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CORPORATE GREENING: A STUDY OF RESPONSIVENESS OF FIRMS IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY

DR. ROOPA T.N.
SPECIAL OFFICER
VISVESVARAYA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
BELGAUM

NISHA RAJAN
ASST. PROFESSOR
EAST POINT COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING FOR WOMEN
BIDARAHALLI

ABSTRACT

Studies have shown that firms though not all, around the world are now trying to enroll in to the ideology of environmentalism either fully or partly, in spite of the hardships associated with greening. In few such cases, researchers have investigated why some firms embrace ecologically responsive initiatives, while others in seemingly similar circumstances do not even comply with existing legislation. In this background, the present study has been taken up to enfold two aspects; firstly, to identify the factors which motivated the hotels to embrace greening as their selling proposition, secondly to identify the factors which are impediment to the process of greening. The study also aimed at bringing out the adequacy of measures taken up by green hotels towards achieving greening with a view to coming out with reasonable recommendations. The present study is qualitative in nature and takes up an inductive methodology. Considering the sample of four representative hotels belonging to high grade and budget category in a metropolitan city of India, the study employed an in depth interview technique with the help of a semi structured interview guide. Grounded theory approach to data analysis helped in identifying the major motivational factors as; want of greening as a theme of marketing, responsibility to match profitability and planet, want of best management practice, stake holder pressure and want of incentives. Few problems associated with the greening process of firms were brought out corresponding to motivations. Grounding of the rich data helped in bringing out appropriate recommendations.

KEYWORDS

Environmental sustainability, Greening, Hospitality industry, Motives, Responsiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Environmental sustainability has been widely discussed and addressed in the business literature. Studies have shown that, businesses in recent past, could catch up with green products and services in their constant effort to meeting the demand for innovative alternatives. These new demands have helped to trigger a new trend in the business world, "corporate environmentalism." (Elkington, 1994: 91).

Presently concern about the environment has become a world wide phenomenon. There has been a growing awareness of widespread environmental degradation facing current and future generations. As a result, Greening of market place has become one of the most significant environmental trends of recent years (Elkington, 1994). Thus it is not surprising, that many companies have been attempting to capitalize on the public's interest in green issues by positioning themselves as environmentally responsible organizations (Jay, 1990).

In spite of the hardships associated with greening, certain firms chose to embrace greening either as the main or part of their marketing agenda or part of social responsibility. "The hospitality industry is one of the fastest growing sectors globally." (Watson, 2008: 758). Hospitality firms, such as hotels, are an ideal example of a market which could benefit from the implementation of green practices and labeling themselves as 'green'. 'Eco friendly' and 'green' hotels are the terms that refer to a lodging establishment that has made a commitment to various ecologically sound practices such as; saving water, saving energy and reducing solid waste (Manaktola, cited in Victorina, 2005). Becoming a green hotel can be the foundation for a great marketing strategy.

Green marketing (Peattie and Ottman, 1992) as a strategy facilitates promotion of products by employing environmental claims either about their attributes or about the systems, policies and processes of the firms that manufacture or sell them. Websites of certain hotels are flooded with innumerable claims relating to greening of systems, policies and processes. "As people are becoming aware of the damage caused to the environment, they are increasingly looking for hotels that follow practices to protect the environment." (Manaktola, 2007: 365). As a result, hotels are trying to adopt methods that bring down the harm caused by them to the environment. Thus it is observed that "The willingness and ability of hotel management to advocate and implement state-of-the art environmentally responsible behavior and practices is crucial for the incorporation of more sustainable hotel practices." (Warszawa, 2004: 2)

The issue of greening has been widely addressed in the business literature. Based on the two concepts- Green Marketing and Corporate Responsiveness, the present study aims at exploring the reasonable motives which are responsible for hotel's green initiatives. Such motives explored in the present study are expected to help in understanding and predicting the ecologically based behaviors of the hotels.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have identified motives for corporate greening, such as regulatory compliance, competitive advantage, stake holder pressures, ethical concerns, critical events and top management initiative (Dillon & Fischer, 1992; Lampe, Ellis & Drummond, 1991; Lawrence & Morell, 1995; Vredenburg & Westley 1993; Winn, 1995). It was observed that, these studies helped in understanding the concept of greening yet failed to foresee ecological responsiveness. Conceptual distinctiveness of alternate ecologically based motivations was not specified. Further, clarity was not established with the identified categories of motivations as to whether the factors leading to motivation categories were either inclusive or exclusive to each other. (Bansal, 2000)

