

## **A Study of Customer Awareness of Sustainability Initiatives taken at Star Category Hotels in Hinjewadi Area of Pune**

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**Abstract:** Sustainability has become a critical business issue for all industries. The growing worldwide tourism industry and its potential impact on the environment has become a hot topic within the global hospitality industry. There has been an increase in the consciousness of sustainability issues over the last decades amongst hoteliers and investors. They have started to consider the impact on the environment and society of hotel development and operations and sustainability issues are now being considered in most aspects of the hotel industry. This study reviews sustainable initiatives undertaken by various international and Indian hotels. A primary research was conducted to understand the awareness of customers regarding various sustainable initiatives carried out at hotel properties of star category (Sayaji, Gateway, Raddison Blu, Holiday Inn and Courtyard), of Hinjewadi area in Pune and whether knowledge regarding the same will have any impact on their purchase decision.

**Keywords:** HVS-Hotel Valuations and Appraisals, O& M-Operations and Maintenance, LFC-Liquid Food Composter, LEED-Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

### **Introduction**

Goldstein, of HVS said that green in hospitality boils down to the amount of utilities being consumed or waste being produced by a hospitality property each year, and how that can be reduced. Utility savings, lead to reductions in property O&M costs, and that, in turn, leads to operating profitability, which can lead to increases in property valuations. In today's uncertain economic climate, hotel brands are looking to increase efficiency by using energy management systems to better integrate hotel systems. Cost savings, laws, pressure from the public, customer awareness or increased environmental awareness could all be reasons for hotels to incorporate more sustainable practices to decrease their negative impact on the environment and society. (Sloan *et al.*, 2013). Hoteliers moving to use energy management will essentially save on heating and cooling when guests are not in the room, and reset extreme settings either too high or too low depending on the outside temperature. Individuals and organizations alike are each responsible for the footprint they leave on their neighbourhoods, communities, and world. Therefore, hotels should enhance their sustainable initiatives by increasing awareness and by active customer engagement for reducing the carbon footprint.

### **Various Initiatives by International Hotels**

#### **Intercontinental Hotel Group**

Some initiatives taken by hospitality majors like IHG's in-house sustainability program, Green Engage, has been awarded Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design precertification. At

the hotel level, green engagement includes electrical usages as well as gas and water. IHG says Green Engage delivers its hotels over \$90,000 in annual energy savings and makes their hotels 15 to 20 percent more efficient. New builds are being designed with better sustainability in mind.

### **Starwood**

Starwood's 2020 initiative, which commits the company to reducing energy consumption by 30 percent and water consumption by 20 percent by the year 2020. Starwood sustainability efforts encompass trying to minimize the use of water and energy and the generation of waste and pollution, seeking to enhance indoor environmental quality and pushing to raise environmental awareness among associates, guests and communities. Data from 2015 found that Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, for example, reduced its energy use by 12.08 percent, carbon emissions by 16.07 percent and water use by 17.26 percent across all its properties between 2008 and 2014.

### **JW Marriott**

The JW Marriott Marquis Miami continues its commitment to sustainability by investing in state-of-the-art technology with Power Knot's Liquid Food Composter (LFC). The Liquid Food Composter digests food waste in a clean, sanitary and odourless manner. As a result, it reduces the hotel's carbon footprint by eliminating the amount of waste sent to landfills and decreasing the amount of methane gases released into the environment. It digests all food within 24 hours and then converts it into nutrient-rich grey water that can be released down the drain or used for landscape maintenance. J W Marriot other green initiatives are water conservation through low-flow plumbing fixtures, linen reuse programs, the installation of energy star appliances and programmable thermostats, and the use of green cleaners and high-efficiency air filters throughout the hotel.

### **Indian Context**

India is emerging as a major global tourism hub and green practices are being increasingly adopted by hotels. The hotels have adopted practices like LEED standards in the construction of hotels use of local products, wind energy devices, compact fluorescent lamps to reuse of linens and installation of green roofs, solar heaters. One of the direct benefits of environmental initiatives in a hotel is cost savings. In fact, there have been instances where energy consumptions have been brought down by 40% in certain hotels. The examples of sustainability in India hotels are as follows

- The Park, Hyderabad is one of the first hotels in India to be LEED certified. This LEED Gold certified hotel continues to draw visitors from around the world. The 270 room flagship property of The Park Hotel's chain of boutique hotels is considered one of the finest luxury hotels in the country.
- The Orchid Hotel in Mumbai is Asia's first certified Five Star Ecotel Hotel. The hotel management has various initiatives in the areas of, energy efficiency, water

conservation, solid waste management, environmental commitment and employee environmental education and community. An vermiculture area has been set up in the premises to decompose and convert waste into organic manure. The hotel also uses energy efficient lighting such as LED and CFL. Solar panels have also been installed on the roof of the hotel. The specially designed aerators, taps and special flushes which reduce water consumption are another green feature incorporated in the design of this trendsetting hotel.

