

Perception of Guest on Green Practices– A Key Analysis to Promote Marketing in Hotel Sector

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ABSTRACT

Past few decades green hotel have become one among the attributes in the selection of hotels. Guests are more concerned about their stay in a hotel with eco friendly practices. The current study guesstimates the perception of hotel guest towards the eco friendly practices in accommodation operations, and in turn its promotion in room sales in hotel sector. A structured questionnaire with three sections covering the profile of the hotel, demographic constituents of the guest, and questions revealing the perception facts of guest about the eco practices in accommodation operation is used to survey the guest staying in hotels located in and around Chennai. The analysis was performed by descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of variance in Statistical data analysis tool (SPSS, Version 20.0). On the basis of the results, it was analysed that the guest strongly agree that the procedures and practice at accommodation operation department are oriented towards the eco-practices and suggest the hoteliers to include as a marketing tool in promoting the sales percentage.

Keywords: Eco Practices, Guest, Perception, Green Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, the fourth largest industry has a greater impact on the world's economy. Tourism in India is progressing in an enormous phase and accounts for about 7.5 percent of the GDP, which is expected to reach US\$160.2 billion by 2026. Among the key drivers promoting hospitality industry, tourism plays a pivotal role¹. An increase in business raises the demand on energy supplies, burden on solid waste management and pollution.

Accommodation Operation department are responsible for the service of hygienic, healthy, safety and security environment to the guest during their stay. Eco hotels can be stated as hotel being environmental friendly, taking measures and following rules in saving the natural resources and minimizing waste disposals. Most of the guest prefers to stay in green environmental friendly hotels. Eco friendly concepts are considered one among the attributes in selecting a hotel.

According to Accor Asia Pacific Business Traveller Survey 2011, it has been noted that the 66 % of Indian travellers prefer to stay in environmental friendly hotels and are even ready to pay a 10% more than their actual

for an eco friendly stay.² Practicing eco procedures have become a reputation of hotels in improving their standards. Hotels have started initiating these practices to retain their guest.

The study was done in Chennai, TamilNadu ranking first among the states of India in possessing green buildings. Chennai acquires 42 green building and 57 more awaiting certification.³ The novelty and main part of this study is to analyse the perception among the guest regarding eco friendly practices followed at accommodation operation department in hotels and its influence in guest. This study interprets the perception of the guest towards the eco practices which acts as a key analysis and allows the industry to fine tune their green marketing approach and provoke their business activities. Thus this eco friendly practice and procedures indirectly plays a marketing role by satisfying the guest preference on eco components on a higher scale that incite the guest in selecting the hotel.

METHOD

The study has been conducted during February and March 2016, across hotels in Chennai. The respondents

were the guest staying in these hotels. A questionnaire was developed with three sections first exhibiting the location, name, category of the property, the purpose of visit and length of stay. Secondly the section describes the demographic factors such as the gender, age, educational level of the guest.

Third section consists of 20 questions where the guest was requested to rate their perception about the accommodation operation department on how they carry out the eco friendly practices in the rooms during their stay on a day to day procedures and their opinion about the recommending the hotel to their business circle. The guest rates the policies and practices according to their view using a 5 point likert scale which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The questions include awareness of the guest towards the practices followed in the rooms of the hotel. The hotel using the resource saving practices like usage of automatic infrared sensors for water conservation. Solar panels and usage of natural lighting than electricity, the equipments used are eco friendly, the supplies and cleaning agents are bio degradable, adapting the norms while disposing waste from the department. Employees in the departments are equipped, knowledgeable and follow the eco friendly procedures. The responsibility of the hotel is to create awareness to the guest staying in the property towards the eco friendly concepts. Opinions about the guest whether the green hotel acts as an attribute during hotel selection and their recommendation about the hotel to their business sector friends.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Globalization has made the world smaller which puts a lime light on today's reality. Every action of mankind has a positive or negative reaction on our planet. Plundering of natural resources has made much adverse reaction. Ecotels are the hotels which adopt the eco-friendly concepts in upgrading and market themselves as a green hotel. Eco friendly hotels or green hotels maybe defined as the hotels with the concepts of developing a sustainable operation. Cheng-Jui Tseng(2013)⁴ stated that, the green concepts is based on developing a green living and reducing the ecological impact on the environment. Eco practices have been considered one among the selection attributes among the guest, this made the hoteliers to take a step forward in implementing these practices in their hotels. (Michelle Millar (2008))⁵

Guest perception is an intangible factor with regard to hospitality industry which could be positive or negative and difficult to assess (Patrik Hellstrand)(2010)⁶ . They expect the hotels to be with green surrounding, renewable energy, life span of durable goods which proves the green marketing should not be in the terms of mere marketing policies, must be considered with more dynamics. (S. Punitha et.al)⁷

