

Green Initiatives Practices in Indian Hotels

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Abstract: Economies and industries worldwide are becoming increasingly sensitive towards the environment in the wake of the fact that they will not be able to sustain the growth if they ignored their environment. They are realising that something needs to be done to conserve the environment. Hotel industry is one such example which displays such values in their regular business models. The concept of 'green' or eco-friendly hotels is getting increasingly popular now. The environmental friendly policies through efficient use of power, water and other resources is likely to not only improve hotel's image but also improves operational economy. Both the hotels and the customers are making their efforts towards green business of hotel industry. The customers are demanding their preferred hotels to be environmental friendly and sensitive and thus even hotels are trying to do so in order to satisfy and attract customers. The changing environment and governmental support, green growth model is no longer a dream but has become a reality. Present paper aims at determining the various green initiatives (environment friendly practices) among Indian hotels and how hotels can help in reducing the harmful effects on environment.

Present research has concluded that the world is facing too many environmental problems like pollution, ozone layer depletion, wastage of resources and waste creation etc. Hotels, being a part of international tourism industry, have customers from various social and cultural backgrounds and have a great influence on the environment. Although, the scale of operations of the hotels indeed affects the environment, the question still remains how sensitive Indian hotels are towards environmental issues and what are they doing towards mitigating this problem.

Keywords: Green Initiatives, Hotels, Environmental Initiatives, Sustainability, Indian Hotel Industry, Hospitality Industry.

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I. Introduction

The present generation has understood the importance of saving our resources and preserving our environment through sustainable development. Even the policy makers from different governments and industrialists are making efforts towards this direction. It has been observed that hospitality industry is one of the leading influencers of environmental damage. As a result, it has become important for the hotel industry to encourage environmentally responsible practices. Deraman et al. (2017) opine that one of the reasons why hotels are growing increasingly sensitive towards environmental issues is the sensitisation of the various stakeholders including shareholders, employees and customers. Hospitality industry is required to be more environmentally sensitive and responsible.

Al-Aomar and Hussain (2017) opined that there have been energy crisis in past as well and thus the importance of conserving energy is not new. The infamous energy crisis of 1973-74 have already sensitised industries regarding the role that energy plays in their smooth operations. Saving energy is not only nature friendly but also cost friendly. This has prompted hoteliers to focus on adopting energy efficient policies and practices. One of the biggest challenges with hotel industry in any country is that it is expected to operate round the clock whole year providing luxury services to its customers. They need uninterrupted power supply and thus need to find ways to do this cost efficiently (Eskerod and Duric, 2018). The problem remains how the hoteliers can do so?

The hotel and tourism industry has vast potential of adopting environmental friendly sustainable growth strategies in several ways. Although, there are several hotels that have already started efforts in this direction, the fact remains that there are only countable few companies worldwide which have been using this effectively (Singjai et al., 2017). Much is needed to be done and evolved in the area of green hotels. The most probable reason is that the idea of green hotels can be made possible only when both the government policy makers and the hoteliers display strong commitment for the same.

II. Significance Of The Research

The increasing power demand, unmanaged solid waste and pollution are the three main negative effects that hoteliers have on environment. Given the size of the hotel industry worldwide, there is an imminent uncertainty on their sustainability due to global climate change. This certainly calls for environmental sensitivity of hospitality industry (Zhang et al., 2017).

Accommodation sector of hospitality industry is one sector which exerts substantial load on resources and therefore environment. This is due to the reason that accommodation sector itself need several collective services in order to serve their customers better (Kasliwal and Agarwal, 2016). Hence, many of the activities of hotel sector cause environmental damage and climate change both at national and global scale. The green house gasses released in the atmosphere and the carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and chlorofluorocarbons emission are causing immense damage to the environment. It has also been observed in a research that the commercial buildings and the hotels are damaging the environment more than any domestic setup. Kim et al. (2016) discovered in their research that any five star hotel annually release 160 kgs to 200 kgs of carbon dioxide per square meters of room area, consumes 170 – 440 litres of water every day. Moreover, every guest generates atleast 1 kg of waste every day.