Tzchentke *et al.*, (2004) carried out a study to explore the reasons behind the adoption of environmental practices and participation in an environmental accreditation scheme. The findings suggested that ethical and social concerns were equally important drivers of environmental commitment, acting in many cases in parallel with economic factors.

Prakash, (2002) in his study tries to apply Herzberg's theory of motivation and attempted to understand whether consumers view firm/product greening as motivating factors or hygiene factors and made a note that green certification like ISO 14001 or green products like the one with a percentage of recycled inputs are motivating factors for consumers to buy products from a green firm.

Another stream of literature tries to bring out the economic as well as environmental benefits by adopting greening of organizational culture. Accordingly, by incorporating environmental concerns in to the culture of the firm may deliver environmental capabilities that competitors would find hard to imitate (Barney, 1991) and such imperfectly imitable resources should facilitate a sustainable competitive advantage.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Hotels which form a very important part of Hospitality industry operate in varied sizes in different environment. Hotels consume various local resources specific to cleaner industry, the unprincipled consumption of which in an unbalanced manner harms the supporting environment.

Manaktola and Jauhari, (2007: 366) made an observation that the environment is the major recipient of negative impacts created by the construction and operation of hotel and facilities.

In view of the volume of environmental harm which could be done; hotels assume a huge responsibility towards greening. "There have been growing efforts to engage the greening of hospitality practice, with initiatives such as the International Hotels Environmental Initiative (IHEI) acting as a catalyst for action" (Tzschentke *et al.*, 2004: 116). "Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) is an environmental accreditation scheme for tourism businesses in Scotland" (Tzschentke *et al.*, 2004: 117). Members of this scheme are socially responsible and proactive towards greening. These kinds of initiatives are being reported more and more in recent years which have resulted in the onset of green consumerism which implies change in perception of general public and hotel customers in particular towards hotel and its services. In this sense, customers appreciate environmentally friendly efforts at tourism businesses." (Andereck, cited in Ruiz-Molina, 2010: 465).

As Carmona *et al.*, (2004) describe, firms in the groups with more developed environmental strategies are associated with a higher level of environmental performance but not necessarily with economic performance. However economic benefits of green practices cannot be undermined. As Barney, cited in Rivera, (2001) a credible green reputation can be a source of differentiation advantage that yields price premiums and/or enhanced sales because it is rare, difficult to create and imitate, and provide higher value to environmentally aware customers. Thus, understanding of eco responsiveness which is both external and internal to the firm is necessitated to support the hotel marketers in exploring green initiatives which are unique and help them to stand apart in the competitive market.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Good number of studies have been undertaken on consumer green responsiveness whereas corporate responsiveness towards greening has been limited. In few such cases, researchers have investigated why some firms embrace ecologically responsive initiatives, while others in seemingly similar circumstances do not even comply with existing legislation (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

Limited research in the Indian context prompted the researcher to examine the corporate responsiveness towards green practices of hotels where the literature lacks compared to studies in developed countries. Hence the present study has been undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the various measures employed by Hotels in achieving the green objective
2. To elucidate the factors which motivated the Hotels to take up green initiatives
3. To establish the uniqueness of green innovations of participant hotels in India
4. To determine the factors impediment to the process of greening in the hotel industry

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objective of understanding corporate responsiveness towards green ideology in the context of Indian hotels, an attempt is made to unfold two aspects; firstly, to identify the factors which motivated the hotels to embrace greening, secondly to identify the factors which are impediment to the process of greening.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