The department follows the practices of eco-friendly concepts developing eco-friendly amenities, commodities, adopting measures for power and water conservation (M.Karthick 2015)⁸. High percentage of energy is consumed for lighting which can be rectified by a measure of introducing the energy efficient bulbs with a greater life span can reduce the hotels energy consumption of 15'417'000 kWh/year. (Karim Zein et.al (2008))⁹ Accommodation operation consumes the major part of water; conservation of water is executed by the provision of good maintenance practice and introduction of water recycling plants, reduction of pressure, usage of water efficient accessories in wash rooms and laundry areas. Water recycling procedure have reduced 23% water consumption of hotel (Bruns-Smith (2015))¹⁰. High polluting materials can be avoided. Effective recycling in waste management payback an addition profit of US\$90,000 for an interval period of 7.5 months. (Karim Zein et.al (2008))⁹. Initiating these eco friendly practices in a hotels will helps to market their rooms and attract new guest and retain their old customers (Mbasera(2016))¹¹. Thus the practice of eco measures always proves profitability to business.

Marketing is not a mere concept of advertising or promoting the products it also constitutes the policies of reducing the operating costs, thus the green hotel marketing is environmentally sensitive reduces the cost by lowering the energy usage sticking to the concepts of reusing, recycling, and reducing supplies and equipments. (Sam Ashe-Edmunds)¹²

Adopting the green practice in a hotel brings in goodwill into the guest, these practices create a safe ambience to stay which initiates the guest to select and recommend the hotel to their friends and business colleagues (Marge C. Enriquez (2012))¹³ Thus the tangible perception in guest has been changed to a positive perception towards the green hotel practices and the guests are willing even to pay more to stay in a green hotel. (Godwin-Charles Ogbeide) (2012)

Understand the present scenario the positive perception in the guest can be improved and the hoteliers can adopt new concepts into their marketing strategies that exhibit the green hotels concepts and improve the business scale. (Michelle Millar (2008)).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data were collected from the guest who stayed in hotels and were analysed using the SPSS 21.0. The Cronbach’s Alpha value is 0.804. The demographic profile of the guest were evaluated **Table 1** illustrates the demographic profile of the guest and Table 2 exhibits the guest stay profile in the hotel where the study is conducted.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Characteristics		Frequency (N = 112)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	74	66.3
	Female	38	33.9
Age	Below 30 Years	44	38.9
	31 to 40 Years	43	37.9
	Above 40 years	25	23.2
Qualification	Diploma	32	28.6
	Under Graduate	35	31.3
	Post Graduate	45	40.1

Table: 2 Guest stay profile

Characteristics		Frequency (N = 112)	Percentage (%)
Hotel Categorization	Three star	27	24.1
	Four star	54	48.2
	Five star	31	27.7
Length of Guest Stay	Below 3 days	35	31.3
	3 – 5 days	61	54.5
	Above 5 days	16	14.2
Purpose of visit	Business	74	66.1
	Personal	26	23.2
	No Response	12	10.7

Table 3 discusses the guest perception regarding the eco-friendly practice of accommodation operation department at star hotels. According to the study 48.2% of guest agrees the department is using eco friendly equipments. 76.8% of the guest agree that the hotel is following power saving measures like using LED lamps etc. 48.2% agrees that the department is interested in using the natural source of light like keeping the curtains opened in guest rooms during day times. 55.3% of guest agrees the hotels possess a water recycling plant, generally the guest are aware all hotels hold a water recycling plant and the recycled water are used for closet flushing and gardening. 89.3% of the guest agrees that the property provide them a eco-friendly supplies like disposable pens, recyclable papers and dispensers for soap liquids and shampoos. 67.9% of guest agrees the department actively follows the water conservation measures by timely and regular maintenance of fixtures and fittings usage of modern water conserving showers and taps at bathrooms.

In the table 62.5 % of guest there is an effective procedure in handling the heating or cooling equipments. 54.4% of guest agrees the hotel is aware of using cleaning agents. Organic and biodegradable cleaning agents are used. The department also promotes the practices like cleaning on request to reduce the usage of cleaning agents. With regard to solid waste handling the guest responded neutral, 65.2% have not either agreed or disagreed to the practice. 34.9% of the guest agrees that the hotel induces the guest to follow the refuse, reduce and reuse of linen. The bed making is done on guest request; towel usage at guest room is traced. 48.2% of the guest accept the department follows procedures to provide a pollution free zone, most of the cleaning is done at night, noisy equipments been replaced and quality air management system is followed. 76.8% of guest agrees that there are policies to avoid smoking by promoting no smoking rooms separate zones for smokers. 51.8% of guest accepts the employees have been trained and are aware of the eco friendly practices followed in their accommodation operation department. 83.2% of guest agree, the hotel follows a procedure in creating awareness by displaying poster at specified areas in conserving water, power consumption, water handling etc.

