

The green concept in the hotel industry



**ASSIGN
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Tourism industry is one of the leading industries around the world. It has been proved that this industry generates billions of money and it also helps people around the world to travel and increase their knowledge about other cultures and languages. But unfortunately, after thousands of years we found out that the tourism industry have a negative impact on the environment. However, there has been awareness both for the research arena and people since decades in the protection of the environment, and the need to safeguard the natural resources for the future generation. This awareness has spread all over the world starting first in US and Europe. The green practices were put into action after the deal Mauritius made with France for the contract of 'Maurice Ile Durable'. The population of Mauritius comprising both consumers and producers have recently shown an increase concern about the environmental impact of products. Considerable attention has been directed toward green products such as organic foods, recyclable paper, phosphate-free detergents, energy-efficient lighting. Consumers make product choices based on which combination of product attributes that meet their needs based on dimensions of value, cost, and prior satisfaction (Kotler, 1997). Considering the tourism industry in Mauritius, we can say that it is the leading growth sector. Somehow the country depends a lot on this industry and same as foreign countries, Mauritius also has made a lot of evolution. Big hotels were built in every coastal area to accommodate tourists and the minister of tourism has also embellished our historical gardens and other visiting sites. It is also well known that tourists are attracted by the 3'S of our country, that is, the sea, sun and the sand. Mauritius is a small Island and we must conserve and preserve the natural resources and also protect the environment surrounding us. As mentioned above, same as in Goa, Mauritius

as well is facing serious problems concerning pollution and over use of resources. At present hotels, travelers and other tourism industries are aware of the measures that should be taken to preserve the nature together with the satisfaction of customers. This is why, nowadays it can be seen that there are hotels that are innovating into green hotels and more green hotels are built so as to be sustainable.

2. 1 The Green Concept in the hotel industry

The “ Green” concept of the hotel industry is an increase in awareness since the late 1980’s. The hotel sector is said to be one of the most energy and water intensive sectors in the tourism industry. (Bohdanowicz, 2005). When hotels are constructed there is a need to make use of the environment’s resources like the land. Hotels can operate in different parts of the environment. The facilities like comfortable services, supplies (heating, cooling, lighting, ventilation, etc) to customers are necessary for their operations. (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Han et al., 2009). All these are said to be contributions to negative impacts on the environment. However, the success of the tourism industry, as well as the hotel sector will depends on the availability of a clean environment. Hotels’ operation lead to pollution, waste, and other elements represent a threat for the environment. The “ Green” concept in this context is to turn these elements into a recycling process that will cause less harm to the environment. It is believed that hotels have produced great harm to the environment by, for example, consuming vast quantities of non – recyclable products that generate tremendous waste, consuming substantial amounts of water and energy and emitting carbon dioxide and air, water and soil pollutants (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Chan, 2005).

According to Wolfe and Shanklin (2001), the term “green”, which can alternatively be called “eco-friendly”, “environmentally responsible”, “environmentally friendly”, “sustainable” and “environmentally oriented” (Han et al., 2009; Pizam, 2009), are referred to actions (for e. g. recycling) that diminish harmful impacts on the environment.

Green hotels are therefore described as environmentally responsible hotels that actively follow environmentally friendly guidelines, practice environmental management, implement diverse eco-friendly practices, institute sound green programs and commit themselves to achieving environmental improvement by displaying eco-labels or a green globe logo (Department of Environmental Protection, 2001; Green Hotel Association, 2008; Han et al., 2009, 2010; International Hotels Environmental Initiative, 1993).

There is a public concern over environmental damage and customers’ desire for environmentally oriented products have stimulated hotel operators to green their operations (Han et al., 2009; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Wolfe & Shanklin, 2001). Researchers and practitioners agree that the greening of a hotel contributes to satisfying eco-friendly customers’ green needs, avoids criticism of existing tourism practices, fulfils the requirements of government regulations and substantially decreases costs through waste reduction, water or energy conservation and recycling (Chan, 2005; Han et al., 2009; Wolfe & Shanklin, 2001).

