



AN INVESTIGATION ON IMPACT OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES ON HOTEL EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the association of Social Sustainability Practices, with the acceptance of the concept by hotel employees and their relative satisfaction derived from the same. It also seeks to identify the various social sustainability practices integrated in the sustainability strategy of Hotels. In order to achieve this, the study concentrates on the establishing the extent of relationship if any of the sustainability practices on employee adaptability to them based on their demographic profile and also with their satisfaction level. A survey of 375 employees working in 15 five star and five star deluxe hotels in Delhi were conducted. The analysis revealed that, there are a large number of sustainability initiatives taken by the hotel management revolving around employee welfare. The results of the survey highlighted a positive correlation of sustainability practices with employee satisfaction. Although it has been found that the adaptability of employees to these practices is independent of their age and gender. However, the Generation X is more enthusiastic about sustainability practices and actively responded to the survey conducted. Overall, this study proposes for hotels simply deploying social sustainability practices is not enough. They should carefully plan their sustainability strategies by training and motivating employees.

KEYWORD: Social Sustainability; Employee satisfaction; adaptability; Five Star Hotels, Delhi.

INTRODUCTION

The organizations are increasingly nurturing the concepts of Sustainability and sustainable development. The terms such as Corporate social responsibility (CSR), organizational social responsibility (OSR), social responsibility, corporate responsibility, corporate social investment, corporate citizenship, global corporate citizenship, and sustainable growth are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The concept of sustainability and corporate responsibility, have merge to address the concern about the balancing the environment and economics, along with the fulfillment of corporate philanthropy. Still, there are many who insist that these terms carry different meanings. Social sustainability is but one of the three parts of the Triple Bottom line that covers community and employee issues and the like. But the term is often used in a broader sense, too. Some assign sustainable development or sustainability to the larger societal focus of the TBL and consider social responsibility to cover the organizational perspective on the same.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines social responsibility in its draft Guidance on Social Responsibility' “,as actions of an organization to take responsibility for the impacts of its activities on society and the environment, where these actions are consistent with the interests of society and sustainable development.” Social Sustainability Practices are deeply integrated into the ongoing activities of an organization. They are based on ethical behavior, compliance with applicable law, intergovernmental instruments.

CSR,a term of growing popularity in India, sometimes does not include environmental responsibility in its usage, although most often it covers the same. In fact it is noted that even the scope of documents labeled “CSR reports” is the same as of “sustainability reports” based on TBL. However CSR excludes economic responsibility. As defined by the European Commission in its Green Paper as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operation and in their interaction with their stakeholders.” However, the most commonly cited difference between sustainability and the Corporate responsibility and Corporate citizenship terms is that the latter concepts sometimes exclude a company’s financial viability—its need to economically prosper as a business. Thus, for our study, sustainability or sustainable development are the most appropriate terms given their breadth, origin, and consistent inclusion of a company’s financial success. The well-being of a community or company’s employees is an outcome of financial success of the company that makes up an indispensable element of a company sustainability initiative. This paper is therefore centered on the objectives to find out the prevailing social sustainability practices in Five Star Hotels of Delhi and to determine the impact of sustainable practices on the employee's work satisfaction in a hotel.

For the purpose of building a radical understanding of the research area, an exhaustive number of

publications were reviewed by the researcher revolving around the keywords of the research topic as below:

According to Porter & Derry, (2012) sustainability is a topic of growing importance today in all aspects of organizational life. Businesses and managers are increasingly considering ways to incorporate a balance among economic, ecological, social, and cultural value creation into their business models. Sustainability attempts to balance financial, social, and environmental factors to facilitate responsible business decision making over the immediate and long term (Primlani, 2012). Velazquez, Esquer, Munguia, & Moure-Eraso, (2011) in a review paper on learning organization and its sustainability perspectives presented the most used and insightful concepts of sustainability. Wirtenberg, (2012) stated, Sustainability is both a strategy and a mind-set. As per him, “leaders do not think in terms of trading off sustainability and profitability—they seamlessly integrate people, planet, and profits. The triple bottom line is not an exotic leadership approach or new management gimmick—it is a way of doing everyday business in a new world.” Based on the report on a survey done on US Corporates, (SHRM, Can Sustainability Initiatives Survive in a Tough Economy?, 2009) envisaged that an emphasis on sustainability has also strengthened HR’s position as a strategic business partner. Sustainability has improved employee morale, loyalty and productivity. This definition demonstrates that in sustainability-driven organizations, sustainability practices are included in every aspect of doing business and therefore, need to be embedded across all organizational levels (Cohen, Taylor, & Muller-Camen, 2012). However, many scholars have found that organizations’ sustainability strategies and practices differ greatly and there are no clear guidelines or organizational leaders spearheading sustainability initiatives (Marshall & Brown, 2003; SHRM, 2009).