The present study is qualitative in nature where corporate responsiveness to green initiatives is attempted to be generalised through the observation of green practices of fairly small number of participant hotels. The interpretive approach seeks to describe how and why the hotels become responsive to green ideology. Sample frame consisted of the two categories of hotels selected from the directory of hotels published by the Ministry of Tourism Development, Government of Karnataka. Star category and Budget category. Two hotels each from each of the category made up the sample to four hotels. Judgmental sampling procedure was employed which attempted to draw sample elements from the geographic jurisdiction of urban Bangalore District of Karnataka in India. Websites as source of visual object helped in identifying pioneering Green Hotels in Bangalore. Data was collected by the technique of in-depth interview with the help of a semi structured interview guide. This was undertaken over a week period involved face to face interview with key executives, one each drawn from two high grade Star hotels and two local group budget hotels. Each interview session lasted between one to two hours. The researcher chose to digitally record the interviews and use the input directly for analysis. The questions were specifically designed so as to allow the informants to freely express their understanding and observations. This data was analyzed through open coding technique.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

To achieve clarity, findings were presented under various appropriate themes.

MOTIVES FOR HOTELS' GREEN INITIATIVES

To derive the factors which are responsible for Hotels' green initiatives, at the outset, the ecological responses of each firm was listed as suggested by Bansal and Roth, 2000. This list was then used to sort them under broader motivation category. A table that listed all possible initiatives corresponding to their broader motivation category was prepared for each of the hotel. This table directed the researcher towards short listing the firm's green initiatives which are unique to a specific category of motivations which was enveloped as the dominant motivation of the firm.

"GREEN AS A THEME"

Informants in general viewed the term greening with reverence and they asserted that the term greening is synonymous with green features such as rain water harvesting system, use of Light Emitting Diode (LED) to save energy, Sensor controlled power management, recycling of water etc.

As regards the significance of the ideology of "greening" in the hotels, informants did generally differ in their contention. One informant asserted that "green" is one of the finest and unique selling proposition through which they are able to get very good response. He revealed that from the hotel building stage they have incorporated the concept of greening and greening is not something like celebrating green week or green day rather it is perpetual and is there in their DNA. This observation is justified by (Porter, 1998 cited in Manaktola, 2007) "product differentiation has proven to be a successful competitive strategy that may also be applied within the environmental context." (Hart, 1997; Reinhardt, 1998, cited in Manaktola, 2007)

Desire to be recognized and respected as market leaders by setting a new trend appeared to be another reason for choosing green niche. It was evident from the contention of an informant in repeatedly putting forward that his hotel was the first in implementing variety of innovative green initiatives. One informant contended that they are competing on the edges of price and quality as their business consists of corporate customers. For another informant "green" doesn't make much sense. As expected, informants affirmed that though each of them is determined to be recognized as green hotel, the importance attached to it varied substantially. While one informant established that they are the trend setters in setting the green norms for the society, another stated that they want to be recognized in the society as a high technology hotel. For one informant practicing green would bring in wisdom, where as another informant was strongly against to the idea of incorporating green features. He mainly cited financial burden and customer indifference towards the ideology. However excepting one, all the informants disputed the endorsement of "Green" as a unique selling proposition though they did acknowledge on its intangible benefits.

Success of "Green" theme as a unique selling proposition appears to be related to the age and type of the hotel. It was on the late 1980s the idea of green marketing emerged." (Peattie and Crane 2005: 358) and became popular in the recent past. Embracing the theme of green is practically impossible for hotels with design of the old building and facilities, incompatible to adopt green initiatives. The informants of five star category hotels were sure about the benefits of green endorsement which was in line with the suggestions made by (Barney, 1991; Hart, 1995) that green tag would prove advantageous to the hotel in way of

premium prices and enhanced sales. "Moreover the green firm enjoys the first mover advantage" (Prakash, 2002: 287). As suggested by literature, philosophy of greening is much respected and adopted by higher class of the society, who mainly form their customer base.

RESPONSIBILITY TO MATCH PROFITABILITY AND PLANET

Adoption of environmental measures in the case of a hotel was a well thought process imbibed in the vision statement. The prime reason behind the adoption of green practices as expressed by informants was responsibility towards the society. For them greening starts from the inception of the hotel and go on with design of the building.

