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Going green in the hospitality industry

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Going Green in the Hospitality Industry

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PART ONE

Introduction

Since the Industrial Revolution, the United States has been emitting large amounts of pollutants into the environment. The U.S. has operated in a world of extremes, whether it is driving a Hummer on the streets of New York City or watering lawns in the desert so the grass stays green. This country is a country of waste, and it finally has caught up with us. We are running out of water and other natural resources and are making the world a worse place to live for us and future generations.

Going green has become the “it” topic of the past several years and continues to gain traction. Scientists are telling us if we do not take action now, we will not be able to correct the damage that has been done. While the government lags behind, businesses and individuals need to take the lead to show responsibility to the human race.

The hotel industry is a large U.S. business sector, which means hotels can play a major role in changing the culture of waste. While making changes can be costly, it may be in the best interest of hotels to make these changes. Part two of this paper, the literature review, examines the history of sustainability in the hotel industry and how different functions of the hotel can incorporate change. In addition, the literature review examines the cost and savings associated with going green.

The final part of the paper outlines a study to be used to examine the wants of meeting planners and can be used by hotels to determine if they should incorporate an environmental sustainability program for their property. It concludes with recommendations for the hotel based on these results.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine whether a hotel's greening efforts are a reason why everyday guests or hospitality professionals choose a hotel. Do meeting planners and business travelers expect certain things while staying at a hotel? Do the personal greening activities of a guest affect their hotel stay? This will also include the housekeeping needs of the guests and why they choose the hotel. The objective of the research will be to discover whether there is guest data to support the need for hotels to become green establishments.

Justification

With global warming affecting all facets of the world, environmental policies are on the horizon for all businesses. The hospitality industry can help lead this change if given the right tools to make a difference. The purpose of this paper is to discover how different areas of the industry are saving energy and reducing waste and if these changes are worth the expense.

Glossary

Environmental Sustainability – Maintaining the factors and practices that contribute to the quality of the environment on a long-term basis.

Going Green – Pursuing knowledge and practices conducive to more environmentally friendly and ecologically responsible decisions and lifestyles, which can help protect the environment and sustain its natural resources for current and future generations.

Sustainable Development - Balancing short-term interests with the protection of the interests of future generations.

PART TWO

Introduction

There are many definitions of sustainability in use today. One such definition is from the United Nations' World Commission on Environment in 1987. The U.N. states sustainability is "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs" (Morris, 2004). Another definition from the Forum of the Future in 2008 is "sustainable development is a dynamic process which enables all people to realize their potential and to improve their quality of life in ways which simultaneously protect the Earth's life support systems" (Ricord & Smith, 2009). Both of these definitions explain the basic thought: to sustain all generations to come.

These definitions explain why it is necessary for both businesses and individuals to make changes within their lives and environment. Each group or individual is responsible for taking action to help our environment as a whole and to allow each generation to live with the required amount of food and energy to advance the next generation.

The hospitality industry has started doing its part in recent years to sustain the environment while maintaining the integrity of the industry. However, many more steps need to be taken by hotels, meeting planners, associations, attendees, etc. Hotels need to become green buildings and make their locations energy efficient, which permits planners to run more sustainable conferences at the hotels. This allows for the companies and associations contracting these meetings to take the initiative in booking these hotels for

their meetings so they can say to the shareholders that sustainability is a top priority. The responsibility for making changes lies with every shareholder.

The literature review of this paper analyzes the factors involved in going green in the hospitality field, both positive and negative, and the ensuing financial savings. It builds on the introduction of this paper, outlining initiatives in the field and the responsibility of applying change. The review can be used as an informational tool for companies and individuals who are interested in taking the next step to go green.

Literature Review

History of Sustainability in the U.S.

In 2007, the United Nations declared that global warming was completely the fault of humans (Ashkin, 2007). This is the type of scared- straight warning that is needed for companies to start taking responsibility within their own industry. While this statement was not new information for individuals, this was one of the first times a governing organization has placed the blame directly on the human race.