The hotel industry is in the midst of a sustainability awakening. Prairie, (2012) stated in his critical analysis of negative trend of sustainability in hotels in U.S. According to Slaper & J.Hall, (2011) putting the TBL into practice is extremely challenging in Business organizations. This includes measuring each of the three categories, finding applicable data and calculating a project or policy’s contribution to sustainability. A green Hotel Whitepaper, presented by Graci & Kuehnel, (2009) as an outcome of study done on various hotels in Canada outlines the benefits of environmental and social sustainable hotel practices along with an action plan and a detailed self-audit checklist for the hotel management to audit their environmental sustainability practices, purchasing, community support, customer education and employee training with respect to best practices on sustainability. Werbach, (2009) added ‘Cultural’ as the fourth component to Elkington’s well known TBL of sustainability that is social, economic, and environmental. This fourth component of true sustainability according to him protects and values the diversity through which communities

manifest their identity and cultivate traditions across generations. He also stresses that companies that take into account broader social issues will be better able to thrive and to lead. These issues include conditions that affect us all, including poverty, violence, injustice, education, public health, and labor and human rights.

Kim S. , (2009) in her study illustrated that the employees' perception regarding green practices in terms of importance and performance was similar to that of hoteliers, and employees gave much weightage to the green practices that were beneficial to them than those green practices that required their behavior change. In a case study done on 2 hotels in USA, Albert, (2011) emphasized that, "When looking at the social and economic aspects of sustainability, the rights and treatment of workers are key elements to be considered." He has lucidly reasoned small changes in hotel operations aid significantly in minimizing adverse effects on people, environment and local economy. Benefits of this can be more profound in urban than in rural areas.

Australian Govt:Dept of environment, (2009) in its 'Sustainability a Toolkit for Hospitality' unveiled that due to the labour and resource strength of the hospitality sector, there are several opportunities for hotels, restaurants and tourism operators to add value and sustainability to the local community. This can be done in ways such as prioritizing generation of jobs, training and education programs for local and indigenous community members that can enhance the sustainability of the local area which hotels and resorts depend upon. This shall also offer guests and customers a unique opportunity to experience Australian culture and biodiversity. This toolkit in its Action Plan towards Sustainability in Hospitality Sector, suggested 'Staff engagement' as the 7th step in the decision making process to pursue or at least become aware of sustainability in business by appointing Sustainability Advocates. O'Neill, (2013) in his article observed that ITC hotels triple bottom-line philosophy is to create a sustainable future for the environment and for the local communities where the hotels are based (employed over 300 people with disabilities.)

In a study done on restaurants in mid western USA, (Alcorn, 2014) the employees exhibit a high level of environmental awareness, satisfaction, pride and loyalty because of sustainability initiatives. According to (Raderbauer, 2011) Sustainable human resource management in Hospitality industry is a major concern. In an interview in Viennese hotels, Managers indicated that staff is valued and rewarded and that their employees were more committed and satisfied through the implementation of sustainable business practices. However, only a few hotels had specific trainings related to sustainability and further research is required to assess the attitudes of the employees. (Parsa, 2014) Classified CSR practices along three dimensions: (A) health/nutritional concerns, (B) environmental concerns, and (C) social concerns. Lindgreen and Swaen (2010) offered the following perspective: CSR generally represents a continuing

commitment by an organization to behave ethically and contribute to economic development, while also improving the quality of life of its employees (and their families), the local community, and society at large.

Thus, on the basis of gaps identified through the literature review, this study provides the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a higher level of satisfaction of social sustainability practices amongst employees of five star hotels in Delhi.