It has been increasingly observed that customers are environmentally conscious. This is exerting even more pressure on hotels to go green and environmentally and ecologically safe. With increasing pressure on environment, even the government and authority are under pressure to promote environment friendly policies (Robin et al., 2017). With pressures mounting on both the hoteliers and the authorities, it is getting more and more important for hotel operators to maintain eco-friendly policies. Hotels are now required to display ecologically friendly and responsible behaviour using water and energy responsibly and manage waste responsibly (Zhang et al., 2017).

Although, it is established that luxurious service delivery by hospitality industry can potentially deteriorate our environment, there is hardly any evidence on the efforts that these hotels are making in order to preserve our environment. There is clearly a need to put together a combined effort to save our environment from further damage. As has been pointed out by Punitha et al. (2015) there is clearly a need to have certain policies and guidelines which could prevent environmental damage but there are hardly any policies which could do so. The authorities worldwide need to design certain strict policies and measures which could prompt hotels and other such commercial organisations to do so (Robin et al., 2017). And moreover the policies which are currently in place have hardly been effective enough due to poor implementation. The present paper is one such effort to highlight this need.

III. Aim Of The Research

This paper aims at determining the various green initiatives (environment friendly practices) among Indian hotels and how hotels can help in reducing the harmful effects on environment.

IV. Technology As A Tool To Promote Sustainability

Present state of the art technology can be used as a potential tool to reduce power consumption and reduce pollution and waste. Moreover, the aware customers are also the reason why hotels need to show environmentally responsible behaviour. With the help of technology, hotels can decrease power consumption and reduce waste creation, water consumption and pollution (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2015). The centralised monitoring and control of consumption points can reduce power consumption and increase efficient utilisation of resources. Use of automated and smart systems and their centralisation can help control temperature efficiently and stop the wasteful use of power and other resources in unoccupied rooms (Punitha et al., 2015). Use of smart keys can ensure that all electrical devices are switched off when the guests out of the room and are switched on when they enter without the involvement of any staff. This not only reduces the cost of operations but also reduces power consumption and hence saves environment (Robin et al., 2017).

Similarly, hotel may install sensors which could switch on, switch off or control the devices according to certain predefined parameters. For example, motion sensors can be installed to understand where the guests are and accordingly, activate the devices to control the temperature and other devices. The sensors may also tell the management which devices are not working properly or need maintenance. Technology can be used to understand how power and other resources are used and thus effective ways can be designed to reduce the same. With right technology and its use hotels can provide more effective and satisfactory services to its customers at very low cost (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2015).

V. Greening Initiatives In Indian Hotels

The race to 'going green' has started among Indian hoteliers but the race has started only recently. India is emerging as a major global tourism destination. Living upto the image of leading hotels of emerging tourism destinations, the hotels are trying to provide world class services to its customers (Sharma et al., 2018).

As an indication of the same, many hotels are claiming 'LEED' or 'Ecotel' certified. LEED and Ecotel Certificates are given by third party organisation to hotels maintaining high environmentally responsible and sensitive practices. With hotels having Ecotel and LEED certification, we can be sure the organisations are following strict power saving norms (Verma and Chandra, 2018).

India is a country with extreme weather conditions like high temperatures during summer, extremely cold winters and heavy rains etc. Places like Shimla are famous for extremely cold weather whereas Delhi has infamous hot summers. Places like Jaipur and Rajasthan are known for its hot weather whereas places like Ooty and Manali are known for its cold weather. Hotels need to spend a lot of money and energy on maintaining comfortable temperature for its customers and provide them services accordingly (Kasliwal and Agarwal, 2016). With proper observation of such use, the hotel can effectively plan long term sustainable energy conservation strategies which will not only save it money but will also be appreciated by customers. This is one reason why Energy Management Systems are fast gaining popularity in India. The country's expertise in software development is further helping Indian hotels in getting customised software to efficiently manage their affairs in cost effective manner. The advance technology solutions like HVAC interface, wall temperature sensors, EMS packages etc. are becoming commonplace now days (Singh et al., 2015).