One informant stated that greening process in his hotel has started from five years and every year they are adding to the list. They have realized that they can not profit on green issue only. Still they are gradually incorporating green initiatives stage by stage. In case of another hotel, adoption of green measures was a slow and gradual process associated with either up-gradation of facilities and equipments or renovation of hotel building. An informant made an effort to explain, that even a simple facility for rain water harvesting can not be created in his hotel and as an alternative, they have created a ground unit in the back of the hotel through which water is harvested and that is the minimum that they could do. He was quick to add that the top management wants green without incurring cost which is not possible. He asserted: Adding to this was the time-lag involved in pro-green-renovation process which may cause a lasting damage to the existing business, which small hotels can not withstand.

Higher investment costs and time-lag involved appeared to be the reasons behind poor green initiatives in budget hotels which are old. This is consistent with the findings of the study of (Richardson and Lynes, 2007) where they found that some of the respondents were strongly against incorporating green design features in to buildings on campus citing financial considerations and long pay back period.

It is evident from the study undertaken by (Richardson and Lynes, 2007) where lack of vision and commitment on the part of the leaders of the organization did not yield the desired results. Managers who have strong vision were able to meeting the challenge of balancing profitability and social responsibility towards greening. This view is in accordance with the observation made by that, corporate sustainability leaders achieve long term share holder value by gearing their strategies and management to harness the market's potential for sustainability products and services while at the same time successfully reducing and avoiding sustainability costs and risks." (Holcomb et al, 2007).

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Informants generally felt that greening is a best management practice in that several measures like use of solar power, waste management, and energy production and conservation will result in higher returns to the hotel either by increasing revenue or by decreasing costs.

In one hotel, HR policies were focused to save the distance traveled by its employees. Initiatives like internal green audit, monthly reporting about the green performance to the head office, energy audit by third party vendor and strict monitoring of employees towards green practices, all contributed to "ideal management practices" which resulted in increased efficiency of the hotel and hence the profitability.

HR Practices of new and large hotels appeared to environment friendly. It was noticed in one hotel that, recruitment interview with the prospective employee consisted of questions which would exploit the perception and respect which the candidates have towards ideology of greening. Training also played a significant role in this regard. In one case the execution system of green practices is so rigorous, that the HR department even resorted to punishments for under-performing employees. Results suggested that almost all the hotels created the required technological establishments with a primary motive to reducing their costs, although they felt that those measures were a part of their ethical responsibility in that they were able to conserve critical resources. This finding is consistent with an outcome of the study undertaken by (Tzschentke, 2004) which affirms that hotels embrace green initiative if they believe that they benefit the business financially.

Interesting observation is that the new hotels out-smarted the old and already established renowned hotels in adopting required technology to conserve resources in order to find out comfort to claim that they are 'Green' hotels. This observation is conforming the observation made by (Prakash, 2002) that firms can make verifiable claims about the environmental impact of their management system.

The findings revealed that the old and small hotels with a weakness of being incapable of projecting 'Green' as their main agenda, paved way for new and big hotels to convert in to their opportunities to project themselves as 'Green'. It is obvious that, old and small hotels can not compete with new and large hotels on green issue and undoubtedly gave them a competitive advantage which apparently was judiciously exploited. This observation was supported by Russo & Flouts (Russo & Flouts, cited in Harris and Crane, 2002) that by incorporating environmental concerns in to the culture of the firm may deliver environmental capabilities that competitors would find hard to imitate and (Barney, 1991) such imperfectly imitable resources should facilitate a sustainable competitive advantage.

STAKE HOLDER PRESSURE

As regards Government norms are concerned, mixed opinions were expressed. Informants generally accepted that there are certain norms of Local authorities regarding construction of building, usage of water and energy which are mandatory and hence they also would follow. Further it was found that government regulations are discriminatory. For instance, rain water harvesting facilities are mandatory only for new and coming up hotels as old hotels are practically unable to comply with. Environmental legislation in hotel industry is almost non-existent unlike other industries in India and hence green activities appeared to be of voluntary in nature. However, another Informant strongly contradicted that government norms are only indicative and minimum which does not discourage him to go beyond them.