H2: There is a significant positive impact of sustainability practices on employee satisfaction in Five Star Hotel.

H3: Employees support to social sustainability practices is not independent of demographic characteristics (Age and gender)

METHODOLOGY

The scope of this paper includes estimation of the sustainability practices adopted by five star hotels, involving the employment of energy saving methods, water conservation methods and waste management methods, certifications of environment and quality, maintenance of indoor-air quality, reduce, reuse, and recycling methods and involvement in socially responsible activities. The primary purpose of the study was to assess the customer's satisfaction of sustainability practices in five star hotels in Delhi. Awareness of customers about the various practices followed in the hotels was also analyzed.

15 hotels were identified for the study from the list of 17 hotels including five star and five star deluxe hotels in Delhi that were approved by and available on the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India website in June 2016 (Table1.). Hotel 'The Oberois New Delhi' was closed for renovation at the time when the survey was being done and JW Marriotts was included in both Five Star and Five Star Deluxe categories of hotels and hence treated as one making only 15 hotels qualifying as the population to be studied.

Table 1: List of Five Stars and Five Star Deluxe Hotels In Delhi

5 STAR		
S.No	City	Hotel Name
1	New Delhi*	Jaypee Siddharth
2	Delhi	JW Marriott
3	New Delhi*	Park Plaza, Delhi
4	Delhi	Piccadily Hotels Pvt. Ltd.
5 STAR DELUXE		
	City	Hotel Name
5	Delhi	Hotel Welcom Sheraton
6	Delhi	Hotel Amanbagh

7	Delhi	Le Meridien New Delhi
8	Delhi	Kempinski Ambience Hotel Delhi
9	Delhi	ITC Maurya
10	Delhi	The Oberoi, New Delhi (closed for renovation)
11	Delhi	Hotel Imperial
12	New Delhi*	The Taj Palace Hotel
13	Delhi	The Park
14	Delhi	Radisson Blu Dwarka
15	Delhi	JW Marriott
16	Delhi	The Lodhi
17	Delhi	The Ashok

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2016

The sampling population represented the employees at senior management, middle management and junior management level who were engaged with the sampled hotels. A survey methodology was chosen because it was deemed to be the most efficient way of reaching a large number of respondents. This study used a self-administered, close-ended questionnaire with order choices to survey a random sample. Besides the offline survey for collecting individual responses from the employees an online questionnaire was prepared and circulated amongst employees who used the communities on Facebook and Whatsapp. The questionnaires were also emailed to a set of contacts at random. Of the total sample, usable questionnaires were returned by 375 Hotel Employees.

The questionnaire had two parts, Part A for obtaining responses on questions leading to finding Employee's understanding and awareness of the Environmental Sustainability Practices in Hotels they stayed and Part B to know the level of satisfaction of employee's in relation to social sustainability practices towards employees and other stakeholders. The Employee's demographic profile was obtained through Part F. Majority of the questions relating to our objectives were made on a Likert scale. The statistical tools used in this study were percentages. The analysis of the survey results combined with the statistical applications (SPSS) allowed for the researcher to draw conclusions regarding the objectives of the study is produced.

The data collected through the survey was tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha, that shows internal consistency reliability of .958 for the composite scores of 21 items used that denotes a reliable variance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