The going-green movement in the United States officially started in 1969 with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (History of Sustainability, 2009). The purpose of this bill was to “foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations” (2009). This definition is very similar to the definition created by the U.N. in 1987 as both statements are promoting the welfare of future generations. But NEPA was a statement of policy, not a regulatory measure. Without being a regulatory measure, there

are no laws that the country has to follow, only suggestions. NEPA is what the environmental protection policies in America are based on today (MacDonald, 2003).

Then in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency opened its doors and began using federal laws to protect the environment. This change led into the Stockholm Conference, which involved the developed nations of the world (History of Sustainability, 2009). While the Stockholm Conference created a lot of media attention, the conference itself made little progress (MacDonald, 2003). However, the conference did create the concept of sustainable development and facilitated the phrase's acceptance (History of Sustainability, 2009).

According to David Stipanuk and Jack Ninemeier, a growing concern for the environment could be seen starting in the early 1990s, partly as a result of heavier media coverage. There was twice as much information in the media during the early 1990s than in the early 1980s (Stipanuk and Ninemeier, 1996). This also can be said of the information from the 2000s when compared with the 1990s. Seemingly each day, a new story is breaking in the news.

One of the events in the 1990s that created more media coverage on the environment was the Earth Summit in 1992. At the summit, Agenda 21 was presented. Agenda 21's proper name is the Agenda for the 21st Century with concern to the environment around the world (History of Sustainability, 2009). Agenda 21 wanted to educate global leaders and help make decisions about sustainability. However, the goals of Agenda 21 were unachievable for most of the world. This created a frustration for world leaders as many would have liked to have had realistic options to take back to their countries (MacDonald, 2003).

These events led us to where the environmental message is today. While the United States and other developed countries of the world have taken a stance and are starting to show some positive movement toward creating a green policy, developing countries are lagging behind. The Kyoto Protocol requires nations to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases to 5 percent below the levels that were seen in 1990 by the year 2012 (History of Sustainability, 2009). The Kyoto Protocol was revolutionary as it was the first time the nations participating put legal limits on the emission requirements (2009). Unfortunately, two of the largest countries in the world, China and India, have not agreed to the protocol, and they plan to rely on coal as a major energy resource in the future (MacDonald, 2003). The lack of participation from China and India will greatly affect the progress made by the rest of the world.

While this is the history of how the initiative received its start within the United States and other nations, the history within the hotel industry is not that far off. It has come and gone throughout the years much like many fads. Whether the current initiatives are here to stay, only time will tell.

History of Sustainability in Hospitality

In the past, going green was seen as a fad within all industries, especially the hospitality industry. However, some of these “fads” have proven the critics wrong through the years. There are some green hotels that have been in existence for more than three decades (Pizam, 2008). Choosing to be a green hotel is a very significant decision. According to the Alliance to Save Energy, the lodging industry was the fourth largest

user of energy among businesses in the United States (Fedrizzi and Rogers, 2002). Fortunately, the lodging industry is making changes to facilitate environmental upgrades.. One such change, which began in 1996, is a program to allow for certification in the travel and tourism industry. The organizations involved created a program called “Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development” (Hospitality Going Green, 2008). This title pays homage to the Agenda 21 created at the Earth Summit in 1992. The program created a “Green Globe” certificate for hotels that address the issues of greenhouse emissions, energy efficiency and water management. This is just one of the many types of certification processes that are available in the United States. Another is to be LEED certified. For a building or hotel to be considered green, it needs to be recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council, or USGBC, and certified for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED. The USGBC was formed in 1993 to define what is eco-friendly within the building development community and what needs to be done to help the initiative (Holtmann, 2008). LEED is the rules that builders follow to have a certified green building. There are five areas that LEED certification uses as criteria to judge a hotels sustainability: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality (Katz, 2008). The LEED standards were first used in 2000 and now there are at least 60 hotels that are applying to be LEED certified (Butler, 2008).

The federal government and 23 states in the U.S. have put their weight behind LEED buildings by giving tax credits and incentives to those that build according to the standards (Butler, 2008). California leads other states by passing AB 32, which will require the state to reduce greenhouse gases by 80 percent below the levels in 1990 by the

year 2050 (Butler, 2008). This will affect all industries within the state and change the way companies do business. Without conforming to the changes, hotels and other businesses will not be able to meet these standards and will have to face the consequences.

