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SERVICE SUSTAINABILITY IN HOTEL OPERATIONS – AN INTROSPECTIVE APPROACH

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Abstract:

In most industries, some firms are more profitable than others, regardless of whether the average profitability of the industry is high or low. The superior performers conceivably possess something special and hard to imitate that allows them to outperform their rivals. These unique skills and assets (resources) are referred to as sources of competitive advantage strategy literature. (bharadwaj, Sundar. G) Sustainable strategies and practices can be just as useful in service operations as in manufacturing operations; and second, that such strategies and practices can support a hotel turnaround effort. This can possibly be achieved by introducing two business principles, decentralized management and sustainable development. Sustainable buildings and hotels have an important role in reducing the negative impact on the environment since they use energy, water, waste, materials and land much more efficiently than buildings simply built to code (Persic-Zivadinov, Irena.). A hotels sustainable value system, embodied in the concept of progression, which links customers and employees, can support environmental responsibility. Through employee-training programs, environmental-information systems, and innovative collaborations with suppliers, hotels can look into a revival policy within a few years as a profitable corporation well on the road to sustainability. As people are becoming more aware of the damage caused on the environment by regular business activities, it has become increasingly obvious that the hotel industry does more than its share in harming and wasting environmental resources. As a result, more and more guests are looking for hotels following practices to protect environment. Becoming a green hotel l can be the foundation for a great marketing strategy, and the first step in marketing is providing consumers with what they want or need. (kamal manaktola, Vinnie Jauhari)

KEY WORDS:

introspective approach , Service Sustainability , Hotel Operations , manufacturing operations.

INTRODUCTION

India needs to shed its reluctance of encouraging tourism by affluent Westerners. Tourism, if properly planned and promoted can provide 20+ million jobs in next ten years and foreign exchange in excess of 30 billion dollars. What India needs is a firm policy and commitment to expand tourism as a source of sustainable economic development with value for the tourists and enhancement of India's cultural heritage (Kuthiala, SK). Sustainable strategies and practices can be just as useful in service operations as in manufacturing operations; and second, that such strategies and practices can support a hotel turnaround

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effort.

Sustainability typically is viewed as an operating framework that applies to hotel organizations.. This is partly because hotels are more visible with their products, processes, management and environment concerns. Also, common wisdom suggests that hotels rarely use sustainability to support a turnaround, generally viewing it instead as a goal to attain after they are financially secure.

The economic stresses of the early 1990s revealed India's underlying weaknesses: rapid growth, an unfocused strategy, and swelling staff. It rolled out hotels in new cities with no control over the efficiency of each investment. The ambition was to become a fancy, up-market business model chain. While the customer base appreciated the original product, there was no market for what they were doing in terms of sustainable practices. So when profitability spun out of control, they didn't know why. Hoteliering became a question mark.....

A New Strategic Direction: Decentralization and Sustainability

Indian hotel markets are maturing and the key game changers are the emergence of secondary and tertiary cities. India's brand appeal is working well and new opportunities are opening up in smaller cities. Additionally, avenues like medical tourism, religious sites and circuits and adventure tourism offer substantial business opportunities (Jauhari, Rishi, Meghna)

Turning the focus on the customer meant implementing two strategic principles: decentralized management and environmental responsibility. Whereas the previous hotel management had controlled employees' every move, the vision for the new industry is to put decision-making power directly in the hands of sales- and service-front-line workers, "right at the customer level." The survival of hotels in the current competitive environment where most hotels have quite similar luxurious physical facilities much depends on delivery of service quality aiming to result in customer delight (Mohsin, Asad; Lockyer, Tim). Implementing the first strategic principle, decentralized management, seemed to for a hotel to revive its focus on the customer. In a service industry where reputation depends on attention to the most intimate details, customers can directly determine a hotel's success or failure. Decentralized management allowed employees, who interact daily with customers in countless moments of truth, to make their own decisions on the spot. (Xu, Cheng)

So, contrary to the prevailing notion that only stable hotels with appreciable resources can afford to experiment with environmentally responsible practices, sustainability has to be made key building growth block for a new direction, future growth, and market success by integrating it into the hotel's core strategic thinking to assist the turn-around. It could be an effective way to forge a tighter bond with guests a service industry like hospitality.

As an industry which produces both "tangible" and "intangible" products (Zeithaml et al 1990), using sometimes indefinable processes and practices (Nankervis 1993, 1995), within a symbiotic but fragile interdependent framework of tourism suppliers, intermediaries and associated services, it is uniquely susceptible to vagaries in its own structures and relationships (Nankervis, Alan R.). Creating customer loyalty through sustainability is certainly a reasonable option for hotels to pursue. Interestingly, initial customer demand for heightened environmental awareness came not from guests but from those who worked in hotels in metro cities and began to ask about the hotel's disposal practices and larger environmental policy. This demand quickly spread throughout many other metro and tier 1 and tier 2 cities. According to a 2011 consumer report, six out of every 10 consumers said they regularly rejected offerings from hotels that don't take into account the environment; just two years later, one in every four guests rejected such hotels. Concentrating on customer loyalty and retention as a means of building market share is more critical now in India than for the average hotel operating in other geographic regions. (Mishra, Sita; 2014)

Tomorrow's hospitality market is about mutual values. One has to look inward-at interior design and gourmet food-instead of outward at the values of the market. The next generation won't tolerate insensitivity to the environment.

