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## **A STUDY ON HOTEL EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF GREEN PRACTICES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI CITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

During the last few decades, it has become a common phenomenon to focus on the environmental impact of the hotel industry with each hotel striving to achieve environmental sensitivity even though there is no universally agreed upon definition of a green hotel. Although green practices are widely accepted by the hotel industry, there are still some challenges in implementing green practices in the industry that need to be examined in order to move green practices forward. This study examines how employees of the hotel industry perceive green practices. Data was collected from 120 employees working in various hotels in Chennai city. Research results revealed that performance levels of green practices implemented by hotels were lower than the importance levels of those same green practices as perceived by various hotel employees. The results of the study illustrated that (1) the employees' perception regarding green practices was not different than one of the hoteliers in terms of importance and performance, and (2) employees weighted the green practices that were beneficial to them as more important than green practices that required their behavior change. Also, a positive correlation between organizational commitment and green practices detected in this study which suggests that hotel organizations may anticipate positive ramifications of green practices in relation to HR approach when they embrace green practices. Employees' green perceptions at work were generalized by their demographic characteristics, yet a number of considerable results were garnered from this study. This study suggests that hotels need to spend more time and effort in communicating their green practice to employees. Training to improve green practices should be versatile and job-

specific with strategies developed to motivate the employees to engage in green practices. Overall, this study proposes that hotels simply deploying green practices are not enough. They should carefully plan their green practices by training and motivating employees.

**Keywords:** Green practices, Perception, Behavior change, Demographic Factors.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the past thirty years, the hotel industry has identified environmentally responsible movements as one of most important items on the agenda for hotel operations. Evidenced by a myriad of practices aimed at improving the environmental impact on the hotel industry, hoteliers are more committed to environmental issues. A recent Green Assessment Survey conducted by American Hotel & Lodging Association polled 217 respondents' properties and revealed that nearly ninety percent of them have adopted green activities (American Hotel & Lodging Association [AH&LA], 2008). This statistic is an indication that green practices are not only widely accepted but have also become the norm in the hotel industry. Various studies have been conducted relating to environmental concerns, yet the scope has its limitations as the majority of these studies focus primarily on the area of marketing strategy, often investigating consumer perceptions about green products. There are a few studies that have investigated environmental concerns within the hotel industry, but the majority of them focus on hoteliers' attitudes or awareness. In fact, the perspective of hotel employees regarding green practices has gone virtually uninvestigated even though the success of implementing green practices will largely be achieved by employees.

Currently, the term "green" is used to signify "environmentally friendly" when, in fact, it is much more than that. One of the important aspects that should be understood about green practices is that the range of the term "green" is broad and varying based on perspective. From an economic management point of view, Gupta defines "greening" as corporate environmental performance in meeting stockholders' expectations. Shrivastava views environmental management as a tool to fit into a social and ecological system. Further, Gupta and Sharma define green practices as environmentally friendly management principles in which executive levels convert natural resources into better outputs or products. In the hotel industry, practices associated with green concerns are diverse; they may encompass a variety of activities from pollution prevention to stakeholders' education regarding these activities. However, for the purpose of the study this research views green practices as

internal efforts or activities of a hotel to implement environmentally friendly practices towards the goal of becoming a green facility.

In general, the term “green facility or hotel” can be used interchangeably with or synonymously for “an environment friendly hotel,” “an eco-friendly hotel,” or “a sustainable hotel.” During the last few decades it has become a common phenomenon to focus on the environmental impact of the hotel industry with each hotel striving to achieve environmental sensitivity even though there is no universally agreed upon definition of a green hotel. This has not stopped academics, governmental agencies and nonprofit environmental organizations from introducing their own definitions. For instance, some scholars define a green hotel as an environmentally sensitive hotel that operates its business in a manner that minimizes degradation of the environment. The specific areas of focus are energy efficiency, recycling, water conservation, and clean air practices define a green hotel as a lodging facility committed to ecological practices such as saving of water, energy and waste. Interestingly, several states introduced definitions of a green facility in order to encourage or reinforce green practices by hotels. Such definitions are worth mentioning as they might provide a more practical view of what a green hotel should be. Green hotels are defined as properties which are managed utilizing environmentally friendly business procedures, which include policies and procedures as well as activities such as water and energy conservation and waste reduction. According to Alexander, a green hotel is defined as a property which strives to pursue environmentally friendly business disciplines through energy efficiency, conservation of water and reduction of waste. Based on these various concepts of what comprises a green hotel, this study utilizes the definition of focuses on the following: a green hotel as one that must practice certain functional or operational tasks in the areas of energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling (waste reduction), and clean air (air quality control).