VI. Some Examples From Indian Hotel Industry

- ITC Hotels: ITC is one of the leading hotel chain operators worldwide. It has started 'WelcomEnviron' initiative in order to support environment related causes in the place it operates its hotels. The initiative is based on environment friendly policies on the principal of recycle, reuse and reduce. The hotel promotes people awareness on environment friendly practices, sensitising employees towards environment and energy conservation and using eco-friendly material and technology (Lakshman and Manjunath, 2015).
- The Orchid Hotel, Mumbai: it is the proud hotel to be the first Ecotel Certified Five Star Hotel of India. The hotel has been able to get this certificate owing to its several environment friendly initiatives like efficient solid waste management systems, energy conservation practices and its commitment to save environment. The hotel is also involved with community education towards environment conservation. The hotel has set up an in house vermi-composting unit to reuse the food waste generated everyday at the hotel. The hotel has is architecture designed in such a manner that it uses maximum sunlight to light up its atrium area with natural light. Instead of using traditional high power consuming lighting system, the hotel uses LED and CFL lights which save electricity for the hotel. Installation of solar panel enables the hotel to use sunlight as alternative to traditional expensive power supply solutions. The taps and other water using devices are specially designed to save water. Overall, it will not be an overstatement to say that the Orchid Hotels are trend setters in the field of "Green Hotels" (Sharma et al., 2018).
- Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces: Taj is another one of the most prestigious hotels known for its heritage worldwide. The Taj Group has started its environment friendly initiative called the EARTH which is an Environment Awareness and Renewal Program. The program EARTH began as a conscious effort to save energy and develop environment friendly sustainable business strategies and has now been formally adopted across all its properties.
- The Fern Hotels and Resorts: the Hotel chain is another example of environment friendly and eco-sensitive hotels which has its branches countrywide. Some of the innovative eco-friendly practices adopted by the Ferns is the use of ayurvedic soaps and toiletries, eco-friendly baskets, water saving taps and flushes, use of paper and cloth bags instead of plastics etc. (Kasliwal and Agarwal, 2016).
- The Raintree Hotels, Chennai: the hotels have kept environment friendly practice in mind while construction of the hotel. For example the hotel has been built using medium density fiber, bamboo and rubber wood. Moreover the cement used in construction of the hotel has a percentage of fly ash. The hotel has installed an innovative flushing system called 'George Fisher Concealed Cistern' which uses only six litres of water per flush as compared to traditional flushing system which use 15-20 litres. The water used in the hotel is recycled and reused in air conditioning. Interestingly the heat generated through air conditioning is again used to warm water for bathrooms and kitchen (Kasliwal and Agarwal, 2016).

VII. Conclusion

The hospitality industry is known for its luxury and has been blamed for its wasteful use of resources. But the hotels worldwide are going eco-friendly in order to save on cost of operations and also to please its environmentally sensitive customers. The increasing environmental awareness and sensitivity among Indian hotels is quite evident and commonplace now. At the least the hotels are trying to educate community, employees and customers to save water and energy for the sake of environment but at the greater end several innovative sustainable strategies can be seen in several prominent hotels which are usually the trend setters for the industry.

There are multiple reasons why hotels are going 'green'. The eco-friendly policies save on cost and resources and thus make operations sustainable in long term. The technology is playing a significant role in helping the hotels go 'green'. With the help of technology, the hotels can now monitor, control and manage energy and other resources efficiently. Moreover with the help of technology, the customers can also be involved and educated on energy conservation. With the help of new and upcoming technology, hotels are now able to come up with innovative strategies to conserve energy and resources. Because customers are also environment sensitive, they also recognise and appreciate the environment friendly practices of hotels.

The leading Indian hotels are now displaying environment friendly policies as a part of their corporate social responsibility. They are continuously and innovatively developing strategies to ensure minimum environmental damage. Even government and authorities are getting stricter towards implementation of environment friendly policies. With all these initiatives coming into place, it is becoming all the more important that hotels follow environment friendly practices in favour of their organisation and their customers. Environment friendly practices and sustainable strategies are close reality in hospitality industry and are here to stay.

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