

Green Casino Hotels

Subjects: Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism

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Green casino hotels refer to casino hotels where managers adopt environmental strategies (or so-called "green strategies") in their operations. At the same time, provide customers with green products and services.

Keywords: environmental management system (EMS) ; green casino hotels ; systems theory

1. Introduction

Today, hotel managers and owners are more aware of the importance and benefits of adopting environmental strategies (or so-called "green strategies") in their operations ^{[1][2][3]}. Several internationally recognized green hotel programs certify properties, including ISO14001, Green Globe 21, Energy and Environmental Design Leadership (LEED), EU Ecological Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), TripAdvisor GreenLeaders, Green Seal, and Green Key ^{[4][5]}. Despite these efforts, previous studies shown that in many cases, environmental strategies often yield to other operational issues: a big gap remains between the management attitude in the hotel industry and the adoption of environmental strategies ^{[6][7][8]}.

Customers are increasingly becoming more environmentally conscious and are preferring green products and services. Being green is thus advantageous, especially as a marketing strategy. Environmental practices distinguish greens from non-green casino hotels and benefit green casino hotel marketing ^[2]. Furthermore, making casino hotels green produces numerous benefits, such as enhancing the company's image, reducing operating costs, and gaining positive public attention ^{[9][10][11]}. Kim et al. (2019) ^[12] found that the business of green casino hotels is a niche in the competitive hotel industry.

Previous environmental strategies usually considered the three R principle: reduce, reuse, and recycle ^[11]. Today, however, environmental strategies mainly focus on an overall environmental management system (EMS). We recognize the implementation of official environmental policies or an EMS as a successful ecological strategy. The aim of an EMS is to encourage organizations to reduce and control their environmental impact. According to Chan (2008) ^[8], some of the main reasons that hotels use an EMS include building a positive image, gaining economic rights, and addressing environmental issues. Hotels with an EMS or official ecological policies tend to achieve better environmental performance ^[13].

In existing EMSs, there are certain shortcomings and practices that are inapplicable to casino hotels ^[8]. Casino hotels differ from general hotels in terms of green practices, and thus, the specific aspects of an EMS for the latter may not be suitable for the former. Although many international standards assess the environmental performance of organizations (e.g., ISO 14000 and 14001), there are no specific assessments for the casino industry. There is a need to assess the appropriateness of existing green hotel standards to develop a suitable EMS for casino hotels.

The hotel industry is also adopting various measures for either environmental considerations or economic reasons, or to establish a positive image. Some hotels have gone a step further and adopted voluntary self-discipline measures such as the international environmental management system (EMS) standard ISO 14001 to develop a systematic approach to improving environmental performance. For example, Hong Kong's Island Shangri-La Hotel, Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel, Hotel Nikko Hong Kong, and InterContinental Jiafu Hong Kong have all passed ISO 14001 certification. Due to pressure from customers ^[14], supplier requirements to comply with formal EMS standards ^[15], and a more systematic approach for shareholders, companies will consider using formal EMS standards or obtaining certification, and government regulatory agencies, insurance companies, and financial institutions will assess their commitment to improving environmental performance ^[16]. Despite these pressures, as of the end of December 2005, 138 countries/regions had issued at least 111,162 ISO 14001 certificates ^[17], but many hotels did not adopt a formal EMS. When the hotel industry's motives for adopting an EMS were investigated, it was unexpectedly found that nearly 40% of the respondents stated that their hotels did not have one. In addition, only 10.6% of hotels with an EMS passed ISO 14001 certification ^[8].

Studies have often analyzed EMS and systems theory separately, and few studies have attempted to integrate the two aspects ^[18]. To the author's knowledge, there is no scientific and systematic assessment of an EMS for green casino hotels. As casino hotels operate 24 h a day through a three-shift system, they consume large amounts of energy.

2. Barriers for Applying Environmental Management Systems in Casino Hotels

Although customer awareness of and interest in "greener" products has generally increased, their preference for such products may not appear anytime soon in the casino tourism environment. This is because casino tourism is mainly hedonistic ^[19]. Numerous casino hotel tourists do not want to endure "inconvenience" or "difficulty" while traveling ^[13]. There seems to be a notion that "environmental protection" brings with it a certain amount of inconvenience and austerity, which is in contrast to the hedonistic character of casino tourism. Consequently, some casino hotel owners and managers are concerned that green practices could lead to a sharp decline in service quality ^[13].

There are several external and internal obstacles to applying EMSs in the casino hotel industry. Hsiao et al. (2014) ^[20] provided a comprehensive list of indicators for using EMSs in inclusive hotels; however, they include 16 indicators that are unsuitable for casino hotels.

Unsuitable indicator 1:

There is a widespread promotional campaign to promote the hotel's environmental policy to stakeholders, such as staff, customers, and suppliers.

Hotels with an EMS or official ecological policies tend to achieve better environmental performance ^[21]. Additionally, the choice of green casino hotels is an irreversible trend and a great way to balance environmental protection and consumption. However, at present, casino hotels lack the operation and components to promote environmental policies. Thus, it may be challenging to publicize ecological policies to attract customers, suppliers, and employees.

Unsuitable indicator 2:

The overall objective of environmental management is both feasible and measurable.