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Harris & Crane, 2012** the term “green facility or hotel” can be used interchangeably with or synonymously for “an environment friendly hotel,” “an eco-friendly hotel,” or “a sustainable hotel.” During the last few decades it has become a common phenomenon to focus on the environmental impact of the hotel industry with each hotel striving to achieve environmental sensitivity even though there is no universally agreed upon definition of a green hotel.

**The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (2009)** defines indoor air quality as the quality of air inside buildings as expressed by concentrations of pollutants and the thermal conditions that affect the health, comfort, and performance of the occupants

**Bohdanowicz (2006)** points out in the study of managers' perceptions in Indian & European hotels that doubts have been raised regarding financial effectiveness of green practices because the functional attributes of green practices are highly related to installation of new technologies or systems that increase costs. However, several case studies indicate the fact that the cost of new systems will be offset by savings in water, energy and waste reduction costs within a few years.

**Iwanowski & Rushmore, 2006** Green certified cleaning products such as "Green Seal" improve indoor air quality and reduce emissions of volatile organic chemicals. Some challenges accompany the use of these products such as the effectiveness of these cleaners and their higher price. Regardless of these challenges, green products certainly contribute to improving air quality by reducing toxic emissions.

**According to Mensah, (2004)** the number of firms that considered green facilities for their meetings spaces increased by 10 percent between 1997 and 1998. This significant growth in attention paid to green practices in the hotel industry is clearly demonstrated in the case of the Saunders Hotel Group which estimated that its promotion of the term "green practices" contributed to bringing over \$2 million of new group business.

**Harris & Crane, 2002** although green practices are widely accepted by the hotel industry, there are still some challenges in implementing green practices in the industry that need to be examined in order to move green practices forward. As discussed, there is the lack of a universally or widely accepted definition of green practices.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is focused on analyzing **A Study on Hotel Employees' Perception of Green Practices with Special Reference to Chennai City**; this also analyzes the problems faced by the hotel industry outlets to meet the perceptions of the employees. This study also explores

the employees changing behaviours while selecting their hotels and employees perception' while making their perception decisions. Hence the nature of this study is Descriptive.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Although studies on green concerns in industry have reproduced, two major research gaps exist in regards to the hotel industry. First, the majority of studies on green practices have focused on manufacturing operations; the hotel industry as a whole should be investigated as it has a unique set of circumstances and challenges that could likely yield differing results. Green practices of hotels differ from those of manufacturing on two levels: (1) generally, hotels tend to be more labor intensive than the manufacturing firms. Labor intensive in this context implies that hotels heavily rely on manpower to exercise green practices. Additionally, the amount of natural resources used at work by the employees is not predictable, unlike the machines of the manufacturing industry, and (2) the operational nature of the hotel business, open 365 days per year, expects more natural resources consumption than manufacturing firms do. Therefore, it is essential to examine green practices in the hotel industry specifically. Second, there is a need to examine how hotel employees perceive green practices in order to better understand application of green practices to the hotel industry. Previous studies have not examined the employees' perspectives on green practices, but have instead focused on guest perceptions and attitudes of managers. Meanwhile, researchers suggest that employee perception or attitude towards green activities may affect the organization's ultimate green performance. Also, employees lead the way to success by not only creating a green culture but being one of the crucial elements to having a greener hotel industry considering that they demonstrate hands-on green activities in the work environment. Therefore, understanding how hotel employees perceive green practices is not only critical in implementing successful green programs but also an essential element to consider when developing appropriate plans and evaluating capabilities in order to remain competitive in the hotel market of the future.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine green practices in terms of importance from the perspective of the hotel employees.
- To evaluate green practices in terms of performance from the perspective of the hotel employees.

- To examine the relationship between organizational commitment and green practices.
- To investigate whether the employee's green perceptions at work are different based on the demographic characteristics of employees.
- To recommend Human Resource Management (HRM) approaches for hotels involved in green practices.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- This study is conducted only in hotel employees', Chennai city.
- Getting information from the respondents was quite difficult.
- The opinions of the respondents may be biased.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The goal of the study was to examine green practices of the hotel industry from its employees' perspectives. This study is descriptive which employed a self-administered and closed-ended questionnaire to survey employees in the hotel industry. The reason this study employed the survey method was to obtain research data aimed at generalizing green perceptions from the sample to a population so that inferences can be suggested. Also, three advantages of the survey were recognized. These were: (1) the rapid turnaround in data collection, (2) suitability to obtaining the targeted sample size, and (3) the economy of the design.