These are a few examples of how the hospitality industry has changed over the years. The world is starting to make bigger leaps into a more environmentally friendly existence. These processes will obviously help the environment, but may also help the businesses with their energy costs, and as a side effect, the public appeal of hospitality companies.

Responsibility of Environmental Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry

The environmental debate has many leaders explaining what needs to be done and how it should be completed, but there are very few individuals actually taking charge of the situation. The responsibility is passed from the individual to the businesses and back to the individual. This is where corporate social responsibility, or CSR, comes into play. CSR is the idea that companies should exist for more than just making a profit (Bohdanowicz and Zientara, 2008). While for the most part, CSR concerns community service and volunteerism, the phrase can also be used to describe environmentalism. This can be seen within the hospitality industry.

In the 1990s, the hospitality industry started being concerned about their CSR and focused it on environmental concerns, technology usage and the use of energy (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumus, 2007). These are positive ways to focus the responsibility, but according to Paulina Bohdanowicz and Piotr Zientara, CSR has everything to do with

brand management and nothing to do with caring about an actual cause (2008). And this is the main concern with CSR.

If a company is only doing a good thing because it makes them look responsible, then is it really a good thing? Should it be the responsibility of the individual? In the hotel business, if the cost of the hotel is noticeably higher because of an environmental initiative, then the guest does not have a positive attitude toward the environment (Verbeek and Mommaas, 2008). Jim Butler says the hospitality industry has been somewhat slow in responding to the global warming warnings as the guests do not seem to care about anything more than recycling, so the hotel does not see the need to invest in the future (Butler, 2008). Basically, these data are saying that while the responsibility should be on the guest as well as the hotels, the guest would like the hotel to take charge without being involved in the change.

Implementing Green Initiatives

While many companies and individuals talk about ways they can help the environment, it is still only a few that are actually creating a plan of action. Meeting Professionals International, or MPI, took its first step in 2006 at the Professional Education Conference, a convention of meeting planners from around the world. MPI worked with the convention center to recycle products from the meeting by donating leftover food to a food bank, donating signs to local schools for art projects and using green catering for conference events (Gardner, 2006). These are simple ways to add a green initiative to your meeting and incorporate a no-waste practice at little cost.

One way meeting planners can learn what a hotel provides in terms of green practices is by placing green requests into the RFP, or request for proposal. Some planners are asking for recycling programs to be in place. Planners are also requesting that hotels have complete green programs in place or their hotel will not be chosen for an event (Gardner, 2006).

Banquet Department, Staff Areas and Meeting Space

According to Nancy Wilson of Meeting Strategies Worldwide, these are some steps that can be taken to green your company and your company's meetings: Use e-mail instead of paper mail, use an online registration system and forgo handing out conference bags unless they are made of recycled materials. Another major paper saver is to limit the amount of paper handed out at the conference. This can be done by using flash drives or posting presentations to a Web site prior to the conference. A really interesting thought is to choose hotels either near the airport or close to all activities relating to the meeting (Gardner, 2006). This will limit carbon dioxide emissions by limiting the need for vehicular transportation from one location to the next.

As for food service, the banquet department should update how food and coffee breaks are presented to the attendee. Instead of individually wrapped sweets, honey, jams and cream, the hotel needs to switch to bulk containers that can be reused many times, creating less trash (McPhee, 2006). In addition, instead of throwaway utensils, silverware should be supplied to stir coffee and tea. Refillable water jugs that can be set up sporadically throughout the meeting space with real glasses available should be used in place of bottled water.

Changing the lighting to energy-efficient bulbs in the meeting space, fitness center and employee-only areas of the hotel will be a high priority. Groups have specific lighting needs for the meeting space, but the fitness center and back of house do not need to have many different types of lighting. Fortunately, there are many new efficient bulbs that can now be dimmed and adjusted to the groups' needs in the event space (Fedrizzi and Rogers, 2002).