The aim is to build customer loyalty (and hence financial stability) partly by establishing "an emotional tie between the customers and the hotel" based on a common desire for environmental improvement. At the same time, empowering staff also demanded increased environmental responsibility from the hotel. (Kozlowski, Kathryn M.)

Employee Training and Environmental Information Systems

A hotel's top priority is to communicate its new values and strategy to its workforce through

SERVICE SUSTAINABILITY IN HOTEL OPERATIONS – AN INTROSPECTIVE APPROACH

education and training.(Duschenes, Christopher S A.) "It would be impossible to implement a goal of sustainable development without knowledge. The message about the environment is very attractive to everyone, because you can use that knowledge in your private life as well as for work. If you involve everyone in the hotel, one can achieve huge results through critical and key decisions like:

Don't take more from the earth than can be naturally recreated there;
Do not use unnatural and no degradable substances, such as PCBs and DDT;
Preserve areas of natural greenery and nature's diversity; and
Use the earth's resources efficiently and fairly.

The hotel's education program has to entail two principal efforts. Create an internal hub, that trains managers and other employees in basic and specialized skills of hotel management and secondly roll out a new environmental training course and call it "the environmental dialogue," to emphasize communication among the key stakeholders-staff, customer, and suppliers-the program focused on teamwork to achieve the mutually beneficial end of a better environment.

In addition combining the purchasing and environmental functions makes it easier to press suppliers for more environmentally friendly products, ideas, and solutions and pave the way for partnerships that has to prove fruitful for all stakeholders. A frequent model the hotel can use is to jointly develop a product with a supplier, and retain exclusive rights to use it for a specified period of time before allowing the supplier to sell it to others.

New sustainability ideas like:

Developing a 97% recyclable room
Expand a rooms average life without increasing costs
Usage of natural cotton and wool on walls rather than synthetic textiles
Removing mercury usage by reducing the size of mirrors.
Creating a environ-customer loyalty award for guests who engage in the hotels initiative

Developing a Resource Hunt

The successful implementation of many environmental measures and educating its staff of over environmental strategy can be dubbed the resource hunt. The goal of this program is to combine environmental initiatives and operational efficiency at individual hotels to achieve 40-percent reductions in energy and water consumption and 30-percent cuts in the volume of unsorted waste over three years. "The goal should be change individuals' behavior, not through technical investments," but by facilitating implementation by employees in terms of developing a booklet explaining the rationale and how-tos of energy and water management.

"It's very important not to affect the comfort of guests or the atmosphere of the hotel in these cases, as bulk of the concept has to be behind the scenes". To minimize customer discomfort, many of the measures can be implemented "back of house," such as dimming or turning off corridor lights and reducing unnecessary water use. Incentives for employees to change behavior should build into the new program. The hotel has to create a fund for each idea, according to the reductions in energy, water, etc. The money saved is then designated for additional training for hotel employees, so they directly reap the benefits of their changed behavior.

Sustainability to Profitability

The many benefits of the sustainability strategy have been cost savings and employee satisfaction. For instance, despite the fact that most work tends to carry very low status, especially in India where the population is high, hotels can become a popular place to work, especially among young people, if the hotel emphasizes work as a career, rather than as a temporary job, and provided continual training and job rotation, it will regularly attract a pool of educated youth from which to select employees.(Buchanan, Winston L.) This young talent can easily identify with the hotel's environmentally progressive policies. Environmental activities are also important to the hotel from a market perspective. An increasing number of customers are demanding that hotels accept their environmental responsibility and the hotel's concern for the environment helps reinforce the values shared with its staff and customers as well as increasing their loyalty towards stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Experience suggests that sustainable strategies are not solely the domain of financially secure hotels, but that such efforts can also support a turnaround. Opportunities exist for implementing sustainable practices in service operations, a relatively neglected area and perhaps in practice compared with the manufacturing sector. Also, experience reveals that the hotels' location impacts its sustainability potential. Developers will benefit from locating projects in urban locations and brownfield sites, which will yield smaller carbon footprints while connecting to existing infrastructure and public transportation are opportunities for achieving many environmental innovations and benefits across the value chain verticals (Smith, Edgar J.,). Further, study shows that successful implementation of sustainable strategies may be aided by-or even be dependent on-strong leadership, employee education, and information and measurement systems. Finally, sustainable strategies can be a means to improve customer loyalty and employee satisfaction.

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