

# **Sustainable Practices in 5- star Hotels and Perception of Employees on the Effectiveness of Sustainable Practices.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*“The world is focussed to minimise the negative impacts on earth and implement sustainable practices as sustainability will be a question if we don’t respond.”The world is facing many challenges like Poverty, Climate change, Hunger, Scarcity of Clean water, Greenhouses gases etc. The world leaders, organisations and individuals had come together to address the above issues with sustainable goals. They are constantly bringing in new policies and procedures to align every activity to attain sustainable goals. Hotels are taking a keen interest in adopting sustainable practices to reduce the negative impact of their operations in the areas of Environment, Social and Economic. Major Chain hotels are changing their focus from profit to responsible and sustainable business. International, National hotel chains and independent hotels have been reworking on their policies, Products ,processes and mind-set of guests, Employees and Suppliers to create a sustainable environment and business. There has been a significant change in hotel operations which created appreciable results in the hotels' path to reach sustainable goals. Besides hotels taking initiatives, Guests awareness, increasing demand for Green hotels, Government Policies and changed mind set of people resulted in significant changes in Products and Processes of hotels. Hotels have been effective in ensuring their operations are sustainable in the areas consumption, Production, Clean Energy, Waste Management, and Education. However, there is a scope for improvement and consistency in implementing sustainable Practices. The main objective of this study is to identify the various sustainable practices followed by hotels and know the perception of employees on how effective the hotels sustainable Practices are.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Practices, Environmental, Economic, Social factors, Education, Mindset.

**Introduction:** In the Year 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” More than 140 developing countries in the world are seeking ways to meet their development needs by keeping in mind the sustainability of the various resources and with an effort to ensure development today does not negatively affect future generations. (Academic Impact)

According to estimations, an average hotel releases between 160 and 200 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per square meter of room floor area per year and water consumption per guest per night is between 170 and 440 l in the average five-star hotel. On average, hotels produce 1 kg of waste per guest per night. This clearly states that the hotels create significant negative impact on the Environment and its operations have adverse on the environment. (Adesina & Ngozi, 2013).

Hotels uses various resources /energies like water, Heat, Electrical, Air, Fuels for its day to day operations like cleaning the areas and laundry ,Heating the water ,to lit the different areas with electricity and to cook various dishes with fuels like gas etc. (Reckoska, Reckoski, & Vasileska, 2008)These natural resources and other energies add Co<sub>2</sub> emissions, reduce the supply and disrupt sustainability. Therefore, The Hotels have started focussing on the importance of sustainability in the hospitality industry as it leads to development in the operations of the hotel and also contribute to better environmental, economic and social impact. (Stottler, 2018)

The Hotels have adopted sustainable practices to reduce the negative impact of their activities in the areas of Environment, Social and Economic .The Hotels are moving from traditional thinking to provide the best luxury to responsible Luxury. The Hotels have adopted many initiatives like Water Conservation, Waste Management, Reduce, Recycle and Reuse of various resources or energies and products to better contribute to their hotels Sustainable Goals.

## **Objectives**

- To determine the Sustainable practices followed in hotels
- To find out the perception of the effectiveness of sustainable practices from employees

**Literature review:** Sustainable development has been intensely debated for more than twenty years, but the real progress of our societies to become more sustainable is very slow. Therefore

this special issue provides a forum for critical perspectives of Sustainable Development Research and Practice. The main goal of sustainability research should be to contribute to our understanding of sustainability problems and to develop and help to implement viable solutions.(J.Baumgartner, 05,2011)

ITC Hotels have adopted Responsible Luxury concept to ensure luxury without compromising the earth and sustainability, Ensuring environmentally sustainable and responsible practices not hampering the guest experience. They have adopted elimination of single plastic use in all hotels. Sunya Aqua where the hotel have its own bottling Unit to serve water to guests,Radiation Harmoniser to reduce the radiation and many other initiatives to follow the sustainable practices. (H C Vinayaka, 2019).

The Accor Hotels have future targets like 30% less in food waste, 100% low-carbon new buildings and renovations for its owned and leased properties, 1,000 urban vegetable gardens in its hotels and many more initiatives to contribute for sustainability goals of the brand and of the world.(Accor , 2016). Accor has decided to remove all single-use plastic items from guest experience in our hotels by 2022. They want to accelerate their efforts. Accor has joined with UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Pledge in partnership with Expedia Group to contribute and accelerate their sustainable goals.(Webintravel, 2021)

Sustainability can be defined as the practice of maintaining world processes of productivity indefinitely—natural or human-made—by replacing resources used with resources of equal or greater value without degrading or endangering natural biotic systems. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by humanity. (Nova Synergy)

We are Custodians of the Planet as stated by Shangrila Hotels ,They have been following many practices to reduce the 4% Co2 emissions: 2% Carbon Footprint(2018 vs 2019).They have 17 LEED Certified Hotels and many green certified green buildings and certifications (Shangrila, 2019).