- The Raintree hotels in Chennai are another good example of green hotels. The wood that has been used in the construction of the hotel includes medium density fiber, bamboo and rubber wood. The management of the hotel has also ensured that they use cement containing a significant percent of fly ash in the construction of the hotel. Similarly, the hotel has installed a water device called the 'George Fisher Concealed Cistern' which uses only six liters of water per flush, as compared to 15-20 liters in the case of a conventional flush. The water that is recycled by the sewage treatment plant at the hotel is used in the air conditioners. The heat that is generated by the air conditioners in the hotel is used to warm the water in the bathrooms.
- ITC Hotels, one of the topmost hotel chains in the country, has for instance has come out with its 'Welcom Environ' initiative, which has been started in order to propagate environmental causes in the cities where the company's hotels are located. The guiding principle behind the initiative is 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'. Each one of the hotels under the initiative has its own programme, encompassing local participation, creating awareness among employees and internal conservation through energy saving gadgets and environment friendly material.
- Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces have implemented the Environmental Awareness and Renewal (EARTH) program, a project which began as a conscious effort to commit to energy conservation and other sustainability strategies.
- Fern Hotels & Resorts. has a number of environmentally sensitive hotels spread throughout the country. Some of the top eco features that can be found in these hotels include Ayurvedic toiletries, eco-friendly baskets, water-friendly tap and flushes, cloth bags instead of plastic shopping bags, etc.

## **A Unique Fuel Alternative for Hotels**

Carbon Masters, a Bangalore based social enterprise, converts wet waste into biogas, which it then bottles and supplies to restaurants as Carbonlite brand. "Carbonlite cylinders are priced almost at par with LPG cylinders. But through using the former, there is a minimum savings of 15%, when you think of things like an efficient kitchen and a better cooking performance. Carbonlite burns

stronger and for longer compared with LPG. They enable a constant run of gas throughout the cooking process. Being liquefied, LPG, on the other hand, decreases in its pressure with usage. Biogas burns better than LPG. The yearly savings are estimated to be ₹ 3.5 lakh. The annual spending on LPG is usually ₹ 25 lakh.” Adopting bio gas as an alternate fuel will help hotels in cost savings.

### Objectives of Primary Research

1. To know the awareness regarding sustainable practices carried at hotel property.
2. To understand the readiness of customers to support hotel in its sustainability initiatives.
3. To understand whether in future sustainability would be a criterion for hotel selection.

### Research Design for the Study

1. *Type of Research*: Descriptive Research
2. *Type of Sampling*: Convenience Sampling
3. *Sampling Size*: 250
4. *Sampling Unit*: Customer of hotel
5. *Data Type*: Primary Data: Questionnaire
6. *Analytical Tools Used*: Pie Chart, Bar Chart

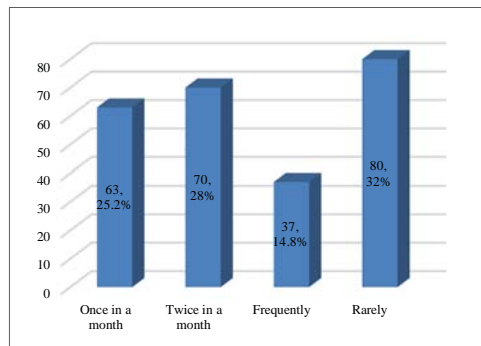
### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Q.1) What is the frequency of visit to the hotel?