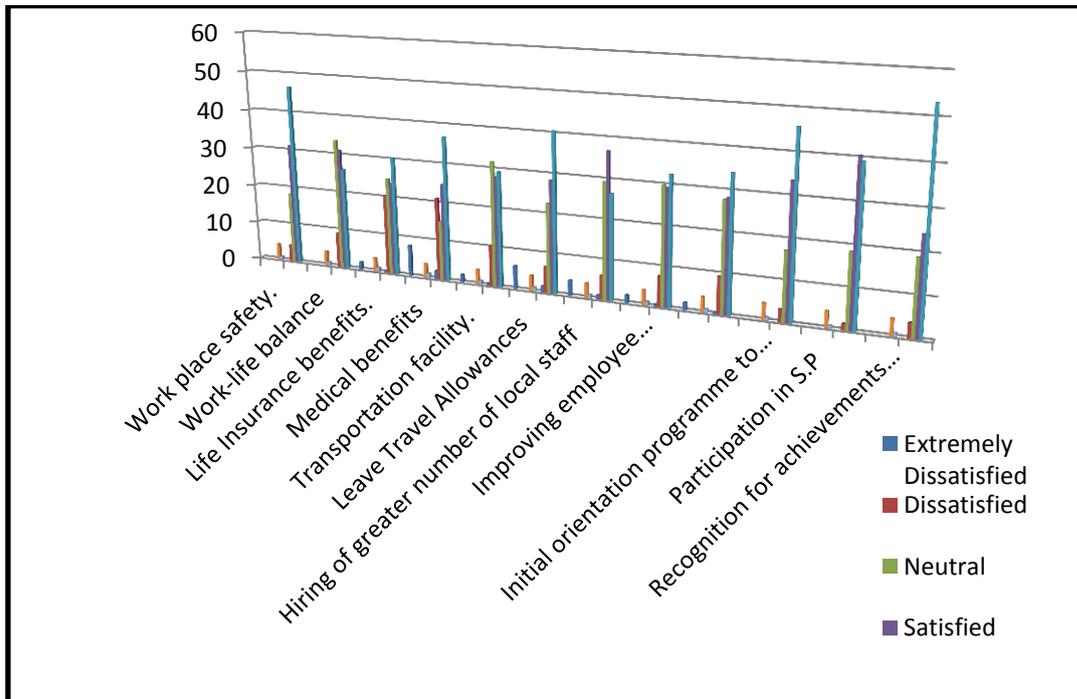
Table 1: Employee’s level of satisfaction towards social sustainability practices in hotels

Social Sustainability Practices	Frequency/ Percentage	Extremely Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied	Total	Mean	S.D
Work place safety.	Frequency		16	68	117	174	375	4.197	.883
	Percent		4.3	18.1	31.2	46.4	100		
Work-life balance	Frequency		34	126	117	98	375	3.744	.947
	Percent		9.1	33.6	31.2	26.1	100		
Life Insurance benefits.	Frequency	2	77	93	89	114	375	3.629	1.135
	Percent	.5	20.5	24.8	23.7	30.4	100		
Medical benefits	Frequency	8	79	57	93	138	375	3.730	1.219
	Percent	2.1	21.1	15.2	24.8	36.8	100		
Transportation facility.	Frequency	2	39	119	105	110	375	3.752	1.008
	Percent	.5	10.4	31.7	28.0	29.3	100		
Leave Travel Allowances	Frequency	6	25	85	107	152	375	3.997	1.022
	Percent	1.6	6.7	22.7	28.5	40.5	100		
Hiring of greater number of local staff	Frequency	4	23	110	138	100	375	3.818	.933
	Percent	1.1	6.1	29.3	36.8	26.7	100		
Improving employee satisfaction, morale and retention	Frequency	2	29	112	110	122	375	3.856	.981
	Percent	.5	7.7	29.9	29.3	32.5	100		
Frequency of meetings held to discuss sustainability	Frequency	2	35	104	106	128	375	3.861	1.012
	Percent	.5	9.3	27.7	28.3	34.1	100		
Initial orientation programme to educate on S.P	Frequency		12	65	126	172	375	4.221	.844
	Percent		3.2	17.3	33.6	45.9	100		
Participation in S.P	Frequency		6	70	152	147	375	4.173	.784
	Percent		1.6	18.7	40.5	39.2	100		
Recognition for achievements towards sustainability	Frequency		14	71	91	199	375	4.266	.895
	Percent		3.7	18.9	24.3	53.1	100		
		Strongly	Some	Neutral	Some	Strongly	Total	Mea	S.D