Mark Hoplamazian, president/CEO States “ our purpose—we care for people so they can be their best—guides all business decisions, including our global sustainability framework, which focuses on using resources responsibly and helping address today’s most pressing environmental issues.”The recent global initiatives are removing plastic straws and drink picks and making

alternative options available only by request at Hyatt hotels, and increasing the use of compostable, recyclable or recycled content packaging for to-go food containers. (Hotel Business, 2019)

Sustainable development is a matter of great concern to both nations and individuals alike. Whereas in the late 1980s sustainable development was perceived as a matter of concern only to nations, there has been an increased awareness about the fact that it permeates all parts of our lives. Some of the trends related to the evolution of sustainable development can be seen among various sectors. Due to their relevance, universities are uniquely placed to pass on the messages of sustainable development to a wide audience. (Filho, 2010)

This paper describes especially the evolution of the concept of sustainable development and process behind its establishment at the university level, including an analysis of the problems related to it and their roots. It also states what universities need to do in order to claim excellence in the field of sustainable development, listing a set of criteria that need to be fulfilled in order to achieve this goal.

## **Research Methodology:**

### Data Collection

- The Main objective of this survey is to investigate the sustainable practices in five-star hotels in India. A descriptive research questionnaire is administered among the employees of the Hotels.
- An Interview with employees of hotels at different levels are conducted to get future ideas and in-depth information about sustainable Practices.
- Likert scale with five parameters is designed to obtain respondents perception of effectiveness of hotels sustainable Practices.
- The data was received from 60 respondents working in five 5 star Hotels in the online questionnaire .Apart from these responses, Interviews with Top Senior Officials in the hotels also contributed to more information and future plan of action their hotels for sustainable development

## **Findings:**

The responses are obtained from employees of major hotel chains like ITC Hotels, TAJHotels, AccorHotels, Hyatt Hotel and Trident Hotels etc.

The Hotels and Staff have shown great commitment to sustainable practices and have been constantly working towards attaining the best practices for sustainable development.

The hotels also are certified with organisations which are leaders in guiding, measuring and recognising sustainable practices of hotels .Few certifications are listed below:

- Planet 21
- Earth
- LEED

In addition to certifications, Hotels have shown a great level of commitment by adopting sustainable practices in the following areas

### **Water Conservation:**

- Water Meters are installed to understand, monitor and control the consumption of water for various operations.
- Upgrade to cold and low-water laundry detergents.
- Reutilisation of treated water for Flushing, Cooling Tower, Horticultureetc.
- Water should be poured and served in the glasses directly instead of usage of bottled water in order to reduce water wastage. Some Hotels fill only half a glass of water
- Monitor and rectify the Leakages in Plumbing fixtures with immediate effect to reduce water waste.
- Use of Water Efficient Faucets, flush fixtures and shower fixtures such as short and long flushes etc.
- Aerators are installed in plumbing fixtures.
- Rain water harvesting pits are used for use of the water in certain areas.

- Use drought-tolerant plants, which require less amount of water in your landscape to reduce irrigation costs, and schedule watering at mornings and evenings to reduce evaporation of water.
- Waterless Urinals

### **Energy conservation**

- Installment of solar energy panels to utilise the most of solar energy.
- Direct Day light is used to keep the areas lit in hotel
- Get everyone involved and train them about the various methods of conserving energy.
- Laundry cycle reduction, which consequently results in conservation of energy.
- Installation of prominent and upgraded technological equipment's like sensors, LED lightings etc. Sensors: - Automatically switching off lights within 30 seconds in guest rooms post removal of Key card from Switch.
- Implement incentive programs with rewards for employees who come up with the best ideas or those who make exceptional contributions to the environmental conservation efforts in the hotel.
- Use cold water whenever possible
- Make use of alternative power sources
- Purchase detergent that gets activated at low temperature.
- Proper use and Maintenance of equipment's to reduce loss of energy-Boilers, Scrubbing and polishing machines, Refrigeration units, etc.