He made the point clear by saying that in terms of greening; his hotel is more than going beyond the legislation and is going to set the norm in the coming years. The list of initiatives stated by him substantiated his views; Training to spouses of employees, guests are offered bicycles to move around, training to stake holders to minimize waste, customer card service, constructing check dams in nearby village, planting saplings on the birth day of each of the employee, organic waste converting system, production of wind power etc. All these practices are very unique to a hotel which is practically going beyond what was expected by the society and government.

ISO certification is another factor which appeared to have made the hotels in general to keep up the environment standards. As far as public and media were concerned, all the respondents felt that they are very supportive to their green agenda. Results suggested that, in general new hotels embraced greening voluntarily by making up self legislation towards it, which was in compliance with the governmental requirements and also they stretched beyond legislation considering societal well being and also profitable business in the long run. It was feasible for them by virtue of their size and volume of operation. As far as old and small hotels are concerned, greening merely meant, keeping up to the minimum possible legislation. Results indicated the lapse of governmental action towards maintaining the required environmental standards.

The common belief that customers always expect pampered services was disputed by an informant. He responded by claiming that customers relish anything which brings in environmental well being. However the experience of another informant did differ when he said that guests are arrogant and irresponsible in their behaviour. He narrated an instance happened an year before that an educated guest kept the tap opened and vanished and allowed the water to waste till the overhead tank got empty.

It was a common opinion of informants that the guests are indifferent towards conservation of resources and environment and green initiatives were taken up in their respective hotels with a view to have a control on such customers through innovative waste reducing technology. Use of I Pod interface system, Light Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs, in-built water tap sensors are few such examples implemented to have a check on customers.

An informant opined that, customers are attracted to a hotel not because products and services offered are green but for their innovativeness facilitated by emerging technology, which result in green benefits, towards which customers may be indifferent. Yet he revealed that modern technology implementation is associated with certain difficulties and even a small inconvenience may result in losing valuable customers. It was commonly observed by informants that, customers look for aesthetic look of the hotel. One informant believed that, creating green facilities mean losing of aesthetic look of the hotel. For him a city hotel should look like a city hotel with the contemporary fittings.

However a respondent believed that green policies are expensive and firms often need to charge premium prices for green services which may affect their customer base negatively. However greening process need not always be associated with heavy investments and running costs as it was suggested by (Kirk, 1995) that environmental management does not have to involve capital intensive projects and may not necessarily introduce increased running costs. It can be

achieved by starting with staff training together with the initiation of low-cost, easy to achieve projects and slowly move on to higher levels. As it was indicated by results, keeping up the customer loyalty in the long run and achieving environmental sustainability largely depends on educating and enrolling the customers via trained employees.

INCENTIVES

Incentives either monetary or non-monetary is generally assumed to be a strong motivator. In the context of present study a factor appeared to have impact on hotels' motivation to activate green initiatives appeared to be that of benefits they get by its implementation. However the benefits were perceived in different ways by different informants. It is justified by the observation made by Prakash, (2002) that green certification like ISO 14001 or green products like the one with a percentage of recycled inputs are motivating factors for consumers.

However, certification and awards did not carry any significant meaning for an informant who affirmed that they are not bothered about them. This was evident when an informant exposing that certification does not carry any importance till the time their customers ask for it and that they are sure customers will not ask for it.

The results suggested that, incentives in the form of awards and recognitions played an important role for large and new hotels competing on the green theme. Small and old hotels were however not keen even on the award certifying their star category. Interviews with the respondents clearly indicated that most hotels under study practiced rain water harvesting for the want of subsidy and new and big hotels erected wind mills for want of depreciation subsidy. Hotels followed certain green initiatives only when they were associated with incentives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GREEN AS A THEME

'Greening' in the present study was represented as offering "responsible luxury" to hotel customers without harming the environment and a continuous process which needs to be present in a hotel's DNA. The literature brings out many dimensions of greening. Scholars in 1990s called it "sustainability marketing" (Charter and Polonsky, 1999): Corporate environmentalism; "Green orientation" (Donaton and Fitzgerald, 1992). One of the more cited definition as proposed by (Peattie, 1995; Welford 2000, cited in Manaktola, 2007) described the process of Greening from the customer as well as societal point of view. They define it as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way. Findings of the present research thus supported the conception of the term greening and contributed to the terminology of the marketing literature by assigning a new dimension called "responsible luxury" to greening, appropriate for the hotel industry in particular.