2. 2 The Green Building

Green building is a new term which refers to environmentally friendly practices from the building design to the landscaping choice. With the introduction of sustainable development, building also need to be sustainable because buildings generate large amount of wastes from its construction and during its lifetime. And these wastes impacts on the surroundings, the environment and the people.

According to Scatterfield (2009) “ the less impact a building has on human health and the environment, the more green it is”. A green building can cost a lot at the beginning, but is profitable in the long run. It brings more benefits such as less pollution, more comfort for the employees and guests, and increase in productivity. The U. S Green Building Council (USGBC) in 2010 organised a competition with the aim to identify the “ best and brightest vision” in the designing of “ an environmentally friendly hotel suite”. The title of the competition was the sustainable Suite Design Competition. The judges have to consider several elements such as the resources efficiency of the suite (water, energy and materials), the guest room overall attributes, innovation nad aesthetic and lastly the cost associated with the design of the suite. The winner’s name was “ Haptik”. The techniques developed by Haptik concerns the saving of energy in the room by using the PIS which is the passive infrared sensors. The PIS switch off light automatically when nobody is in the room. Haptik utilized the Trombe wall in the bathroom which uses sunlight to heat the water. A model of the suite was shown to the public during the HD Expo 2010.

2. 2. 1 The Green Building Certificate

There are several certifications given to hotel all over the world to encourage them to move towards eco friendly attitude. The certification includes specific norms from energy saving to waste water disposal. Having a certification is often considered as a marketing tool also. The certifications are often internationally known.

2. 3 The Green Tourist

Nowadays, tourists are showing preferences for destinations that protect and preserve the environment. In the literature there has been a tendency to use the terms green and sustainable interchangeably. However, there are very distinct differences between the two. Green is defined as a product or service that is both environmentally and socially responsible. It is accountable to and respectful of the places and people that provide and use them (Mc Laren, 2006). Sustainable is defined as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland, 1987). Green Tourism is defined by the Green Association as travel and exploration within and around an area that offers visitors enjoyment and appreciation of the area's natural assets and cultural resources, while inspiring physically active, intellectually stimulating and socially interactive experiences (Blackstone Corporation, 1996). The United Nations designated the year 2000 as the international year of Ecotourism. Eco tourists or green tourists attempt to travel in a manner not harmful to the environment. To travel green means to travel responsibly while conserving the environment and minimizing the social, cultural and ecological impacts, a green tourist enables other people to visit

the same place later and still enjoy the same experience. Green tourism is informative because travelers learn their destination and local people learn what to appreciate what they have to offer. It supports the integrity of the place because conscientious travelers seek out things that are characteristic of the locality in terms of architecture, cuisine, heritage or environment. Quality not quantity should be the goal of Green Tourism, therefore permanence and richness of experience is what both parties are striving for.

According to environmentalists, the “ Green” Practice was put into action when the view of the Earth was broadcasted through satellites programs. From that moment itself an increase concern to protect the earth’s fragility, and there is a need to conserve and protect it. This is the result in an increase of awareness of the following terms like; the ozone layer, greenhouse effect and acid rain. (Walker, 2000). Despite the complexities surrounding green behavior the tourism industry is still keen to understand how the green concerns of consumers correlate to tourists and how the concerns convert to travel- or holiday-related behavior. Moreover, Peattie (2001) has claimed that although all consumers are green consumers at some point in their lives, most green purchases involve a trade-off. These compromises include paying a green premium or accepting a lower standard product or service for better eco performance. However, differences in concerns and behaviors among tourists highlight the lack of homogeneity in this market. For example, concerns about the impact of transport and conservation of wildlife tend to be more mainstream issues, whereas erosion of recreational areas by walking or riding may only concern niche market segments, such as eco-tourists, environmentally responsible tourists or

ethical tourists, which are the alternative terms given to green tourists (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2006). These differences have been explained according to four factors – ‘ awareness and knowledge of the issues; attitudes towards the environment in general; other priorities in life; information obtained from the media and pressure groups; and their health, family commitments and housing ‘ (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2006, p. 181).