Table No-1 Visit Frequency

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Once in a month	63	25.2
Twice in a month	70	28
Frequently	37	14.8
Rarely	80	32
Total	50	20

Fig No 1 Visit Frequency



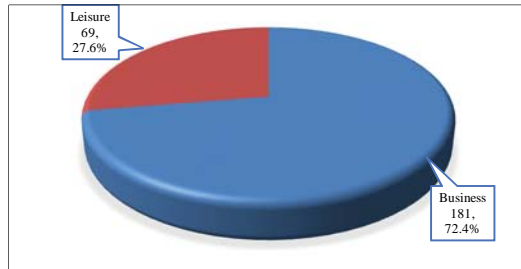
**Data Interpretation:** Out of 250 customers 32% of them visit rarely and 28 % visit twice in a month.

Q.2) What is the purpose of visit to hotel?

Table No-2 Purpose of Visit

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Business	181	72.4%
Leisure	69	27.6%

Fig No- 2 Purpose of Visit



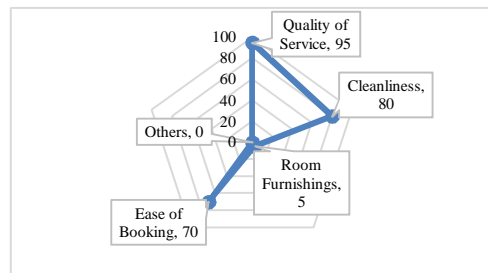
**Data Interpretation:** 72% visit hotel as a part of business and 28% visit for leisure.

Q.3) What is the parameter you consider most while selecting the hotel?

Table No-3 Parameter for hotel selection

	Responses	%
Quality of Service	95	38%
Cleanliness	80	32%
Room Furnishings	5	2%
Ease of Booking	70	28%
Others	0	0%

Fig No-3 Parameter for hotel selection



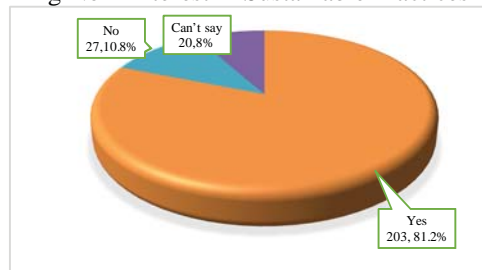
**Data Interpretation:** Out of 250 customers 38 % consider quality of service as important parameter for hotel selection and next important parameter is cleanliness 32 % followed by ease of booking 28%

Q.4) Are you interested in knowing the sustainable practices in hotel?

Table No-4 Interest in Sustainable Practices

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Yes	203	81.2%
No	27	10.8%
Can't say	20	8%

Fig No-4 Interest in Sustainable Practices



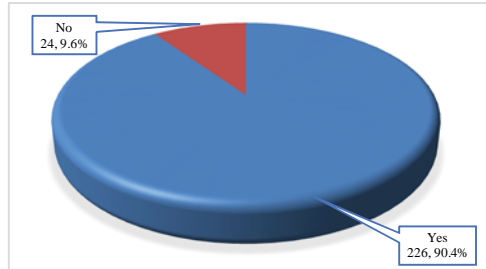
**Data Interpretation:** Out of 250 customers 81.2% are interested in sustainable practices while 8% are not interested.

Q.5) Would you support the hotel in its sustainable practices?

Table No5 – Readiness to support

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Yes	226	90.4%
No	24	9.6%

Fig No-4 Readiness to support



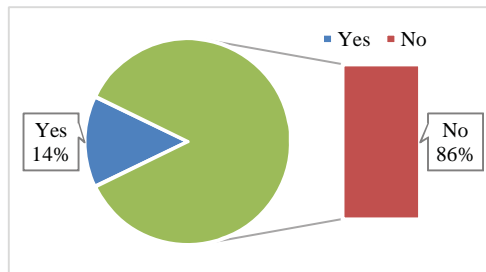
**Data Interpretation:** 90% are ready to support hotel in its sustainable practices.

Q.6) Are you aware about energy conservation practices carried out in the hotel?

Table No-6 Awareness about energy conservation

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Yes	36	14%
No	214	86%

Fig No-6 Awareness about energy conservation



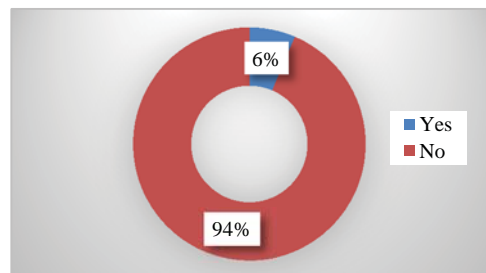
**Data Interpretation:** 86% are not aware about energy conservation practices carried out in the hotel.

