
FRONT OFFICE STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE GREEN ACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES: A CASE STUDY OF MARRIOTT HOTELS IN BALI

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses at the strategies implemented by Bali Marriott Hotels' Front Office Department to encourage environmentally conscious actions among its employees. The research used a mixed-methods methodology over a six-month period in 2024, focusing on three luxury properties: The St. Regis Bali Resort, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, and The Laguna, A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa. The results show that front office staff members' environmental awareness as well as involvement were greatly increased by a variety of strategies that included comprehensive training, operational integration of green practices, employee recognition programs, cross-departmental collaboration, guest engagement, and innovative use of technology. According to the study, luxurious hotels may successfully implement sustainability programs without compromising the guest experience.

Keywords: sustainability, hospitality industry, green action, luxury hotels, front office

INTRODUCTION

Over the recent past, all sectors, particularly hotel chains have been under pressure to adopt green practices (Jones et al., 2014). Indeed, there are various drivers for this pressure, including customer awareness on environmental issues, the increasing enforcement of government regulations and the realization of the industry's significant effects on the environment (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). For they are large consumers of resources and producers of waste, hotels have been perceived as endorsing climate change control and sustainable development practices across the globe (Styles et al., 2013).

The environmental influence attributable to the hotel industry is both extensive and multifaceted. A considerable amount of power is needed for the hotels to operate their lighting, heating, cooling, and other systems (Bohdanowicz et al., 2011). Furthermore, they consume much more water in irrigation, cleaning, and guest areas (Gössling et al., 2012). Also, the sector is responsible for the generation of large volumes of waste that include organic waste, plastics, and chemicals used in cleaning and maintenance (Pirani & Arafat, 2014). Such developments have led to heightened concerns from stakeholders such as the green tourists, the government, and the local residents as well (Hsieh, 2012).

Marriott International, as a leading hotel chain, has taken remarkable steps towards sustainable practices by recognizing its commitment to minimizing the environmental impact of its operations (Marriott International, 2021). The company has established a well-articulated sustainability strategy which includes goals to mitigate waste generation, water

consumption, and carbon emissions in all its global properties (Bonilla-Priego et al., 2011). In terms of improving resource use efficiency, Marriott has resorted to a wide range of strategies that include considerable investments in green building and renewable energy resources, as well as simple modifications of some processes (Peiró-Signes et al., 2014).

Hotel front office can be considered as the implementing and sustaining of the measures of greening of hotel operations (Melissen et al., 2016). The front office is the first site that visitors come into contact with and the operations of the hotel revolves around it hence it influences both the internal operations and the behavior of the guests (Ettinger et al., 2018). The hotel's employees working at the front office may educate the visitors on the various sustainability programs in place in the hotel and encourage them to participate in programs such as energy saving or reusing of towels (Han & Yoon, 2015). In addition, the front office often leads the other departments and is the first to show the commitment of the hotel to green practices (Zhang et al., 2012).

The front office can be made more environmentally friendly in various ways. These approaches could include the use of eco-friendly light and electrical fittings, encouraging a paper-free check in and check out procedures, and dissuading patrons from using their personal vehicles among other encouragements (Verma & Chandra, 2018). In addition, the front office is also important as it helps in gathering data and tracking the progress of different sustainability efforts which can be beneficial in assessing the achievements of set goals as well as pinpointing gap areas (Hsiao et al., 2014).

Proper involvement of the staff and their training are considered as important factors for performance of the green initiatives at the front office and generally in the whole hotel (Chan et al., 2014). Employees should not only understand the hotel's vision on sustainability, but also be able to adapt to it in their routine working practice. This can come in the form of carrying out regular campaigns, rewarding the development of innovative eco-friendly practices, or integrating steps towards sustainable development in the appraisal process (Zientara & Zamojska, 2016).

In addition, the reception can take on the responsibility of educating visitors and getting them engaged in activities designed to protect the environment. For instance, the hotel staff can explain environmental issues existing in the area, offer activities that do not harm the environment, and talk about the accomplishments of the hotel in being green to promote guests' more eco-friendly behavior (Teng et al., 2018). The role of the front office in promoting and implementing sustainability practices will increase considering the trends in the hospitality industry relating to environmental concerns. Furthermore, hotels that are efficiently green in regards to low-impact practices at the front office are able to increase customer satisfaction, enhance their reputation, and even cut costs by becoming more efficient (Peng & Chen, 2019).