Although many in the tourism industry question whether the environmental concerns of tourists influence decision making, there is evidence that some tourists may choose an airline based on their environmental management practices (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2006). They may also boycott events involving animal cruelty (for example, bull-fights) or campaign against tourism development that destroys wildlife habitats. Furthermore, the extent of change varies from one type of tourist to another. The very dark green consumers may convert their beliefs into action by not taking holidays away from home so as to prevent harm to the environment and in doing so do not become tourists. On the other hand, the ‘ not all green’ tourist may show only a passing interest by reading about the environmental issues caused by tourism (Hornermand Swarbrooke, 2006).

2. 4 Attitudes towards the Green Practice

Over the last few decades, protecting the environment has been a major issue in our society (Easterling et al., 1996). Recognizing the seriousness of ecological problems, people have become increasingly environmentally conscious. This ecological awareness has led an increasing number of individuals to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors in their everyday lives. (Kalafatis et al., 1999; Laroche et al., 2001). In addition, Amyx et al.

(1994) has focused on the perceived importance of the environment to the degree to which individuals express their consciousness of environmental issues. In conceptualizing the perceived importance of the environment as the primary indicator of attitudes toward environmentally compatible behaviors, Laroche et al. (2001) determined the levels of these attitudes by whether individuals considered eco-friendly behaviors to be essential to themselves or the entire society. This ATGB mainly involves the perceived importance or inconvenience of environmental consciousness, the severity of environmental problems, and the level of responsibility of corporations (Laroche et al., 2001; McCarty and Shrum, 1994; Roberts, 1996). In other words, individuals' ATGB can be established by the level of their awareness of these dimensions of ATGB for themselves and for society as a whole. Some researchers has also pointed out that only a small portion of environmentally conscious customers actually purchases eco-friendly products in the marketplace because of high monetary and non-monetary costs and inconvenience (Maibach, 1993; Roberts, 1996).

However, numerous findings indicated that more environmental concern tends to result in more environmentally friendly buying behaviors (e. g., Kalafatis et al., 1999; Laroche et al., 2001; Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). Consumers may be willing to purchase environmentally-friendly products but are faced with constraints or conflicts that create a resistance to adopting pro-environmental behavior. For example, consumers may want to be environmentally responsible but still want to maintain their existing life-style (Schwartz, 1990; McDaniel and Rylander, 1993). They may not be prepared to sacrifice convenience (Simon, 1992; Stern, 1999), accept lower

performance levels, or pay a price premium (Peattie, 1999b). Based on Ajzen's (1988) theory of planned behaviour consumers' environmental purchasing intentions and behaviour may be influenced by a number of factors, such as the individual's knowledge and motivation, the ability to perform the behaviour and the opportunity to behave in an environmentally-friendly way (Pieters, 1989; O'lander and Thøgersen, 1995).

2. 5 Tourists' willingness to buy Green Products

Products are defined as "environmentally friendly" if in some way they aim at reducing a product's negative environmental impact. Some authors have suggested that the failure to reassure consumers on the product's functional performance was partly attributable to the early "failure" of many environmentally-friendly products (e. g. Davis, 1993; Ottman, 1999).

Although it has been found that some consumers may, for example, accept a lower functional performance in order to buy a product that delivers environmental benefits, the environmental benefit in itself is neither the primary benefit sought nor the primary motivation for purchase (Speer, 1997; Ottman, 2001). As Wong et al. (1996) observed: "'Green' is seldom the over-riding determinant of product or brand choice but just another benefit or attribute that adds value, usually a 'feel good' factor to the overall product. (Wong et al., 1996, p. 269).