Formal procedures are invaluable for stakeholders committed to environmental improvement; this policy should reflect the top management's promise to comply with appropriate laws, improve continuously, and control pollution. Therefore, a casino hotel can use environmental policies as a base EMS indicator ^[22]. However, there is seldom any mention of the feasibility and measurability of the casino hotel's environmental management goal. This could be because it is difficult to apply this indicator with a casino hotel EMS.

Unsuitable indicator 3:

The hotel has formally established an action plan for environmental issues.

Environmental management is a fundamental problem encountered in the hotel industry. Many hotels take regular ecological management measures to address the growing concerns about sustainable products and services ^[23]. However, hotels in Macau are far behind developed regions in formulating and adopting environmental operations and policies, because green practices in the city were not prioritized until 2007 ^[24]. Therefore, the need to develop action plans for potential ecological problems for casino hotels may be an obstacle.

Unsuitable indicator 4:

Casino hotels located in areas that consume higher amounts of water can be identified by installing metering equipment; this way, resources can be managed effectively.

The casino hotel industry uses a significant amount of water, thus paying attention to environmental management is crucial. However, casino hotels may be disinclined to install metering equipment in areas with high water consumption for tracking and management, citing the time and effort required to install such equipment.

Unsuitable indicators 5 and 6:

Allow guests to choose to not change their towels every day, and allow guests to choose to not change their bed linens daily.

Travel companies must differentiate themselves from competitors by developing competitive advantages to charge high prices ^[23]. For example, Galaxy Entertainment Group includes well-known luxury hotels that provide first-class services.

However, a casino hotel may not have a formal, continuous water-saving process in place because it reduces the quality of the customer experience ^[25]. Therefore, casino hotels hesitate to offer guests the choice of not changing their towels and bed linens every day.

Unsuitable indicator 7:

Invest in metering equipment to identify areas with high power consumption and manage such areas resourcefully.

The casino hotel industry's initial response to environmental needs was slow, until environmental consciousness projects emerged in the 1990s ^{[24][26]}. The perceived inconvenience of green behavior may have a direct influence on green practices ^[27]. As casino hotels operate 24 h a day, it is difficult for them to learn to use installed metering equipment to manage and track areas with high energy consumption.

Unsuitable indicators 8 and 9:

Maximize the use of daylight, and maximize the use of natural ventilation.

The studies of Kularatne et al. (2019) ^[28] estimated the non-operating income of hotels, restaurants, stores, and attractions in casinos, which are often built indoors and tend to favor electric over natural lighting and ventilation.

Unsuitable indicator 10:

Casino hotels can convert organic wastes into compost.

Casino hotels consume large amounts of non-durable products, energy, and water due to their characteristics, functions, and nature ^[26]. Converting organic or kitchen wastes into compost can solve the problem of solid waste to some extent. However, most casino hotels lack the space to operate such a system.

Unsuitable indicator 11:

Casino hotels should use refillable containers such as shower bottles.

We observed that the primary reasons hotels choose certain containers are ease of use and hygiene issues. Paper and plastic containers are preferred because they are easy to use ^[22]. Appropriate procurement policies can emphasize reusable, recyclable, and energy-efficient equipment and goods, suitable containers, and reduced detergent use that can prevent pollution and waste. However, because of health safety concerns (e.g., staying sanitary), it is difficult for casino hotels to use refillable containers.

Unsuitable indicator 12:

Casino hotels should supply guest rooms with independent air-conditioning systems to minimize the spread of pathogens.

It is imperative to set strict air quality standards in order to minimize health risks. The improvement of public spaces should therefore be accompanied by the purification of outdoor and indoor air and the minimization of ambient air. People could thus continue to enjoy tourism safely ^[2]. However, due to a lack of finances and techniques, and stakeholder pressure, casino hotels might have difficulty setting up independent air-conditioning systems in guest rooms.

Unsuitable indicator 13:

Ensure that all suppliers have a declared environmental policy.

Green procurement refers to providing quality products and services while improving efficiency, being environmentally responsible, and reducing costs and waste ^[2]. However, some local suppliers are small and may not have environmental policies similar to those of giant suppliers. Additionally, when the number of suppliers is limited, cooperating with only those who have declared ecological policies may not be practical or provide guarantees.

Unsuitable indicator 14:

Capitalize on purchasing local products, such as food and materials.

Global development toward sustainable and locally produced foods explores the interactions among tourism, sustainable food, and customer loyalty. However, due to the trend of farm integration and industrialized farming, the development of locally produced and sustainably procured food and materials is restricted by the particular situation of the local geography ^[25]. Furthermore, casino hotels usually purchase imported products ^[2]. Therefore, it is somewhat difficult for them to rely on only local goods.

Unsuitable indicator 15:

There is adequate insurance coverage, including accidental and environmental damage insurance.

Some leading enterprises use environmental policies to enhance their corporate image, improve operational efficiency, and develop new opportunities and products to gain a competitive advantage ^[27]. However, as environmental concerns are not as prominent in the casino hotel industry as they are in general hotels, ecological damage insurance may not be common in casino hotels ^[29].

Unsuitable indicator 16:

Staff should be motivated to use public transportation.

Research has shown that employees' environmental behavior is affected by personal and organizational factors ^{[28][30][31]}. Sandvik et al. (2011) ^[32] point to the impact of oversight support on employee "ecological initiatives" and environmental policies. However, driving oneself is considerably popular among hotel employees, thus it might be challenging to encourage them to shift to using public transportation ^[19].

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