In the result 79.2% of the guest agrees that the visibility of eco friendly practices followed by the

accommodation operation department is clear. 44.6 % of accepts that they have been provoked to follow the eco-friendly practices and 64.4% of the guest accepts though the department is following the eco practices in their service their service quality is good to a great extend.73.3% of the guest expressed that the concept

of green hotel was also considered as one among the attribute while selecting their hotel. 81.2% of the guest responded that they will prefer to recommend the hotel to their friends in business network. Thus the study shows that the guests are acting as a marketing tool in promoting the sales of the rooms.

Table: 3 Guest perceptions on Eco-Practices at Accommodation Operation Department
SA- Strongly Agree, A – Agree, N – Neutral, D – Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Eco Practices	Characteristics	Frequency (N=112)	Percentage (%)
Usage of eco-friendly equipments in the department	SD/D	16	14.1
	N	42	37.5
	SA/ A	54	48.2
Power saving Measures – (eg) Usage of LED bulbs	SD/D	12	10.7
	N	14	12.5
	SA/ A	86	76.8
Utilizing the natural light energy	SD/D	20	17.9
	N	38	33.9
	SA/ A	54	48.2
Water Recycling Plant	SD/D	15	13.4
	N	35	31.3
	SA/ A	62	55.3
Provision of Eco-Friendly Guest Supplies	SD/D	11	9.8
	N	1	0.9
	SA/ A	100	89.3
Water conservation measures practiced by the department	SD/D	15	13.4
	N	21	18.7
	SA/ A	76	67.9
Effective Heating/Cooling procedures	SD/D	12	10.7
	N	30	26.8
	SA/ A	70	62.5
Usage of biodegradable products for cleaning practices.	SD/D	34	30.5
	N	17	15.1
	SA/ A	61	54.4
Solid Waste Handling	SD/D	17	15.2
	N	73	65.2
	SA/ A	22	19.6
Linen usage – Refuse / Reduce/ Reuse	SD/D	18	16..0
	N	55	49.1
	SA/ A	39	34.9
Pollution control measures followed	SD/D	16	14.3
	N	42	37.5
	SA/ A	54	48.2

Contd...

Measures towards no smoking practice	SD/D	12	10.7
	N	14	12.5
	SA/ A	74	76.8
Employees knowledge toward eco practices in department	SD/D	27	24.1
	N	27	24.1
	SA/ A	58	51.8
Eco-Friendly awareness posters and displays	SD/D	12	10.7
	N	7	6.1
	SA/ A	93	83.2
Visibility of eco Practices by the department	SD/D	14	12.5
	N	9	8.3
	SA/ A	89	69.2
Provoking guest responsibilities towards eco-friendly procedures	SD/D	20	17.8
	N	42	37.6
	SA/ A	50	44.6
Overall service of service by Accommodation Operation department	SD/D	10	8.9
	N	30	26.7
	SA/ A	72	64.4
Green practice was considered as a selecting attribute while booking a hotel	SD/D	27	24.1
	N	3	2.6
	SA/ A	82	73.3
Recommend this hotel to friends and business network	SD/D	12	10.7
	N	9	8.3
	SA/ A	91	81.2

The data was statically analysed with person correlation and the result was obtained 0.294 and it showed that the Measures Taken for Pollution Control and Non Smoking Practices in hotel are positively and highly correlated and significant at 0.01 level.

The analysis also show there is a highly positive correlation (0.391significant value at 0.01) between the posters displayed by the hotel management and the awareness created among the guest.

CONCLUSION

The study show signs of perception by guest towards the eco-friendly practices constituting water conservation, energy saving, waste handling and pollution control measures. 69.2% of the guest accepts the eco- practices followed in hotel could be easily viewed in the policies and daily operational practices. 73.3% of guest have responded that the stay in a green hotel as a one among the attribute in selection of hotel. This exhibits that there is a positive perception among

the guest with regard to the eco practices. 81.2% of the guest showed interest to recommend the hotel to their friends and business colleagues reveal that the guest himself acts as a marketing tool, this positive perception among the guest could be utilized by the hoteliers in promoting their business scale.

Limitation and Future Recommendations:

The limitations were the area of study was limited to star hotels only in Chennai and the study population were the guest staying in star hotel and their access was not much easier as the hoteliers were not interested in disturbing their guest. This study can be recommended in other states in India.

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Ethical Clearance: NIL

Conflicts of Interest: Conflict of interest declared none.

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