



Analysis of How Resort Hotels Find an Equilibrium Stage among Environment, Economy and Society Aspects When Implementing Sustainable Development Strategies

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Abstract: The mission for resort hotels is to gain profit with considering environmental protection and attaching importance to the business's social responsibility. By reaching the mission, resort hotels are able to step on the equilibrium stage of environment, economy and society. With the aim of understanding how resort hotels set applicable strategies with considering sustainability, the article analyzes the possible sustainability methods that resort hotel industry can apply, while facing the problem of high dependency and competition. During analyzing, sustainability is divided into environmental, economic and social perspectives. Suggested strategies are separately explained under each perspective correspond to the industry challenges. With analyzing, a result come out as environment, economy and society are inseparable to make business decisions as they intertwine with each other.

Keywords: resort hotels, sustainable development, environment, economy, society

1. Introduction

Sustainability is commonly described as the intersection bridging ecological, social and economic concerns[1]. In recent years, it is also noticeable that Cooperate Social Responsibility (CSR) is closely linked with sustainability. Various hospitality industries are realizing the importance of finding an equilibrium point among environment, economy and society, and some of them already been stepping into the stage of applying sustainability strategies in business management. Hotels are always walking in the front place, as hotel managers generally pay more attention to environmental issues[2], and need to suit in the mainstream of the industry full of competitors. As tourism industry is in a boom nowadays, competition is huge for hotels which cannot satisfy their guests. In addition, resort hotels are more dependent than other types of hotels, and rely their business on the tourist-season. A beach resort hotel has its most guest flows during the summer period, which mean that during the other time there may be fewer guests and could bring down the business revenue.

How hotels play the role in protecting environment, or maintain eco-friendly attitude has become a major consideration of guests to evaluate hotels. Researchers on guest psychology pointed out that, individuals with high income[3], high education level[4] or high status[5] demand higher environmental quality and have stronger behavioral intentions for being pro-environmental. Consequently, guests evaluating hotels not only based on how much they fulfill their needs but also how the resort hotels help them to actualize their spiritual requirements and meet with their environmental self-responsibility. Those take sustainability into their business management and operation would be more attractive for guests.

With mentioned in the background, sustainability is well-received by society so applying sustainability as business managing strategy is vital for resort hotels to survive and develop. The main challenges of resort hotels are the high dependency on tourist flow and seasonality, as well as the strong industry competition. In consequence, resort hotel should be more innovative and independent, combining quality with profitability, and focus more on the unexpressed needs and expectation of guests. Thus, this report will be analyzing the applicable managing strategies for resort hotels, from environmental, economic and social perspectives.

2. Analysis and discussion

2.1 Environment

Environment has become an essential behavioral decision value for people to make choices among different hotels[6]. Also, from guest psychology aspect, they are intensive to choose hotels applied the pro-environmental concept and provide 'green' experience.

Using environmental-friendly materials and resources in hotel operation are applicable ways. According to the data collection on carbon emission in China's hotel industry from 1996 to 2010, Zhang and Da (2015) pointed out that hotel

industry accounted for a dramatical proportion of carbon emission comparing with other industries under hospitality category, as it should maintain the living needs for each guest[7]. For resort hotels, the situation is even worse, because during peak tourist season, the number of guests sharply increases, thus the use of energy also rises. It is vital for resort hotels to use clean energies for supporting their daily use. As resort hotels are distributed in different tourist spots with different geographic landscapes and natural resources, they can make decisions based on the location. For example, beach resort hotels can make use of tidal energy, while mountain resort hotels can make use of wind energy.

Along with using clean energy, resort hotels should incorporate environmental protection into every operating detail. As recyclable materials are now a new fashion for making products, resort hotels can also seize this good opportunity. Numerous of hotels have already been using furniture made by recycled wastes. Starwood owned W Hotel started its cooperation with Coca-Cola to use bed sheets made by recycled coke bottles from April 2015. They collect back the used coke bottles and regenerate them into polyester fiber materials, which then be used as raw material to produce bed sheets for each room in W Hotel. Coincidentally, Hilton carried out the Soap Recycling Plan in the same year, which is about collecting used soaps in Hilton to make new soaps after removing impurities and thoroughly disinfecting[8].

2.2 Economy

In the hotel industry, the significance of analyzing economy is finding ways to make profits for the business. The most serious problems resort hotels facing with are their high dependency and strong competition, which both significantly impact on hotel revenue. While resort hotels rely their business on tourist season, the revenue gap between peak season and off-season could be tremendous. . Further, in the hospitality industry, the fixed costs are rather high, with the marginal costs quite low[9]. Apart from dependency, the strong industry competition is another urgent situation as every resort hotels are threatening each other.

Over dependency and strong competition are inevitable problems for resort hotels. Thus, the main solution is not to omit or escape from the challenges, but to enhance the brand awareness and brand image, which can become the competitive advantages of the hotel. Due to the fact that the revenue for peak and off season is in great disparity, implementing different methods in different tourist seasons is feasible.

During off-season, while guest flow is limited, resort hotel managers should make good use of this 'break time' to make their hotel sound. Resort hotels with meeting all green condition can apply for the green hotel certifications, which is key to be listed as an eco-friendly hotel. A global accepted green certificate like the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) could arouse an international awareness for the brand[10]. Meanwhile, resort hotel managers can provide systematic training program for front-line employees of the pro-environmental strategies which hotel are applying. Hotel industry as one member of the huge service industry depends its brand image highly on customers' word-of-mouth. With a clear understanding of hotels' actions, employees can perform more proactive instead of just telling the guests what the hotel is doing.

During peak-season, the adequate amount of hotel guests and the respectable revenue guarantee a solid base for trying all sorts of creative sustainable strategies in operation. In this time period, it is a good idea to diversify hotels' service experience provided for guests by cooperating with local enterprises, restaurants or the tourist spot. Take Accor owned Ibis Hotel Suzhou as an example, it encourages its guest to reuse towels in rooms more than one day so as to decrease the cleaning cost, then uses the money saved for planting trees in Suzhou Park (five towels for one tree). Ibis Hotel's cooperation with Suzhou Park arouse discussion and is praised by society, which also wins reputation.

Resort hotels should realize that meantime with making profits, cooperating with other business and provide diversified experiences to guests is vital. Under this win-win circumstance, the brand image can be enhanced.

2.3 Society

Resorts hotel should be able to build up a dual-level of social responsibility. It is explained as hotels should not only recognize their own social responsibilities but also help guests to their fulfill socially responsible requirements[11]. Social requirements for hotels are various, from ensuring guest safety to using eco-friendly resources. It changes with time and varies from hotel to hotel. As for a resort hotel, one highlighted responsibility is sustainable development[12], which includes being responsible to the environment of the resort and the tourist community. Moreover, resort hotels are expected to provide ways for guests to fulfill their social responsibility needs. For example, according to Puig et al., hotels can apply the Carbon Footprint Analysis System in operation[13]. This system will calculate the estimated data of carbon emission for each guest based on their use of energy during their stay. By showing these data, it can help guests with pro-environmental attitude to better regulate themselves for fulfilling their self-responsibility.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, as sustainability is an aggregation of environment, economy and society, neither of them can be ignored during the creation of new business strategy. In addition, according to guests' positive attitude toward environmental issues, resort hotels should be more sustainable when managing and operating their business. Thus, when making strategies, instead of considering the three factors separately, it is more effective to combine them with more well-balanced strategies.

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