### **Waste management**

- Using refillable dispensers for soaps, shampoos, and conditioners
- Using washable cloth products and re-usable dishware instead of disposable ones.
- Using water filters instead of plastic bottles
- To reduce food waste, Hotels have made a NO Bin day where in staff has no option to waste the food whereas in other hotels Rs 50 is charged if food is wasted by staff.
- Reducing and reusing supplies packaging materials

- Reducing the number of paper products
- Use vendors who deliver chemicals and other products in returnable and/or reusable containers, boxes and crates.
- Extend the life of draperies by rotating them to expose different portions to sunlight
- Prepare right quantity of food to avoid wastage.
- Donate Leftover foods and half used Soaps to NGOs
- Recycle restaurant and Kitchen oil & grease
- Eliminate bottled water in restaurants through high-tech, on-site water filtration system (Natural Water) wherever possible
- Box lunch program; available in Eco-friendly recycled boxes.
- Plastic straws replaced with paper and wooden straws and issued only on request.
- Proper Segregation of Food Waste.
- Use Organic Waste Converter for food waste and use the manure for plants or to sell
- Avoid Printing where ever possible and using both sides of the paper.

### **Awareness on Sustainable Practices**

- Linen change cards are printed with a message – Example, A linen change card is placed next to the bedside table for the guest to indicate change of linen on the bed /bath.
- Monthly Meetings and sharing sustainability practices during the Induction of new employees
- Awareness Through TV's in Guest Rooms and in all operations areas
- Create a "green team" of employees to coordinate implementation of new practices, and to help in analysing what is purchased, how to use products more efficiently, what to throw away, and what steps to take to save money and reduce waste.
- Display of the decorations made from waste and avoiding usage of plastic.
- Installing notices, pictures, carbon footprint calculator awareness cards in guest rooms etc.

## **Use and Purchase of Materials, Resources**

- Purchase of Biodegradable or environmental friendly Products – Pesticides, Laundry agents, Cleaning Agents.
- Design Materials Purchase and use policies keeping in mind Sustainability and to reduce negative impact on earth environment.
- Less Impact on Air quality – Paints, Fuels, Refrigerants and products with reduced carbon emissions.
- Purchase of locally produced products to reduce carbon emission through Freight.
- Purchase and use of products like wood, meatsetc., which are not threatened to exploitation.
- Staffing the hotel with a certain percent of Human resource staying within a certain radius to reduce the carbon emission by transportation.

## **Other Practices:**

- ITC Hotels have been using Radiation Harmoniser to reduce the effect of Electro Magnetic Radiations from Mobiles and Wireless Technologies to ensure better health for Staff and Guests
- Use locally produced products and recycled products at different stages of hotels construction.
- Hotels plant Trees to compensate for their carbon emissions and also to reduce heat, provide shade in the hotels areas resulting in less consumption of energy for cooling and maintain air quality.
- Avoid food products especially meats of endangered species.
- Avoid Wood from forests causing an imbalance.

A Perceptual survey is conducted to understand the perception of employees in the effectiveness of various sustainable practices followed in their hotels .The results are shown in a Pie Diagrams and data is interpreted accordingly.



**Fig 1.1: Effectiveness of Hotel design in comparison with benchmark hotel designs in sustainable practices.**

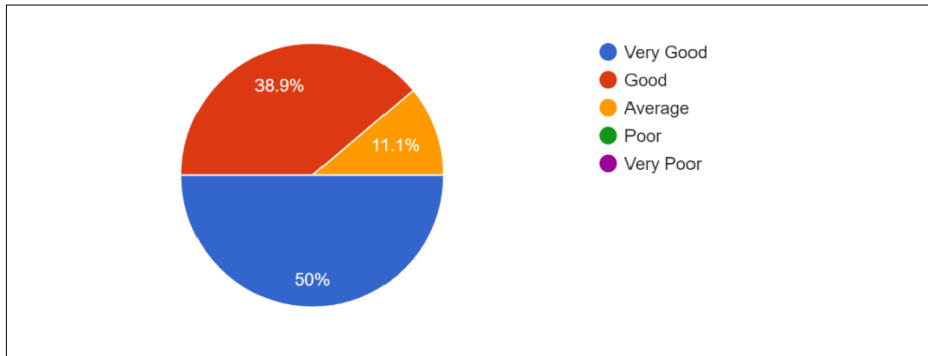


Fig 1.1: Nearly 90% felt their hotels designs are effective to latest sustainable designs whereas around 11 percent felt the design is average.