The objective of this research is to explore the specific strategies which the front office department of Marriott Hotels uses to encourage corporate social responsibility amongst its internal employees. Front office is of specific interest because then we will have a better understanding of how sustainable measures are inserted in the hotel's overall operations and their impact towards the understanding and behavior of the employees (Teng et al., 2018). The purpose of this research is to understand, describe, and assess the green strategies

designed and implemented by Front Office Department of Marriott hotels in Bali and to assess their effectiveness on the environmental concern of the staff, as well as the overall sustainability performance of the hotels with regards to the front office green initiatives.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study focused on the green initiatives of the Front Office Department at Marriott Hotels in Bali, Indonesia, and employed a mixed method in order to gather large amounts of information (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). Three renowned Marriott properties were included in this six-month study which was conducted between April and September 2024: The St. Regis Bali Resort, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, and The Laguna, A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Nusa Dua, Bali.

To ensure a detailed understanding of the green initiatives adopted in these hotels, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach which allowed for data collection using both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). For the quantitative data, structured questionnaires were administered to the front office employees in the three hotels. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with relevant people and management, direct observation of the front office, and other primary data sources (Bryman, 2016).

Selecting these distinct hotels belonging to the Marriott chain facilitated the comparison of the green policies of the different segments of the brand. Through the use of this method, the scholars were able to identify not only common practices but also specific innovations designed for a specific place and its audience (Yin, 2018).

In order to maximize the accuracy and dependability of the results, data analysis comprised integrating results from multiple sources, processing quantitative data from the questionnaires employing statistical techniques as well as conducting thematic analysis of the interviews (Patton, 2002). This strategy in particular was aimed towards providing a deeper insight of the complications and the merits of applying green practices within the front office operations of high-end hotels located in a popular tourist region.

A diversified strategy of collecting data in the study helped to comprehend the green policies of the front office departments in detail. A questionnaire was given to 44 front office staff members of the three Marriott hotels in Bali with a high response rate of 86% (n=38). This quantitative data gave a general picture of the attitudes and behaviors of employees. Twelve front office managers and supervisors engaged in elaborate semi-structured interviews to gain further understanding of the barriers that the green policies faced and their implementation. These qualitative discussions facilitated a more advanced exploration of managerial tactics versus operational dilemmas. Lastly, a direct observational study was carried out by the researchers for a total of thirty hours focusing on the front office's operations and the behaviors of personnel in relation to green practices. From the firsthand observation of actual practices of integrating sustainability into everyday tasks, the survey and interview results were verified and given a revealing context.

The research incorporated all forms of data analysis in a balanced way by employing both qualitative and quantitative designs. The survey data was thoroughly analyzed making use of statistical techniques with theories tested in the form of hypotheses and reports

submitted detailing overall patterns. This was informative in relation to the variables that are known to influence the green practices where correlation studies were performed to establish whether or not there are significant relationships for the identified variables. In the studied Marriott properties, front office departments utilized the combination of these analytical methods in order to gain better insights of the complex interplay at work as well as the measurable advantage of green initiatives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data collected from the three Marriott properties in Bali - The St. Regis Bali Resort, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, and The Laguna, A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa - revealed several key strategies employed by the Front Office Department to promote green action among employees. These strategies, their implementation, and their impacts are discussed in detail below.

Comprehensive Green Training Programs

All three hotels in the Marriott Hotels chain have equipped their front office employees with comprehensive sustainability training sessions (Chan et al., 2014). A lot of topics are shared in these training including waste management strategies, water conservation, energy saving techniques and the importance of biodiversity to the unique environment in Bali. Survey results showed that an outstanding 92% of the employees trained reported an understanding of environmental issues and how they could contribute to their mitigation. The efficiency of such training turned out to be more pronounced when it contained practical drills and implemented real-life scenarios. A number of inventive initiatives emerged, such as the one aimed at collecting, cleaning and reusing hospitality supplies that are left by guests and an initiative that trained the staff to grow vegetable crops using recycled food scraps as fertilizer.

It is worth mentioning that, as the research stated, the impact of these training programs was evident not only in the organization but in the personal lives of the employees as well. In follow-up interviews, 68% of the participants said that because of the imparted knowledge from these trainings, they have adopted more eco-friendly practices in their personal spheres (Teng et al., 2018). This suggests that the benefits of such extensive training are not restricted to the hotels only, but may alter the community's way of thinking and acting with respect to sustainability.