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

A closed-ended question and self-administered questionnaire was developed after conducting a relevant literature review of green practices. Thirty total items were listed under four different sections: The four major green dimensions: energy efficiency (EF), water conservation (WC), recycling (RC), and clean air (CA) which were followed by the five functional green attributes underneath each. The green dimensions were generated from the previous academic literature, and the five functional green features were introduced and modified from literature, green surveys of organizations, and the requirements to be enlisted in a green lodging in the Chennai city.

The majority of this survey used 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used. Demographic characteristics – factual information - asked the respondents

to check the category that they belonged. However, age, working experience for the hotels, and the industry - requested that respondents provide actual years by filling in the options. The detail of each section of the questionnaire used to survey the hotel employees.

### **SAMPLING METHOD**

The researcher has used Random Sampling Technique to select the respondents for the primary data collection. All the employees who are working in hotels' in Chennai city were approached to fill the Questionnaire. When they had difficulties to fill the Questionnaire, the Researcher had helped them to fill them.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

The administered Questionnaires were distributed to the employees those were working the hotels in Chennai City. When the employees' were filling the Questionnaires, they had some doubts. Those doubts were clarified and the Researcher personally helped them to fill the Questionnaire. Out of 150 Questionnaires distributed, 30 were rejected due to insufficiency of information. 120 Questionnaires were filled with all necessary data. They were interpreted.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The collected data were analyzed and inferences were drawn. To analyse the collected data the researcher used Simple percentage analysis, ANOVA and Chi-Square.

#### **A) RELIABILITY TEST - CRONBACH'S ALPHA**

A Reliability test was carried out with a questionnaire to analyse the **HOTEL EMPLOYEES'**

The questionnaire was administrated to 10 employees of retail mall. The data collected on this process has been tested using Cronbachs Alpha for its reliability. The result of the testing and validation revealed that the questionnaire possessed the reliability with the value of 0.802. The questionnaire was best fitted in a normal distribution. So, it was inferred that the questionnaire used for pilot study was highly suitable in ascertaining the responses from the green practices of their employees' perception.

- Reliability Statistics - **SPSS Output for Cronbach's Alpha**

Statistics - **SPSS Output for Cronbach's Alpha**

**B) SIMPLE PERCENTAGE METHOD**

**C) CHI-SQUARE TEST**

**D) ONE ANOVA**

**E) RANK CORRELATION**

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**  
**TABLE SHOWING THE RESPONDENTS CLASSIFICATION BASED ON THEIR**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>No. of</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Male	85	71
	Female	35	29
	Total	120	100
Age	<25	28	23
	26-30	42	35
	31-35	17	14
	36-40	21	18
	>40	12	10
	Total	120	100
Marital Status	Single	64	53
	Married	36	30
	Separated	6	5
	Divorced	10	9
	Widowed	4	3
	Total	120	100
Education Qualification	Schooling & below schooling level	23	19
	Diploma	13	11
	Graduation	28	23
	Post - Graduation	39	33
	Others	17	14
	Total	120	100
Departments	Food & Bakery production	38	32
	Food & Beverage service	30	25
	Housekeeping	19	16
	Front office	20	16
	others	13	11
	Total	120	100
Salary	Less than 15000	28	23
	15001-20000	27	22
	20001-25000	26	22
	25001-30000	07	6
	Above 30001	32	27
	Total	120	100



71% of the respondents are Male and 29% of the respondents are Female. 23% of the respondents are below <25 age groups. 35% of the respondents are below 26-30 age groups. 14% of the respondents are below 31-35 age groups. 18% of the respondents are below 36-40 age groups. 10% of the respondents are below >40 age groups. 53% of the respondents are single. 30% of the respondents are married. 5% of the respondents are separated. 9% of the respondents are divorced and 3% of the respondents are widowed. 19% of the respondents belong to Schooling & below schooling level, 11% of the respondents belong to Diploma, 23% of the respondents belong to Graduation Level, 33% of the respondents belong to the PG Level, and 14% of the respondents belong to the Other Qualification. 32% of the respondents are working under the Food & Bakery production department, 25% of the respondents are Food & Beverage service department, 16% of the respondents are Housekeeping, 16% of the respondents are Housekeeping department and 11% of the respondents are others. 23% of the respondents belong to the Income level of Less than 15000, 22% of the respondents belong to the Income level of 15001-20000, 22% of the respondents belongs to the Income level of 20001-25000, 6% of the respondents belongs to the income level of 25001-30000 and 27% of the respondents the Income level is Above 30001.