Some marketers appear to have overlooked this and assumed that an environmental positioning alone was sufficient to guarantee product success (Ottman, 1995). Product performance appears to play a key role in influencing consumer adoption and retention of environmental products. So, when there is consumer skepticism of the relative performance of

environmental products or a performance gap exists (i. e. consumer expectations of the product's performance have not matched up to the in-use experience), this may strongly influence the product's acceptance (Wong et al., 1996). Within the hotel sector, increasing numbers of customers prefer to choose a green lodging facility that follows environmentally friendly practices, showing concern about the seriousness of ecological degradation (Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). In recognition of this eco-friendly consumption need, nowadays many hotel firms seek to incorporate customers' emerging concerns about the environment in their management or a marketing decision-making (Bohdanowicz, 2006; Lee, Hsu, Han, & Kim, 2010; Mensah, 2006). Altering their hotel operations to be green (i. e. significantly reducing environmental impacts) is becoming a necessity to attain noticeable improvement in their competitiveness in the market (Han, Hsu, & Lee, 2009; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). One of the most credible pieces of evidence demonstrating the increase of environmentally friendly customer behaviors is the increased number of customers who have a strong intention to pay more for green products (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). In the hotel context, in reality, green hotel prices do not significantly differ from those of comparable conventional (or non-green) hotels (Han et al., 2009; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). The green hotel operators' interest is in whether travelers are willing to pay comparable regular-hotel prices for their hotel, perhaps sacrificing little conveniences while staying at their green hotel (reusing towels, limited use of disposable products, use of recycled products/furniture, recycling bins, buffet-style foods without garnishes, meeting tables without tablecloths, minimized decor, non-smoking areas, dispensers for soap/shampoo, etc.). For

consumers who are more receptive to environmental products and purchase them through choice, there may be a segment that are willing to pay more for the environmental benefit. But, whilst some authors suggest that consumers are willing-to-pay more for an environmentally-friendly products (Kassarjian, 1971; Freeman, 1989; Klein, 1990; McCloskey, 1990; Kapelianis et al., 1996; Laroche et al., 2001), others suggest otherwise (Wood, 1990; Simon, 1992; Sims, 1993). Marketplace examples also suggest that in reality consumers are not always prepared to pay the premium prices suggested by research (Fuller, 1999). Although our knowledge about consumers' acceptance of paying a higher price for environmentally-friendly products appears to be inconsistent and inconclusive, it has often been found that consumers will pay on average around 5 percent more (Schwartz, 1990; Kapelianis et al., 1996; Speer, 1997).

2. 6 Cost of going green in the hotel industry

With a broadly point of view, there are two approaches in the environmental cost analysis. One emphasizes the costs associated with environmental damage and its remediation, the other stresses on the price of control. In practice, this damage costing approach faces some essential problems in estimating the environmental impact as described by Bernow at al. (1991). Hotel developers still face specific barriers in developing and operating green properties, such as finding vendors, contractors, engineers, housekeepers, landscapers and managers that understand new systems, products and procedures. Complicating matters for hotels is to cover the typical hotel management and franchise agreements. The highly structures arrangements negotiated between hotels owners and hotel managers have not yet

addressed a number of issues raised by green development, redevelopment or operation that affects the bottom line of both entities.

Finally, there is the issue of meeting the expectations of paying guests.

Although we believe guests expect hotels to operate in an environmentally conscious fashion, it may also be that those same guests may have unrealistic expectations of luxury and comfort in terms of green operation.

To take simple example, do hotels still need to put out individual shampoo bottles and does the spa need to smell faintly like chlorine to satisfy guests' expectations. The costs arising from the implementation of ISO 14001 include those associated with initial set up, maintenance and improvement (Chin et al., 1998). The price of initial set up refers to all costs associated with the provision of hardware and software facilities, plus tools for establishing the system in compliance with the ISO 14000 EMS standards.