its impact on the environment has become the matter of discussion within the hospitality industry (Berezan et al., 2013). Hotels form major part of hospitality industry and are also the major component of tourism (Molina-Azorin et al., 2009).

2. Literature review

2a.) Impact of hotel industry on environment

2a.1) Carbon footprints and usage of non renewable energy resources- In hospitality industry, hotels impact environment in the most harmful way. Approximately 75 percent of this impact is due to inappropriate use of non durables such as energy, water etc and also because of emission to earth, water and air (Rahman et al., 2012). A hotel (conventional one) has always been a threat to the environment as it causes deforestation and absurd use of non renewable resources. The hotels owing to the nature of their services consume considerably more amount of energy than a building of its size (Erdogan and Barris, 2007). A study conducted over European hotels by Bohdanowicz and Martinac in 2003 (Cited in Rahman et al., 2012) estimated usage of approx 108 to 180 litres of water per night by guests including regular housekeeping activities. The same study mentions usage of up to 500 litres per night by the guests in some of the hotels. This usage of water costs both in economic and environmental terms. For example in terms of money, heating of guestrooms and water costs US \$229 in UK hotels whereas the amount of gas used for this emits five million tons of carbon dioxide in a year (Kirk,1995 cited in Rahman et al., 2012). If we calculate this in present day scenario for whole of the world, the figure we get will show how serious the situation is.

2a.2) Waste generation- Waste is the most prominent evidence of the harm caused by human beings to the environment. The hotels use non durable goods, hence are prominent in waste generation as suggested by the studies carried out by Rahman et al. in 2012 and by Ishmael in 2006. The guests in five star hotels are open to pay a relatively higher price for luxury. In order to provide the services of highest levels of luxury to its guests, the luxurious five star hotels generate an enormous amount of waste. This waste generation always becomes the centre point of any discussion on environment preservation (Cespedes-Lorente et al., 2003). Sorting and recycling of this waste can be done but the hotel managers find this to be an expensive and time consuming process. This unsorted physical waste has harmful impacts on environment (Min, 2011). This situation raises concern both from the nongovernmental organizations, which are working for preservation of environment and the public particularly from hotel clientele.

2b.) Influence of environment friendly practices on guests

The stakeholders for long have demanded the hotel organizations to understand their social and environmental responsibility and to contribute towards it positively. They also want to be informed about the practices adopted and also a further scope in this

aspect (Han et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2010 & Danuta, 2012). The hotel organizations have responded positively to the demands of stakeholders and have adopted an environmental audit. Hotels have started using environmental policies adopted by them as a marketing tool and it has now started playing a vital role in operation planning (Dief and Font, 2010). The environment friendly practices have following impact on the guests-

2b.1) Factor of consideration for hotel selection- A report published by PhocusWright for the study carried out in US suggested that 44 percent of the US travelers consider environmental aspect while making their travel arrangements including hotel stays (Raheem, 2009). A similar report by Kimpton hotels and restaurants found that 16 percent of their guests opted for them because of their environment friendly practices and initiatives such as use of non toxic cleaning agents and in room recycle bins (Kang et al., 2012). Study carried out by Mensah (2004) (cited in Han et al., 2011) also suggested that preference for stay for 90% of the guests is the hotels which implement environment friendly practice. Environmental practices formed a positive image and perception among the customers (Molina-Azorin et al, 2009).

2b.2) Factor of dissatisfaction- All the studies discussed above suggested that the guests consider environment friendly practices while selecting a hotel to stay but none suggested that these practices act as an attraction for the guests. These policies may not act as a factor of attraction but may be a factor of dissatisfaction if not implemented (Raheem, 2009; Han and Kim, 2010).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper studies available literature to find out the impact of hotel industry on environment and the influence of environment friendly practices adopted by hotels on hotel guests' while making a decision to stay. Further the websites of the hotels located in Chandigarh region are studied to find out whether there is any mention of environment policy on their website or not and also to know the extent of the information it carries. No statistical tool was applied for the same, as study is mainly focused upon finding the mention of environment policy on hotels' websites' and then, relate it with the literature available so that suggestions if any required can be put forward to these hotels based on the literature. A total of six hotels were studied which includes J.W. Marriott, The Taj, Oberoi Sukhvila, Hyatt Regency, The Lalit and Park Plaza.

4. FINDINGS

Webpage of all six hotels studied were looked into to find information regarding the environmental friendly practices followed by these hotels at their units in Chandigarh. None of these hotels have information available on their individual webpage regarding these practices. So the corporate websites of these hotels were searched for information. A brief of the information is displayed in the table below-

