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# Hotel Energy Efficiency towards Sustainable Tourism

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In the face of dwindling energy resources, it appears we are at a crossroads of development because energy propels the wheels of development and socioeconomic progress.There are growing concerns about the depletion of non-renewable energy stocks like fossil fuel (coal, oil and gas) which is the principal source of energy globally. In fact, fossil fuels account for about 79% of global final energy consumption. The American Petroleum Institute has estimated that with global oil consumption at 80 million barrels per day, the world's oil stocks would be depleted between 2062 and 2094. The depletion of energy resources is therefore counterproductive and tantamount to killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Ironically, the burning of fossil fuels also contributes to global warming through the emission of greenhouse gases and these further compounds the environmental problems confronting the globe. The problem of energy depletion is therefore a double-edged sword that does not only lead to a decline in productivity but also exacerbates global warming. Thus the global energy challenge is potentially a challenge to sustainable development.

The Brundtland Commission (1987) defined sustainable development as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The tourism industry has also coined the phrase 'sustainable tourism' as a corollary of the sustainable development paradigm of the UN.UNWTOdefines sustainable tourism as:'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.'In the same vein sustainable energy is the provision of energy such that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own energy needs.Sustainable energy is replenishable within a human lifetime and causes no long-term damage to the environment.

It has become evident that the hotel industry is a significant consumer of energy and therefore contributes to the depletion of energy resources. Studies have shown that hotel buildings consume more energy than other commercial buildings. Energy costs in hotels usually account for 3-6% of overall operating costs. Most of the energy usage in the hotel industry is for the safety, security, comfort and satisfaction of guests; entertainment, transportation, housekeeping, food production and service as well as Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). However, the real problem with energy consumption by hotels is wastage of energy. Studies have shown that 42% of the energy used to heat and cool spaces in hotels is commonly wasted. Most of the wastage occurs mainly as a result of faulty or inefficient systems as well as the attitude and practices of guests and staff. Lack of routine maintenance of electrical installations and gadgets, use of obsolete and inefficient equipment, use of incandescent light bulbs and not turning off gadgets and lights when not in use.

On the other hand, depletion of energy stocks coupled with rising energy cost due principally to increases in the world price of crude oil impacts adversely on the hotel industry. High cost of electricity and increasing price of fuel to providers of tourism and hospitality services leads to increase in operational costs and thereby hurting profit margins.

Hotels can drive sustainable tourism by switching to sustainable energy. Energy efficiency and renewable energy hold the key to sustainable energy and sustainable tourism development. Energy efficiency is the use of less energy to provide the same service while renewable energy is energy which is naturally replenished.

The greatest precursor to energy efficiency is attitudinal change and environmentally responsible behaviour on the part of management, staff and guests of hotels.Energy efficient practicesinclude reuse of linen and towels, ironing in bulk, regular maintenance of electrical equipment and replacement of incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps. Whilst ensuring efficiency in the use of energy will help cut down energy consumption and arrest the depletion of non-renewable energy resources, the best way to go is switching to renewable energy sources. Renewable energy is energy which comes from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, geothermal heat and biomass.

In effect, by switching to sustainable energy, hotels can contribute towardssustainable tourism whilst improving their bottom line. This can be achieved through collaborative efforts with other stakeholders at the destination with support from governments through policy interventions. Management of hotels should also train their employees on energy conservation practices and lead by example. Future studies on environmental management in hotels should also focus on practical approaches to resource conservation as well as the challenges confronting small to medium hotels in adopting conservation practices.

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