The more intense project will be installing motion sensors throughout the meeting space and back-of-house. These areas are used for a large amount of time each day, but there are times when no one would be in the areas at all. If the sensors could turn the lights on and off when someone walks in or out of a room by detecting body heat, then the energy would be reduced in comparison to when the lights are left on continuously (Serlen, 2008).

Guest Rooms

The guest room is a difficult location to implement changes, as it requires the guest to believe in what the hotel would like to change. If the guest wants new sheets each day, then the hotel most likely will oblige the guest to make them happy. That being said, many initiatives can be taken to make it easy for the guest to participate in the new policies.

The Talbott Hotel in Chicago has incorporated going green into its guest rooms by installing INNCOM International's e4 Smart Digital Thermostat with the ecoMode add-on. This allows for smart technology to control your temperature in the guest room, but with the add-on, the guest can decide if they want to participate in their hotel's energy

program by using a touch screen in the room. The guest can choose to not have housekeeping each day, when they want the lights to go on and off by setting a timer, and more control over the temperature at anytime throughout the day (Kirby, 2008).

Along with controlling housekeeping needs, the hotel can place recycling containers in the guest rooms labeling and explaining the recycling program. A program instituted by the Muse Hotel in New York City has installed designer recycling bins for guest rooms so they can be functional as well as fashionable (Kasavana, 2008). Guests can recycle glass, plastic and paper, and this will allow the bins to blend into the decorations in the guest rooms.

Another aspect is how to save energy in empty guest rooms. According to Jeff Sobieski, hotel guestrooms are unoccupied approximately 60 percent of the time (2008). This means that for 60 percent of the time, the hotel can be in control of the temperature and lighting of a guestroom and manage how much energy is being used during that time without interfering with the guest's comfort.

The following are two examples of energy saving scenarios that can take place in guest rooms. The first is to change light bulbs to energy-efficient light bulbs that will last longer and use less power. The other change is the "turn off" program. This program will have the Thermostat linked to the hotel database so the temperature can change when the guest checks in and out. This system can also reset itself anytime the guest leaves the room (Freed, 2008). Also, if the room has a balcony, anytime the balcony door opens, the temperature will reset itself.

Ran in conjunction with the second scenario, the "turn off" program, hotels can use in-room occupancy detectors. These detectors use body heat sensors to scan the

room to check if a guest has entered or exited the room. Once it detects that someone is in the room, the system will return the temperature of the room back to the guest's preference. The sensors can also be used as a way to keep the lights from being left on all day and night. If there is no movement in a preset amount of time, the sensors can report to the database that it is OK to turn off the lights. While this will save energy, some guests prefer to walk into a room with lights. This can be fixed by having a hall light turn on when the front door opens so the guest is not entering a dark room. This can be managed by a sensor or by a connection between the door and the light (Hanna, 2008).

Housekeeping/laundry

The energy saving in the laundry area will require some installing of new appliances and systems. While there will be an initial cost associated with the new appliances, it will save money and energy in the long run. The first change will be to install new gas dryers that can dry fabric more quickly and use less energy. The other new system is a heat recovery unit that can save the heat from the old water cycle in the laundry and transfer the heat to the clean water being used in the next cycle (Fedrizzi and Rogers, 2002). Both of these options are creating new ways to conserve energy, but not changing the actual process of doing laundry.

The initial charges would be from installing Energy Star washers and dryers that will reduce wastewater that is created by the dirty laundry, detergent and water. If the appliances use less water, money will be saved from smaller consumption in the beginning. Also, less wastewater would be released into the environment (Riggs, 2007). This can be used in conjunction with a linen reuse program. While many hotels have

instituted a towel reuse program for years, the new addition is to not change sheets every day unless it is requested.

The easiest fix for water conservation in the hotel is to fix leaks. The hotel's housekeeping staff would be responsible for watching for leaks throughout all guest rooms and hotel space. According to Ashwin Patel, a single leak can waste 10,000 liters annually; all sinks, showers and toilets need to be checked for leaks (2008). These are initial steps and easy fixes that can be taken while waiting for larger initiatives to take place.

