

Eco- resort



There are researches done by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP, 2005) indicate that, from 1994 to 2004, the international economic sector of tourism industry has grown by 25%, contributing to 10. % of the world's total GDP. To aid the growth of tourism, the UNEP, connected with the World Tourism Organisation, has released the report titled Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers. The report emphasizes the importance of tourism hoteliers to make efficient effort to maintain the environmental sustainability. According to World Wildlife Fund (2010), eco-resorts are “ types of resorts in which eco-efficiency measures are adopted throughout the lifecycle of the building, ranging from orientation, design, operation and maintenance”.

Dowling (2000) also defines the eco-resort, quoted as followings: “ An eco-resort is a self-contained, upmarket, nature-based accommodation facility. It is characterised by environmentally sensitive design, development and management which minimizes its adverse impact on the environment, particularly in the areas of energy and waste management, water conservation and purchasing. ” (Dowling 2000: 165). To summarise the above, eco-resorts are not just focusing on the operation process, but from the concept design until the sustainability of the on-going policies.

This paper is going to explore the principles of eco-resorts, also analysing the benefits and the disadvantages of eco-resorts. Criteria of eco-resorts The Sharetime Magazine (2011) suggests that eco-resorts include the theme of re-use, re-cycle and reduce. As mentioned before, in order to claim that is an eco-resort, there are several criteria to be covered. Environmental factors should be considered during the design stages of the resort. Murphy (2008)

suggested that the landscape features need to be appealing to guests and efficient to operate.

Bohdanowicz (2003) pointed out that resorts are built “ to provide comfort and services twenty-four hours a day, year round”. This shows that the consumption of the resorts is massive and non-stop. Green-orientated landscape features can be added during the design stages in order to carry out the green policies in the operations. One of the most significant examples of green-orientated landscape is the green roof. According to the EPA, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2012), a green roof is a ‘ vegetative layer grown on a rooftop’.

The green roof helps cool down the temperature in the area through evapotranspiration. During the process of evapotranspiration, water from the rooftop soil is absorbed and enters the plants in the transpiration process. The water is then evaporated by the sun through evaporation (Wark, 2010). The other main benefit from implementing a green roof is that the air quality will be improved by a green roof (Martin, 2008). It works as a natural air-cleaner as green plants absorb carbon dioxide, the most common automobile emission, and release oxygen.

In addition, as resorts are massive in energy consumption, it is efficient and beneficial to design a building-integrated photovoltaic. The building-integrated photovoltaic is solar electricity systems which are built into a building, instead of added on a building later (Gold Coast Energy, 2012). Solar energy is known as one of the most effective renewable energy source. The research carried out by Roisin (2012) points out that the amount of

incident solar energy on earth each year equals to 1500 times the world's annual energy use.

Apart from the green-orientated landscape features, there are small designs that can input in the design of the resorts. For example, the resorts can design to use energy saving light bulbs such as LED light bulbs to minimise the energy consumption (Eartheasy. com, 2012). Another idea is to create policies that aim at being eco-friendly. In the aspect of transportation, electric cars can be used within the resort area, to minimise the exhaust emission (Dissabandara, 2010). In the aspect of technology, nowadays the Key Activated system is common in most of the resorts (Entergize, 2012).

The system is designed to reduce the energy consumption to minimum level in the resorts while the room is unoccupied. It automatically detects the room status and switches the energy on and off. This reduces the unnecessary waste of energy cost by the guests. In the aspect of daily operations, there are several ways to be 'green'. The re-use towels policy based on guest request helps save energy and water for washing laundry. According to the Pacific Institute (2011), toilet flush volumes in the resort have declined significantly in the past 25 years, decreasing from 6 gallon per flush in 1980s to the new volume 1. gallon per flush in 2001. In addition to that, the older showerheads have flow rates of an average rate of 5 gallon per minute and 3. 5 gallon per minute average flow for the new ones (Vickers, 2001). The above changes in the resort accommodation greatly help minimising the consumption level of water within a resort. Recycle of wastes can also be carried out to ensure the environmental footprint of the resorts to be minimised. In order to help the customers define the eco-

resorts, there is a third-party certification program, which is known as LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

According to LEED official website (2012), it is a nationally accepted organisation for design, operation and construction of high performance green buildings. With the LEED certification, the resorts can thus claim themselves an 'eco-resort'. Benefits of eco-resort To introduce, the sustainability of both the business and the neighbourhood environment has become two important focuses in the recent years. Firstly, in the point of view of the resort owners, the eco-friendly concept can attract target market group which has awareness to the environment aspect.

Eco-resorts provide a positive impression to the public, which is also a major selling point for marketing. LEED certified resorts can request a higher rental rates than the non-certified resorts (LEED, 2012). Secondly, standing in the position of a consumer, eco-resorts can be attractive to who is paying attention to environmental protection. They can enjoy themselves in the resorts without worrying about massive damages to the environment. Thirdly, looking on the environmental side, eco-resorts, for sure, is an absolute benefit to the environmental protection.

It is not just about the present effort, but also raising public awareness to environmental protection (Eco Green Hotel, 2008). Considerations in eco-resorts It is no doubt that going green for a resort is a contemporary develop trend and an absolute benefit to resort management. However, there are some constraints that needed to take in consideration during planning. First of all, focusing on the staff management, for sure that the staffs working in a green resort should maintain the green policies carried out. The staffs need

to be well-trained and willing to input effort into helping the resort to be 'green' (Townsend, 2011).

Individuals that are believed in environmental protection will be willing to do more work for the environment. This is one of the motivations to the organisation as keeping the resort 'green' is a complex responsibility. Another point is at the financial side, the construction cost and maintenance fee of the building-integrated photovoltaic is higher than traditional electricity system (Sutherland, 2008). The hoteliers need to consider whether the cost is worth spending to operate an eco-resort. In addition to that, consumer behaviour is one factor which is not controllable.

Even if the resort is encouraging customers to save energy and reduce wastes, they may still produce a lot of wastage throughout their stay. For example they may flush the toilet a few more times due to the fact that the decrease in the volume per flush. Therefore, it is an uncertain input to the resort. The resort can encourage the customers to be environmental friendly through marketing campaigns. Conclusion To summarise the above, it is a win-win strategy for both the business and the neighbourhood environment to go 'green' as long as they are able to set up an effective plan successfully.

It is not just about recycling, but a complex concept with different considerations. Designs, operation policies, financial aspect, human resources and customers' behaviour are the major elements that are included in an eco-resort. They need to be linked and corporate with each other in order to set up a successful eco-resort. People nowadays pay more and more attention in environmental protection, sustainability is a growing

concern to all industries. It is a trend for the hospitality to go green, as a small step of the resort can bring huge improvement to the environment.

According to Murphy (2008), the resort should have a long-term vision and goals that matches sustainable objectives development strategy. Resorts should try to minimise the ecological footprint, which has been proposed to be ‘ accounting tool that enables us to estimate the resource consumption and waste assimilation requirements of a defined human population (resort) in terms of a corresponding productive land area’ (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996).