"Green" conceived as a theme of the hotel to project and position itself in the market was perceived reverential only by new and large hotels. Hence, "Green" as a unique selling proposition was a motivator only for new and large hotels. While literature review also suggested that Product differentiation has proven to be a successful competitive strategy that may also be applied within the environmental context (Hart, 1997; Reinhardt, 1998 cited in Manaktola, 2007). Desire to command respect for business by setting the green trend ahead of any one else appeared to be another reason for new and large hotels for choosing a green niche.

For old and small hotels "Green" could not be a selling theme as they were unable to create the required environment in terms of facilities and infrastructure. For them Price, quality and technology associated with customer relationship management still remained competitive advantage.

MATCHING PROFITABILITY AND PLANET

The literature on corporate responsibility towards greening is enormous. As Holcomb, (2007) describes, "In the context of tourism, corporate responsibility is known by the term "Corporate sustainability". For new and large hotels, corporate sustainability is imbibed in their corporate vision. For them working towards conserving the environment is a part of their strong 'Triple Bottom Line approach' of corporate management practice where they are making effort to match their profitability with the environmental well being. Results suggested that a hotel went beyond a limit to render respect to the environment which was evident by the action they initiated to transplant four hundred plus trees in their construction site to elsewhere in the city. Thus they facilitated the long term growth of the hotel without sacrificing the environmental cause.

Another large, old hotel embraced greening in the preceding five years by constantly making effort to incorporate as much green initiatives as possible in spite of their knowing that they can not make profits on green issues. This view is in accordance with the observation made by (Holcomb, 2007) that, corporate sustainability leaders achieve long term share holder value by gearing their strategies and management to harness the market's potential for sustainability products and services while at the same time successfully reducing and avoiding sustainability costs and risks." For another small, old hotel who would never wish to put the green agenda forward, "Green" is just a fancy word which is impracticable in terms of investment and time lag involved in the process of creating facilities and infrastructure for executing green initiatives. Managing the running costs is also a big difficulty for them. However they incorporated green initiatives only when they were associated with financial benefits. This supports the literature that the small firms faced financial constraints and therefore that some of the most commonly implemented measures were those that benefited the business financially (Tzschentke *et al.*, 2004).

Vision of the individuals at the helm of affairs appeared to have a commendable impact on hotels' green initiatives. Corporate hotels out-smarted the individual employers whose inadequacy of vision towards green ideology was noticeable. This was supported by the study undertaken by (Richardson and Lynes, 2007) where lack of vision and commitment on the part of the leaders of the organization did not yield the desired results.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The findings of the present study revealed the significance of managements' aspirations to adopt the "Best management practices". Informants could bring out the role of technology in implementation of green measures. All the hotels irrespective of old or new; small or big; established technologically supported facilities which drastically reduced wastage of energy and water which are the major expense accounts of the hotels. This view was justified in a study that, "By using proactive environmental strategies, firms can eliminate environmentally hazardous production processes, redesign existing product systems to reduce life cycle impacts, and develop new products with lower life cycle costs (Hart, 1995). "More advanced environmental strategies can assist the whole organization in achieving greater organizational efficiency." (Molina-Azorin *et al.*, 2009 : 1082). An interesting observation in this context is that, the high technology hotels would start claiming that they are green hotels by conserving resources like water and energy even though they intended merely to save their costs.

In the literature regarding best environmental practices, various issues relating to technology and processes are discussed. 3R Formula for environmental management that is, Reusing, Recycling and Reducing was suggested by (Grove, 1996). A prudent marketing manager may be able to realize the benefits by prudently harvesting the available opportunities to achieve the goals of the hotel. (Prakash, 2002) asserted that firms can make verifiable claims about the environmental impact of their management system and in turn make the customers to reward for it. It is evident from the findings of the present study that new and big hotels adopted the highest level of HR practices and could employ skilled and motivated workforce to materialize the greening aspirations.