Restaurants

The areas of restaurants and kitchens that are not seen by guests can save energy through a study of how the appliances are used and comparing that to how they are supposed to be used. The main way to save energy in the kitchens is to teach the staff the proper way to use the equipment (Jones, 2002). One example of this is to teach the staff to close the refrigerator door when not in use. In addition, keeping the equipment cleaned and maintained will make sure that the equipment is running at its best level; this will help ensure the lowest amount of energy would be used (Lawn, 2008).

The idea of replacing the appliances in the laundry area also can be applied to hotel kitchens. For example, a new Energy Star steam cooker can be 60 percent more efficient than the regular models available (Brodsky, 2005). This type of savings can be applied to all the appliances in the kitchen. Energy Star products really can make a difference throughout each division of the hotel.

Landscape

The final change the hotel will need to put in place is creating a landscaping design that uses indigenous plants that will not need the extra attention that plants and flowers from other environments may require (Hirsch, 2002). This is confirmed in the article *Going green is possible through a variety of possibilities*. The plants will grow in an appropriate manner if planted in the correct climate (Katz, 2008).

Positive Aspects of Going Green

The most important side effect of going green is to create a more sustainable environment. This is the main goal of all the aforementioned initiatives. Also, the previous examples of changes have shown the savings that can be achieved for the hotel. However, one main positive aspect may seem a little selfish. There are many reasons why a company chooses to do the projects they do, and for the most part, it is because the company wants to be viewed positively by clients.

With positive marketing, the shareholders in the company will see greening as a way the company is doing well by their customers. This has an interesting effect. According to Patrick Hartmann and Vanessa Ibáñez, if the brand is considered green, then consumers are willing to pay more for that product (2006). This allows the individual to feel as if they are doing something good for the environment while attending the conference they planned on attending. However, there is contradictory information on this.

Negative Aspects of Going Green

One of the shareholders in any hotel is the consumer who is choosing this hotel as their destination for work or play. Unfortunately, those staying in the hotels may have unrealistic expectations of what the hotel can do according to the going-green principles. Many guests want their luxury services while helping the environment, and some of these services will have to be changed to accommodate the environment. Will the guests accept the changes or will they want the luxury and forget about environmental needs (Butler, 2008)? While the guest can prove to be selfish in their wants while staying at a hotel, the hotelier must also be responsible in the changes they make. The hotel can not negatively impact the guest when it comes to saving money (Olesen, Seppanen, Boerstra, 2006). This contradicts the previous statement of individuals paying more if something is green.

A major barrier to becoming an environmentally friendly hotel is not seeing the urgency to go green from the guests. The consumers, for the most part, do not want to be involved in the changes, but just know they are occurring (Butler, 2008). According to the article, "Becoming an Ecologically Sustainable Organization," one of the top five reasons sustainability fails is the lack of buy-in from shareholders (2008). Without the support of the shareholders, whether they are the owners, managers or customers, no project will succeed.

While there are industry standard certificates available, unfortunately, there are many hotels that are just calling themselves green to appear more environmentally friendly and to sway the consumer (Pizam, 2008). This is a problem similar to the organic food market as there is not a standard set of rules and regulations. Along with

this problem, hotel industry personnel know about the different certificates available for their buildings; however, the general public is not aware of the certificates and are not as educated in what makes a hotel green. And with the growing amount of certificates available, the credibility of these certificates has been reduced (Ricord and Smith, 2009).

Another problem for hotels is making a hotel LEED-certified while maintaining their branding initiatives (Butler, 2008). The hotel owners may have a vision of one thing, but making that vision fit into the greening initiatives of the USGBC can be a much harder process. However, if the hotel wants to compete in the future, they will need to find a way to incorporate the LEED initiatives. Butler goes on to explain that there are also conflicts between hotel owners and hotel managers. These relationships may be set up to focus in one direction, most likely the bottom line, but need to be reassessed to incorporate greening initiatives (2008).