Integration of Green Practices into Standard Operating Procedures

To date, sustainable practices have been integrated into the routine workings of the Front Office Department in all the three Hotels under the Marriott Hotel chain (Hsiao et al., 2014). This holistic development entails very many front office operational aspects that include the following:

1. The check-in and check-out processes are now automated, whereas visitors are encouraged to receive their bills through email instead of a hard copy.
2. The front office area operates on green cleaning products that do not contain any harmful chemicals to the air that customers breath in.
3. Green efficient LED lights & Technology has replaced the lights in the front office area which has considerably reduced energy consumption.

It was observed that, on average, 78% of front office employees practiced these green initiatives throughout their shifts (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2013). However, the inconvenience of the busy work schedules of the placed staff was also documented where, for example, there were different busy times such as checking in and out when the staff had to serve the guests.

Employee Recognition and Incentive Programs

Marriott has implemented an effective recognition scheme that rewards all the employees who exhibit extraordinary commitment towards the environment (Zientara & Zamojska, 2016). This unique approach comprises of:

1. Performance reviews encompass sustainability measures thereby dealing with the environmental concern and the conventional measures of performance at the same level.
2. There are increases in budgets for the teams that achieve significant reductions in their water or power consumption. Some of the savings are reinvested back into the organization for more sustainability initiatives or enhancing the employees' welfare.

In a study conducted and included in this article, participants who were front office managers indicated that during the last year there has been a 35% increase in the number of sustainability initiatives taken up by the employees, which suggests that these incentive schemes have significantly motivated the employees towards performing green activities (Kim et al., 2017). The findings of the study showed that these employee appreciation programs also fostered a sense of pride and ownership. Based on survey data, 87% of the front office staff posited that they felt their contribution would play a significant role in the wider sustainability efforts of the hotel (Chan & Hsu, 2016).

Guest Engagement in Green Initiatives

All three locations' front office staff have also been trained on how to engage visitors in sustainability activities at the hotel (Han & Yoon, 2015). This involvement takes form in the following ways:

1. During the check-in process, guests are made aware of the sustainability programs offered by the hotel and the possibilities of their participation.
2. Offering green alternatives, for example, using glass bottles in place of plastic ones and digital newspapers instead of the hardcover versions.
3. Encouraging programs for the reuse of linens and towels and informing guests of the water and energy savings that can be achieved.

According to the results of the survey, 89% of front office staff members are friendly when it comes to educating guests about green efforts, which leads to improved compliance with sustainability programs (Verma & Chandra, 2018). The study did identify certain difficulties in this field, though. Some travelers, especially those on opulent trips, objected

to what they saw as compromises in convenience or quality of service in the name of environmental preservation.

Use of Technology for Sustainability

Across all three Marriott properties, the Front Office Department has improved its green activities by utilizing technology (Jeremen et al., 2016). The following are important technology implementations:

1. Mobile check-in alternatives that drastically cut down on paper usage;
2. Energy management systems that are integrated with the property management system, enabling automated temperature adjustments in guest rooms while they are away.

In addition to increasing efficiency, these technology advancements have raised employee and guest knowledge of the hotel's environmental effect and promoted openness. Remarkably, the study discovered that these obvious digital integrations also functioned as discussion starters, with front office employees reporting a rise in visitor questions concerning sustainability programs as a consequence.

The research shows that Marriott's Front Office Department in Bali has extensively and diversely engaged its employees in green action initiatives. This helps to illustrate the extent to which the hospitality sector can contribute to sustainability beyond its operations by transforming the attitudes and actions of both its employees and its patrons. In addition, further studies may assess the impact of these efforts on hotels' sustainability indices over time, as well as their possibility of expansion to other parts of the world and to other cultures within the hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the Marriott Hotels in Bali's Front Office Department has successfully put into practice a wide range of practical tactics to encourage environmentally conscious behavior among its staff members. Front office staff members' environmental awareness and engagement have increased significantly as a result of the multifaceted approach, which combines intensive training programs, seamless operational integration of green practices, creative incentive systems, guest engagement initiatives, and state-of-the-art technology.

The St. Regis Bali Resort, The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali, and The Laguna, A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa have successfully implemented these sustainability initiatives, indicating that luxury hotels possess the ability to take the lead in environmental efforts without compromising the quality of the guest experience. According to the study, when done right, green initiatives can improve the well-liked hotel brand by guests as well as employees.

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