**Fig 1.2 Staff are properly trained, Monitored in sustainable practices**

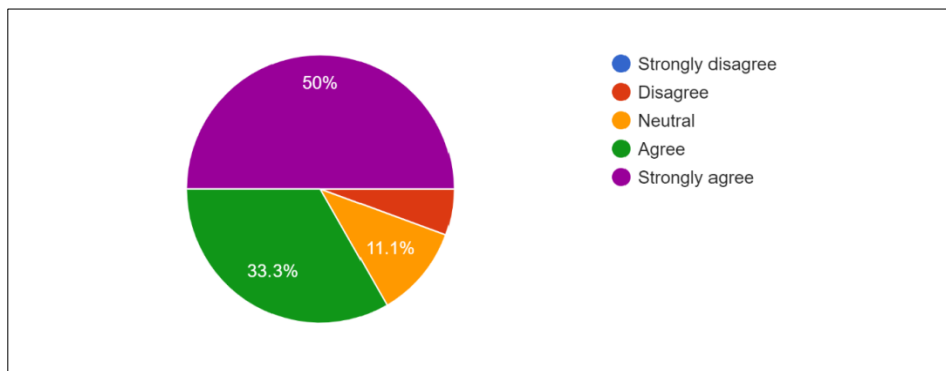


Fig 1.2 Interpretation: More than 83% percent of employees agree that employees are trained and monitored .However 11% response is neutral and around 6% disagree.

**Fig 1.3: The SOPs of the hotel are designed effectively considering sustainable practices.**

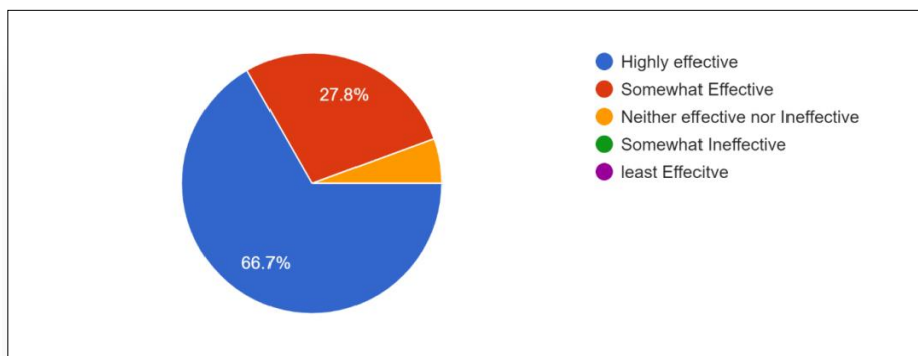


Fig: 1.3 Interpretation: More than 66% of the respondents felt their hotels SOPs are designed effectively considering sustainable practices and nearly 27% responded as somewhat effective while others it was neutral.

### **Recommendations:**

- A lot of awareness needs to be created among the staff, guests to change their mind set to reduce and avail services which would hamper sustainability
- Monitor, Appreciate and incentivise the guests, staff taking keen interest in sustainable practices.
- Adopt the practices, technology and have a strategy for future sustainable goals.(ITC Hotels Division's Approach)
- Leaders of the world, Hoteliers, Guests, Staff and every citizen needs to understand the effect of their actions on Environment .They should think how best they can balance their needs and wants which will reduce the negative impact on mother earth.
- SOP's adopted and Hotel design has to be effective in contributing to sustainable practices

### **Conclusion:**

Hotels have been contributing to sustainability in every possible way .The leaders, Guests and hoteliers have witnessed nature's warnings and disasters due to exploitation of the resources of the Mother earth. Despite the various challenges the current business world encounters, most of the hotels and guests started have committed to play their role responsibly in many of the following ways

**Waste management**– Purchase products which reduce waste – STP Plants, Waste Segregation, Proper Disposal Procedures, Composting and converting kitchens food waste to manure, Donate leftover food to NGOs.

**Water Conservation** – Efficient plumbing fixtures, Reduce, Recycle, Reuse in laundry, Horticulture, Supply of water for Rooms and other areas as required.

**Energy Conversation**- Using energy efficient lightings, machinery ,Sensors to switch on/off lights other equipment's automatically ,Use of day light, Solar energy etc.

**Awareness Creation**– On Websites, Tent cards and posters in Rooms and other locations in hotels, Training, Appreciation and incentive programs designed accordingly.

**Use or Purchase of Appropriate Materials and Resources:**

- Bio degradable products, less harmful cleaning agents, efficient Machinery and Products, Avoidance of Single Use Plastics, Local Purchase of Products.
- Employee’s perceptual survey illustrates majority of hotels design and sops are effective and few expressed that hotels have still scope for improvement in design of hotels and Procedure in SOPs.
- Employees also felt trainings and monitoring is effective and the results show that certain employees still find hotels’ training and monitoring can be more effective.

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