This is also confirmed as one of the reasons sustainability fails as there is conflict between values and money in achieving goals (Becoming an ecologically, 2008). The hotel owners may not see the day-to-day interaction and what the hotel guests want to see updated when it comes to the environment. This can create a divide between how the managers want to make the guests happy and the hotel owners making money.

Financial Aspects

The biggest financial problem to date is the economy. With no way of knowing when the economy will rebound, the industry does not know when and where to spend its money. With the rate of meetings and conferences decreasing every day, the hotels have seen a major decrease in sales. However, now is the time to make a change to get noticed.

One of the largest concerns for the companies is the financial savings that can be seen from going green. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, for every dollar invested into energy efficient lighting, companies will have a profit of \$6.27 returned to them (Katz, 2008). This is a large sum of money in the long run.

For example, in the restaurant industry, energy-saving equipment may cost more to begin with, but the savings will appear within eight to 10 years (Bentley, 2007). This is the challenge with all the new energy-efficient materials. They will save money later, but it is hard to create a business model to spend the money now. Unfortunately, while you may save energy from the products, if you choose to participate in a renewable-energy program from the electric company, this may cost upwards of 20 percent more than regular energy (Elan, 2009). However, a renewable energy program is a much more forward-thinking approach.

This illustrates that the most negative aspect for a business in creating an environmentally friendly program is the upfront costs. Many in the hospitality industry are wary of spending the money needed to implement the plan now even if it saves them money in the end (Paton, 2007). In the recession the world is experiencing today, it is hard for a company to spend money that may take years to recoup.

Conclusion

This literature review has shown that there are many ideas that will not be as much of a financial burden as some may believe. The changes can be subtle and will still make a massive difference in the hotel. These ideas will affect many areas of a hotel and will make the hotel a more responsible business in the community.

PART THREE

Introduction

Part three of this paper presents the methodology, analysis and results of the study and what is concluded from these results. The final section will give recommendations of how hotels can use these insights within their own properties. Part three of this paper surveyed meeting planners and discovered how aspects of the literature review can be seen through the consumer's eyes.

Methodology

In conducting the research, qualitative research was used, specifically experience surveys. The experience survey asks people that are familiar about the subject questions (Zikmund, 2003). While the experience survey can also allow for quantitative results, in this instance, it is mostly useful for the opinions that are relayed to the researcher.

Population

This study probes one type of population. The population consists of meeting planners. The individuals will have stayed or worked in a hotel in the United States within the past two years. While many countries are going green, this research is only focusing on the United States due to the groups contacted.

Sample selection

The type of sample used in the surveys is a purposive, convenience sample. The questionnaire reached out to individuals who have experience traveling and most likely have knowledge about greening practices in the United States. The survey was

distributed via social networking Web sites. The survey sample for meeting planners was found using social networking discussion groups from Meeting Planners International and MiForum, which is the discussion group on the Meetingnews.com Web site. The Meeting Planners International Web site can reach up to 24,000 members, and MiForum can reach up to 2,400 members. Both of these groups consist of meeting planners and other industry personnel. Because this survey is only asking for meeting planners to respond, the number in this sample is less than 26,400.

Survey development

The survey development was completed after analyzing the literature review and deciding what direction the research should take. The survey was Web-based due to the Internet's ability to reach many people quickly.

The Web survey for meeting planners consisted of nine questions (Appendix A) in multiple choice, yes/no, Likert scale and fill-in-the-blank formats. All were simple questions. The first four asked the planner about their meeting planning activities in relation to greening practices. These questions were seeking information on, first, if the planner actually has booked a meeting in the past two years, and second, if the environmental practices of the hotel have influence on where the meetings are booked. The next three were personal questions concerning housekeeping in the guest rooms. Many planners will use these questions to think of what they personally like, but also what their attendees would want as well. The final two questions asked whether they recycle at home and an open-ended question of any opinions they have on greening practices in a hotel. The reason for these questions is to see if recycling is something

they worry about in their own homes, which may affect whether they care about it while traveling. The final question is to see what the survey may be missing as it will help focus additional research.

The questionnaire was developed using the Survey Monkey tool. This allowed for anonymous answers without collecting any demographic information on the submissions. Honesty is more likely achieved from anonymity.