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
.802	20

**HOTEL EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF GREEN PRACTICES**

<b>Employee perception</b>	<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>%</b>
Recycling	Recycling (cardboards, papers, etc)	16	13
	Using reusable utensils rather than disposable ones	19	16
	Purchasing/using post consumer recyclable products	25	21
	Serves proper portion of food to reduce food waste	24	20
	Paperless policy including use of electronic software/system	36	30
	<b>Total no. of respondents</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Clean Air	Non-smoking policy for indoor air quality	15	12
	Place green live plants on property for the quality of indoor air	13	11
	Keeping relative humidity at certain level to prevent the growth of mold	26	22
	Using environmentally preferable cleaning products	31	26
	Cleaning AC units regularly to prevent bacteria	35	29
	<b>Total no. of respondents</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Energy Efficiency	Using automatic sensor lighting on property	12	10
	Using Energy Star rated equipments	18	15
	Using high energy efficient lighting through the property	48	40
	Setting appropriate temperature in back of the house	15	12.5
	Using sky-lights to maximize natural light throughout the property	27	22.5
	<b>Total no. of respondents</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>
Water Conservation	Towel and linen reuse program	18	15
	Using low-flow fixtures	28	23
	Using automatic low-flow fixtures	35	29
	Reclaiming water for reuse	15	13
	Landscaping with native plants to minimize water consumption	24	20
	<b>Total no. of respondents</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

**Recycling:** 13% of the respondents are feels that Recycling (cardboards, papers, etc), 16% of the respondents are feels that Using reusable utensils rather than disposable ones, 21% of the respondents are feels that Purchasing/using post consumer recyclable products, 20% of the respondents are feels that Serves proper portion of food to reduce food waste, 30% of the respondents are feels that Paperless policy including use of electronic software/system

**Clean Air:** 12% of the respondents are feels that Non-smoking policy for indoor air quality, 11% of the respondents are feels that Place green live plants on property for the quality of indoor air, 22% of the respondents are feels that Keeping relative humidity at certain level to prevent the growth of mold, 22% of the respondents are feels that Using environmentally preferable cleaning products, 29% of the respondents are feels that Cleaning AC units regularly to prevent bacteria

**Energy Efficiency:** 10% of the respondents are feels that using automatic sensor lighting on property, 15% of the respondents are feels that Using Energy Star rated equipments, 40% of the respondents are feels that Using high energy efficient lighting through the property, 1205% of the respondents are feels that Setting appropriate temperature in back of the house, 22.5% of the respondents are feels that using sky-lights to maximize natural light throughout the property

**Water Conservation:** 15% of the respondents are feels that Towel and linen reuse program, 23% of the respondents are feels that Using low-flow fixtures, 29% of the respondents are

feels that Using automatic low-flow fixtures, 13% of the respondents are feels that Reclaiming water for reuse, 20% of the respondents are feels that landscaping with native plants to minimize water consumption.

### CHI-SQUARE

#### OVERALL SUMMARY OF Departments VS Recycling

S.No	Dimension	Ho	D.f	P value	Level of significance	Remarks
1.	Departments Vs Recycling (cardboards, papers, etc)	There is no significant association between the variables Departments vs Recycling (cardboards, papers, etc)	4	0.154	0.05	Ho accepted
2.	Departments Vs Using reusable utensils rather than disposable ones	There is no significant association between the variables Departments vs Using reusable utensils rather than disposable ones	4	0.013	0.05	Ho rejected
3.	Departments Vs Purchasing/using post consumer recyclable products	There is no significant association between the variables Departments Vs Purchasing/using post consumer recyclable products	4	0.252	0.05	Ho accepted
4.	Departments Vs Serves proper portion of food to reduce food waste	There is no significant association between the variables Departments Vs Serves proper portion of food to reduce food waste	4	0.868	0.05	Ho accepted
5.	Departments Vs Paperless policy including use of electronic software/system	There is no significant association between the variables Departments Vs Paperless policy including use of electronic software/system	4	0.344	0.05	Ho accepted

**Hypothesis:**There is no relationship between personal factors- departments’ vs. sources of recycling about hotel employees’ perception of green practices. It is clear that the p-value is more than 0.05 for 4 factor so ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is accepted at 5 percent level of significance. Hence, there is relationship between departments’ vs. using reusable utensils rather than disposable ones.