STAKE HOLDER PRESSURE

Another motive for greening, extensively noticed in the literature is pressure exerted by various stake holders of the firm. As Tzschentke *et al.*, (2004) stated, the small firms faced financial constraints and therefore that they commonly implemented measures which benefited the business financially. As Brown, (1994) described, although some practices in the hotel industry could be viewed as being environmental, the main reason for introducing them are different: regulatory requirements, cost savings or customer pressure.

The present study facilitated the listing of the various stake holders of hotels as government, certification agencies, media and public and importantly customers. This is in line with the observation made by (Ambec and Lanoie, 2008) that firms are facing growing pressure to become greener. Various stake holders like consumers, investors, bankers, NGOs etc. press companies to reduce their negative impact on the environment.

Findings of the present study clearly indicated that, governmental pressure on greening of hotels did not exist at all as the compliance formalities were very minimal. Small, old hotels were quick to adhere to the norms set by the Government as regards rain water harvesting and solar energy installations because they were coupled with good amount of subsidies and reductions and also they would bring down their running costs substantially. It was very apparent that these hotels did never go beyond the regulatory norms set by the Government.

In the case of large, new hotels, Governmental norms did not impact on their green activities as they are enlightened to do much more than the legislation. As far as public and media are concerned all the hotels in general revealed that they are very supportive towards their environmental cause. On the other hand hotels that are not serious in environmental cause were also not pressurized by media and public. This observation contradicts the revelation made by Jay (1990) that social groups and media are active in bringing to light the firms which are harmful to the environment causing substantial damage to their reputation.

Customers are presumed to be very important stake holder for a hotel. There are two extreme judgments maintained by informants of hotels. Firstly, Large, new hotels are delighted by the response of customers towards their green initiatives though some times associated with some amount of inconveniences. This finding is a justification to the statement that there has been a wide spread acceptance towards the green ideology by the consumers whose number is growing day by day (Ruiz-Molina, 2010). Interestingly customers from west and east are more concerned about greening in hotels. Secondly small, old hotels are unhappy about the indifferent behavior and pampered expectations of customers towards green initiatives. The results also revealed that in many cases, cost cutting technology is the solution towards controlling such erring customers.

INCENTIVES

Certification on green initiatives and awards contributed to enhancing the image of the hotel and thus attracted the attention of enlightened customers. For big, new hotels which competed on "Green" theme, certification was of huge motivation to embrace greening. This finding was supported by (Klassen and McLaughlin, 1996) in that incentives extended to firms in the form of awards, certification and recognitions result in enhancing the image of the organization which indirectly supports the firm's profitability. Further certification and awards enhanced the image of the hotels in the minds of customers. This view was well supported by the literature study undertaken by Ann *et al.*,(2006) when he revealed that customers perceived 'enhanced corporate image' to be the strongest impact of certification. However Certification and awards did not carry any significance for Small and old hotels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, few recommendations are suggested in this section.

As the literature suggested, firms generally compete on different edges like price, quality and so on. A hotel, preferring to position green theme in the market as its unique selling proposition may put itself in to hardship as "Green" is not always the best seller. Greening is an emerging issue and managers of hotels need to develop a long term strategy involving "green concept selling" to enroll customers. This theme may be taken up by a well established corporate hotel extending its branches and slowly incorporate in other existing branches.

Results revealed that Indian customers are not as much enlightened about the green ideology as the western customers did. It is obvious that firms have to take initiative to change the perception of customers towards hotels in the light of green issues. Signing up of the visionaries at the helm of affairs and the employers towards this becomes necessary to formulate the environmental management practices and marketing strategies.

The Media, public groups and green consumer groups need to team up with the visionaries of green hotels in bringing awareness among consumers. Further, government and local authorities were found to be passive towards the environment. Green hotels, along with other stake holders may make effort to set pressure on the government to put the green legislation on wheels.

In the absence of government legislation, standard environmental management system can not be expected in hotels. Hotels which are emerging successfully on the green ideology may potentially lead the industry through knowledge and technology sharing so that minimum standards of environmental practices are ensured in all hotels. Further, the hotels competing on the green agenda need to stress more on HR training and development to make the business more viable. Pro-active HR policies would prove beneficial both to the firms and the environment.

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