Data collection

The survey for meeting planners was submitted to the message boards on the Meeting Planners International Web site and on MiForum. These surveys were open from March 25 to April 10, 2009. A reminder post was submitted on April 6, 2009, to both sites.

Results

Meeting Planner Survey

Why did you book the hotel for a meeting?

The first question was a multiple choice question to see what the planner looked for when contracting a hotel for a meeting. This question allowed the survey taker to choose more than one option if it applied. Out of 94 respondents, one answer proved to be the cited the most, while two answers tied for second place. Location was cited by 76 respondents, and both price and meeting space received 62. There were 16 for amenities and only four selected the hotel's greening policy as a reason a hotel is selected.

Table 1

Why did you choose to book the hotel?	Response Percent	Response Count
Location	81%	76
Price	66%	62
Meeting Space	66%	62
Amenities	17%	16
Greening Practice	4%	4
Other	17%	16

Note: n = 94

Do you ask about the hotel's greening policies in your RFPs?

While the greening practices of the hotel seem to not play a large role in planners' choices, some do still ask about the environmental practices of the hotel. Out of 94 respondents, 78 said they did not ask about the green policies of the hotel in the RFP, while 16 do ask in the RFP.

Table 2

Do you ask about a hotel's greening policies in your RFP?	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	17%	16
No	83%	78

Note: n = 94

How important are the greening practices of a hotel in booking the hotel for a meeting?

Out of the 94 respondents on the importance of greening practices in a hotel, the results were all over the board. While no one deemed it extremely important, 14 planners believed it to be important, 32 thought it to be neutral, 28 said it was somewhat important

and 20 said it was not important at all. The important number is in comparison to the amount of people in the RFP process that ask about the greening practices.

Table 3

How important are the greening practices of a hotel in booking the hotel for a meeting?	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	21%	20
Somewhat important	30%	28
Neutral	34%	32
Important	15%	14
Extremely important	0%	0

Note: n = 94

How important is it to have your room cleaned daily by the housekeeping staff?

This question relates to the opinions on small changes in the guest rooms to affect the waste of the hotel. The 94 respondents were once again distributed throughout the whole scale. Twenty-two believe it was not important, and 26 believed somewhat important to have their room cleaned daily. Ten do not have an opinion either way and 20 believe it to be important. Sixteen agreed that it is extremely important for housekeeping to clean their room daily.

Table 4

How important is it to have your room cleaned daily by the housekeeping staff?	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	23%	22
Somewhat important	28%	26
Neutral	11%	10
Important	21%	20
Extremely important	17%	16

Note: n = 94

How important is it to have your sheets changed daily by the housekeeping staff?

How important is it to have your towels refreshed daily by the housekeeping staff?

The planners who answered this question showed that although some want their room picked up daily, most do not care whether their sheets are changed daily. However, more do agree with having their towels refreshed daily. These practices may be more similar to their preferences at home.

Table 5

How important is it to have your sheets changed daily by the housekeeping staff?	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	75%	70
Somewhat important	4%	4
Neutral	11%	10
Important	6%	6
Extremely important	4%	4

Note: n = 94

Table 6

How important is it to have your towels refreshed daily by the housekeeping staff?	Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all	43%	40
Somewhat important	23%	22
Neutral	11%	10
Important	19%	18
Extremely important	4%	4

Note: n = 94

Do you recycle at home?

This question relates to planners’ habits in their personal life. The stronger they feel about recycling in their own life, the more they may care about doing it while away.

Table 7

Do you recycle at home?	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	89%	84
No	11%	10

Note: n = 94

Any other comments concerning the greening practices of a hotel?

While open-ended questions are hard to quantify, they may bring the most insight into the issue. Twenty individuals answered the open-ended question, and the top answer was they would like to see more recycling bins in the guest rooms and throughout the hotel. The other responses dealt with the hotels actually following their rules and enforcing green programs. Plus a few believed that although the hotels said they had greening policies, the planner believed it to be just for show.