**ONE WAY ANOVA OVERALL SUMMARY  
EDUCATION QUALIFICATION VS ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

S.no	Dimensions	Ho: Hypothesis	Category	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	sig.	Result
1	Education Qualification vs Using automatic sensor lighting on property	There is no significant association between the variables Education Qualification and Using automatic sensor lighting on property	Between groups	5.124	4	1.281	0.550	0.699	<b>Ho Accepted</b>
			With in groups	267.676	115	2.328			
			Total	272.800	119				
2	Education Qualification vs Using Energy Star rated equipments	There is no significant association between the variables Education Qualification vs Using Energy Star rated equipments	Between groups	3.449	4	0.862	0.368	0.831	<b>Ho Accepted</b>
			With in groups	269.351	115	2.342			
			Total	272.800	119				

3	Education Qualification vs Using high energy efficient lighting through the property	There is no significant association between the variables Education Qualification vs Using high energy efficient lighting through the property	Between groups	10.243	4	2.561	1.122	0.350	<b>Ho Accepted</b>
			With in groups	262.557	115	2.283			
			Total	272.800	119				
4	Education Qualification vs Setting appropriate temperature in back of the house	There is no significant association between the variables Education Qualification vs Setting appropriate temperature in back of the house	Between groups	15.289	4	3.822	1.707	0.153	<b>Ho Accepted</b>
			With in groups	257.511	115	2.239			
			Total	272.800	119				
5	Education Qualification vs Using sky-lights to maximize natural light throughout the property	There is no significant association between the variables Education Qualification vs Using sky-lights to maximize natural light throughout the property	Between groups	13.694	4	3.424	1.519	0.201	<b>Ho Accepted</b>
			With in groups	259.106	115	2.253			
			Total	272.800	119				

**Hypothesis:** There is no relationship between personal factors- Education Qualification vs energy efficiency about hotel employees' perception of green practices. It is clear that the p-value is more than 0.05 for the above factor so ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is accepted at 5 percent level of significance.

### RANK CORRELATION OVERALL SUMMARY

S.No	Factors	Values	Rank
1	Recycling	4.15	4
2	Clean Air	4.77	1
3	Energy Efficiency	4.26	3
4	Water Conservation	4.57	2

The above table reveals that majority of the respondents ranked Clean air factor as I towards the effects with their employees followed closely water conservation factor which obtain the weight age of 4.57, the III position was ranked by energy efficiency which obtain the score of 4.26, fourth towards recycling for green practices of employees perception which obtain the weight age of 4.15.

### SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

For last few decades, green practices have been commonly embraced by hotels. Besides to the fact that there are several motivations to push the industry for going green, such practices are becoming a matter of policy not option. Based on a survey of 120 hotel employees in Chennai city, this study has established the fact that the major stakeholder of the hotel industry, its employees, has perceived green practices in a positive light and attached a high level of importance to them. It is important to note that employees recognize the quality of their employers' performance in green related activities and agree that industry wide improvement is needed. It is apparent that the link between green practices and organizational commitment is still its formative stages in academia since the relationship between the two more likely requires additional investigation. However, this study supports a newly thriving positive relationship and should be recognized throughout the hotel industry as a stepping stone for future goals and commitments to green strategies. Furthermore, this positive correlation between green practices and employees' perception may serve as a training tool for HR strategy as well as act to communicate a positive corporate image to employees. Employees' perception of green initiatives in workplace was not influenced by their demographic characteristics; however, it should not be said that those characteristics are invalid to examine the employees' green perception. This study detects a few noticeable facts about the employees' importance and performance perception. Also, it suspects that if the demographic factors are used in combination of circumstances, the results may be more consistent and significant. Worth nothing is this study suggests that in order for improvement in the implementation and practices of green initiatives, hotels should take into consideration

not only compliance to suggested guidelines but also the degree to which employees embrace those initiatives. The root of commitment should be cultivated by the employees to realize success.

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