Hotel Name	Information available on individual webpage	Information available on corporate site	Major practices followed by hotels
J.W. Marriott	No	Yes, Available in CSR section	a. Sustainable food and beverage policy b. Sustainable seafood position policy c. Make a green choice d. Sustainable meeting practices
The Taj	No	Yes, in 'About us' section, 'who we are' and sustainability.	EARTH (Environment Awareness and Renewal at Taj Hotels)
Oberoi Hotels	No	Yes, Mission and vision statement	Committed to usage of natural and recyclable products
Hyatt Regency	No	Yes, Corporate responsibility under section our planet	a. In 2014, Hyatt group launched its vision 2020 aimed at reducing water and energy consumption and greenhouse gases, recycling and waste reduction, building efficiency etc. b. Responsible sourcing- aiming at broader impact through supply chains. In US and Canada, group has been using cage free eggs upto 90% of total procurement of eggs.
Park Plaza	No	Yes, on parent company (Radisson hotels group) under responsible business and think planet	a. Carbon reduction b. Green meetings c. Water conservation d. Minimizing waste e. Responsible sourcing f. Green certification

J.W. Marriott on its website accessed on 27th of June, 2018 has mentioned that it has developed certain programs and policies under its CSR initiative to conserve our environment. These programs not only involve the management and staff of the hotel but also let the guests participate in saving environment. Under its policy on sustainable food and beverage it has mentioned that it is committed to use only the cage free chickens by 2020 and some of its hotels are already procuring cage free eggs. Under program 'Make a green choice' the hotel has reward system in which guests will be rewarded with star points 250-500 if they do not opt for full housekeeping for three days excluding their check out day. Though the policy seems to be very promising but it does not specify if these all practices are also followed at their unit level and especially at their unit in Chandigarh.

The Taj Hotels group on its corporate website as on 27th June, 2018 mentions about the environment in the EARTH (Environment Awareness and Renewal at Taj Hotels) program but detailed information about the program is not available on the website. The local webpage for The Taj Chandigarh also does not host any information in this regard.

Oberoi hotels has mentioned about their commitment in their mission and vision statement stating that they see themselves as company which is committed towards the usage of natural and recyclable products (Oberoi hotels, 2018). Though the local webpage of Oberoi Sukhvilas, the property in Chandigarh does not host any information regarding environment friendly practices but their mission and vision statement gives an assurance of the adoption of these practices.

Hyatt hotels (2018) on their website mention about environment policy and practice in corporate section where they have a dedicated section for this 'Our planet'. Hyatt hotels have shared their vision in the section saying that the group aims to reduce waste, recycle, reducing water and energy consumption and building efficiency etc. The group in responsible sourcing section mentions about influencing the supply chains to procure local, organic and sustainable food items. It has already started using upto 90% of their total eggs which are cage free. The webpage of Hyatt Regency, Chandigarh does not mention if any of such practices are followed at the local level.

Park Plaza hotel is part of Radisson hotel group and Radisson hotels group (2018), on its corporate website mentions about environmental policy in responsible business section under 'Think Planet'. The section gives a greater insight of the environment policy where it talks about reducing carbon footprint by employing energy solutions, involving guests in it and water conservation through guests and staff engagement. It adds responsible sourcing, reducing waste and recycling into its efforts to conserve environment. They have gone for certification for their efforts from different agencies. But the webpage of Park Plaza does not carry any information on it.

No information could be found from the local webpage of 'The Lalit, Chandigarh' and neither from their corporate website (The Lalit, 2018).

5. DISCUSSION

As studies conducted by Molina-Azorin et al. (2009), Raheem (2009), Han et al. (2011) and Kang et al (2012) have showed that people prefer the hotels which practice environment friendly policy for their stay. The hotels need to project what they are doing for environment conservation on their website which will make it visible for the guests who are either booking or looking for the hotels to select a hotel. Following environment policies create a competitive advantage for the hotels (Chan and Wong, 2006). All these hotels must display it prominently on their websites.

Han and Kim (2010) in their study found out that though practicing environment friendly policy may not be an attraction for the guests but not having these can be a factor of dissatisfaction. So, that also compels all the hotels to prominently display what they are doing to conserve the environment.

5) Suggestions for hotel

There is huge scope for the green hotels in the market. Here green hotels refer to the hotels which significantly implement environment management policy. The increased awareness among the customers will help these hotels in distinguishing themselves from the rest and create a distinctive image for themselves (Raheem, 2009 & Han et al., 2011). It creates competitive advantage for the organization and provides an opportunity to better the brand image. It also allows hotels to charge a premium for implementing these practices and reducing their costs as the implementation of environment management system requires one time investment but are very cost effective and helps hotels in generating profits while conserving the environment (Chan and Wong, 2006, Eric SW, 2008 & Chan and Hawkins, 2012).

6.) Conclusion

With increased mobility and fast transport system, the people have started to travel around the world for leisure, pleasure and business. This brings in the challenge for environment and its conservation. The awareness among the travelers has increased through numerous educational initiatives focusing on the environment. These environmentally educated travelers are pressurizing the hotels to implement environment management policy and to be accountable towards the society as well as the environment. Studies have shown the travelers to be willing to even shed a bit extra to be in an environment friendly property. The implementation of these practices will also help the hotels in garnering extra profit and also provides a competitive edge over the others. Though implementation involves cost but it is one time thing only produces benefits for the organization for long. Hotels may take the help of local authorities as well. The training of the staff is another major factor to look at as it is them who will ensure the success of the implementation of the policy. The hotels should also be displaying the information on their websites to inform their guests.

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