Discussion/Recommendation

Discussion

The data shown in the results section detail that there is a difference between taking actions in a greening program at home and while traveling. Most meeting planners do not notice the greening practices of a hotel. Most said they recycle at home, but most admitted to not making a decision to choose a hotel because of the greening options. Also, many said there should be new towels and sheets daily.

While the group still wants the amenities that the hotel offers the guest rooms, it opens another question of whether the guest understands the amount of energy and water that is wasted by refreshing the towels and sheets each day. If the guest took time to realize the waste involved, perhaps their opinion would be different.

This also plays into the meeting planners' lack of concern for the greening practices of the hotel. Only sixteen stated they ask about the environmental policies during the RFP process, and only four deemed it to be an important factor in booking the hotel. There are meetings of all sizes, but even a meeting of only 20 individuals can create a huge amount of waste from the trash to the energy and water wasted in their guest room stays. With all the publicity that global warming has had in the past few years, one would believe s these numbers would be higher given the current environment.

The most interesting of the answers came from the open-ended question to the meeting planners. Almost all of the responses had to do with the lack of recycling containers throughout the hotel. The lack of this may be the hotel recycles on the back-end of the process and does not bother the guest with these problems. If they do in fact sort the trash to the correct recycling piles after the guest is done with the waste, then it may be the hotel needs to inform the guests of these practices so the guest can know they are not creating a large amount of waste that will end up in a landfill.

Recommendation

This survey shows that there is a level of disconnect between the guest's home life and the guest's travel life. This was detailed as a worry in the literature review and was shown in the survey. While most individuals said they recycle at home, many still

wanted the hotel amenities that may be wasteful. The recommendation for the hotel is to not only say the guest can help save water or energy, but to actually go into detail with how much they can save and compare it so the guest can relate. The hotel will also need to make an effort to make recycling as easy as possible for the guest. If the guest feels put out in any way, they will have a bad response toward the hotel.

While the small changes outlined above can make a large difference, the main concern is the financial aspect of creating a green hotel, whether it is a brand new property or 100 years old. While the literature review shows hotels will save in the long run, the research shows that guests do not care enough to see the changes. While it would be in the best interest for the environment if all businesses were green businesses, hotels need to make the decision of whether it is worth it for the greater good to become a green hotel, because the guests are not demanding it.

That being said, the hotels should conduct further research of their own by contacting former guests. In this survey, they should directly ask about the hotels' greening policies, or lack thereof, and see if it affects the guest's opinion of the property. This may be the most direct way to get to the bottom of the issue, which is guest relations and doing everything possible to make the guest happy.

Conclusion

These questions were asked to discover whether the hotel should take the time or money to create a green policy if guests don't want the program. A hotel may want to create an environmental program for the greater good, but in the down economy, it may not be the right time. However, the literature review showed that the company would

save money. However, the investment must be made upfront. So the best solutions may be to start small and make little changes that will ease the guest into the bigger picture, and then invest slowly in larger changes.

Also, if the hotel makes the guest feel like part of the solution, then the guest may take a vested interest in the changes. The hotel cannot overcharge the guest to make up for the changes as this will not be received positively by the guest and they will stay elsewhere in the future. With these simple changes and the promise of future additions when the economy is in a better place, the hotel will be able to make its environment better and thus affect the ecological environment.

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Appendix A

Survey for meeting planners

1. Have you booked a meeting in a hotel in the US in the past two years? Yes/No
2. If so, why did you choose the hotel?
 - a. Location
 - b. Price
 - c. Meeting Space
 - d. Amenities
 - e. Going green program
 - f. Other
3. Do you ask the hotel environmental information in your RFP? Yes/No
4. How important are the greening practices of a hotel in booking the hotel for a meeting?
Not Important Somewhat Important Neutral Important Extremely Important
5. How important is it for you to have your room cleaned each day?
Not Important Somewhat Important Neutral Important Extremely Important
6. How important is it for you to have your sheets changed each day?
Not Important Somewhat Important Neutral Important Extremely Important
7. How important is it for you to have your towels changed each day?
Not Important Somewhat Important Neutral Important Extremely Important
8. Do you recycle at home? Yes/No
9. Any other comments?