Q.7) Are you aware about waste management practices in hotel?

Table No-7 Awareness about waste management practices

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
Yes	16	6%
No	234	94%

Fig No -7 Awareness about waste management practices



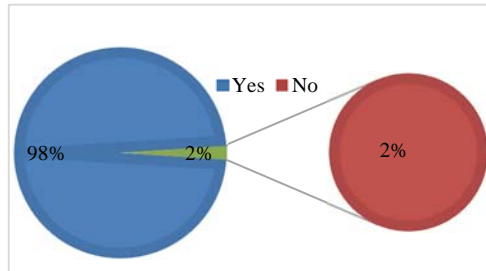
**Data Interpretation:** 94 % are not aware about waste management practices in hotel.

Q.8) Would you like to save water and electricity?

Table No-8 Readiness to save water and electricity

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
<b>Yes</b>	245	98%
<b>No</b>	5	2%

Fig No-8 Readiness to save water and electricity



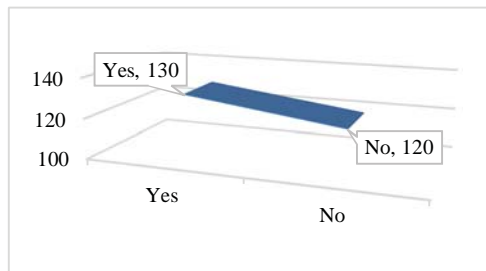
**Data Interpretation:** 98% are ready to save water and electricity.

Q.9) Would you agree to reuse linens?

Table No-9 Readiness to reuse linens

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
<b>Yes</b>	130	52%
<b>No</b>	120	48%

Fig No-9 Readiness to reuse linens



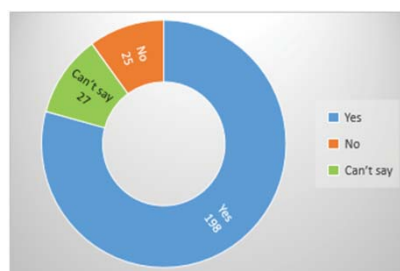
**Data Interpretation:** 52% are ready to reuse linens which would lead to water saving.

Q.10) In future will you prefer a hotel adopting sustainable practices over a hotel which does not follow?

Table No-10 Future Decision

	No. of Responses	Percentage %
<b>Yes</b>	198	79%
<b>No</b>	25	10%
<b>Can't say</b>	27	11%

Fig No-10 Future Decision



**Data Interpretation:** 79% would prefer a hotel adopting sustainable practices over a hotel which does not follow.

## Findings

1. Out of 250 customers 32% of them visit rarely and 28% visit twice in a month.
2. 72% visit hotel as a part of business and 28% visit for leisure.
3. Out of 250 customers 38% consider quality of service as important parameter for hotel selection and next important parameter is cleanliness 32% followed by ease of booking 28%.
4. 81.2% are interested in knowing sustainable practices of hotel.
5. 90% are ready to support hotel in its sustainable practices.
6. 86% are not aware about energy conservation practices carried out in the hotel.
7. 94% are not aware about waste management practices in hotel.
8. 98% are ready to save water and electricity.
9. In future 79% would prefer a hotel adopting sustainable practices.

## Recommendations

1. All hotels should increase customer awareness of sustainable practices as most of them are unaware about the same.
2. They can propagate about environmental issues and seek active participation of customers.
3. They can give complimentary or loyalty points to customers for participation in sustainability initiatives.

## Conclusion

A review of initiatives taken by various international hotels includes energy savings, minimizing water usage, minimizing generation of waste and pollution thereby reducing carbon footprints. It also includes use of liquid food composter which digests food waste in a clean, sanitary and odourless manner. The initiatives taken by Indian hotels include LEED certification, use of wood for construction, following concept reduce reuse and recycle. An alternate fuel to LPG made from biogas, Carbonlite burns stronger and for longer compared with LPG with minimum savings of 15%. The primary research findings reveal that most customers are currently not aware regarding energy conservation, water management and waste management practices of hotel properties. The customers are ready to support the hotels in their sustainability initiatives like reusing linens saving electricity and water. In future, they may consider sustainability as a criterion for hotel selection and support the noble cause of sustainability.

## References

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