		Oppose	what Oppose		what Favour	Favour		n	
Hotel's initiative to employ people with disabilities.	Frequency	12	6	126	106	125	375	3.869	1.003
	Percent	3.2	1.6	33.6	28.3	33.3	100		
Hotel's initiative for the upliftment of the surrounding areas & communities.	Frequency	8	4	58	141	164	375	4.197	.889
	Percent	2.1	1.1	15.5	37.6	43.7	100		
Hotel's initiative to assist an NGO or underprivileged segment of society.	Frequency	8	8	74	129	156	375	4.112	.938
	Percent	2.1	2.1	19.7	34.4	41.6	100		
Hotel's initiative to purchase local products and supplies.	Frequency	12	20	58	127	158	375	4.064	1.037
	Percent	3.2	5.3	15.5	33.9	42.1	100		
Hotel's initiative to support employment generating vocational training programmes	Frequency	8	30	95	74	168	375	3.970	1.103
	Percent	2.1	8.0	25.3	19.7	44.8	100		
Hotel's initiative to supports traditional art & craft-work.	Frequency	10	50	71	86	158	375	3.885	1.172
	Percent	2.7	13.3	18.9	22.9	42.1	100		
Hotel's initiative to contribute donations	Frequency	10	46	95	98	126	375	3.757	1.124
	Percent	2.7	12.3	25.3	26.1	33.6	100		
Hotel's initiative to build tieups with educational institutes and	Frequency	8	50	78	95	144	375	3.845	1.138
	Percent	2.1	13.3	20.8	25.3	38.4	100		

schools to educate them about sustainability.									
Hotel's initiative to build strong relations with it's stakeholder's.	Frequency	10	12	78	103	172	375	4.106	1.012
	Percent	2.7	3.2	20.8	27.5	45.9	100		

Fig 1. Column Chart of Frequency of Responses, Mean and Standard Deviation



Note: N=375

The results of the survey as indicated in Table.1 and Fig.1 denote that out of 375 respondents, 46.4%, 30.4%, 36.8%, 40.5%, 32.5%, 34.1%, 45.9% and 53.1% of the respondents are extremely satisfied of work place safety, life insurance benefits, medical benefits, leave travel allowances, improving employee satisfaction, morale and retention, frequency of meetings held to discuss sustainability, initial orientation program to educate on sustainability practices, and recognition for achievement towards sustainability respectively expressing their satisfaction level towards social sustainability practices towards employees. However, 36.8% and 40.5 % of the employees and satisfied with hiring a greater number of local staff and participation in sustainability practices whereas 33.6% and 31.7% are neutral towards work life balance and transportation facility.

Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a higher level of satisfaction of social sustainability practices amongst employees of five star hotels in Delhi.

Table.2: Impact of Social Sustainability Practices on Employee’s Satisfaction

		Correlations										
1	WPS											
2	WLB	.48**										
3	LIB	.47**	.80**									
4	MB	.46**	.76**	.90*								
5	TF	.50**	.62**	.73*	.77*							
6	LTA	.64**	.45**	.42*	.45*	.62**						
7	LS	.40**	.63**	.66*	.60*	.66**	.45**					
8	HES,M & R	.32**	.60**	.63*	.59*	.61**	.42**	.78**				
9	FOM	.26**	.55**	.56*	.53*	.60**	.47**	.72**	.73**			
10	IOP	.35**	.52**	.47*	.50*	.41**	.40**	.49**	.55**	.62**		
11	PS.P	.32**	.45**	.44*	.35*	.36**	.38**	.60**	.55**	.57**	.65**	
12	RFA	.502**	.255**	.112*	.07	.273**	.470**	.265**	.216**	.349**	.361**	.444**

Spearman’s Rank order correlation matrix of S.P and Employee Satisfaction

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: social sustainability practices as listed in Table.1 are abbreviated in order to condense the correlation table.

Table 2 represents the impact of sustainability practices in employee satisfaction in 5 Star Hotels in Delhi. To provide more accurate data for decision making, respondents were asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with respect to various Social sustainability practices oriented towards the welfare and benefits of employees and other stakeholder’s such as suppliers and local community. The findings suggest that there is a significantly positive relationship between most of the social sustainability practices and employee satisfaction with a correlation coefficient ranging from moderately positive to significantly positive level.

Table.3: Association between Employees Support to Social Sustainability Practices and their Demographic Characteristics (Age and Gender).

S.No	Statement	Test	Categorical Variables	pValue	Remarks
	Work place safety.	Chi square	Female Male	.836 .755	Null Accepted
	Work-life balance	Chi square	Female Male	.192 .585	Null Accepted
	Life Insurance benefits.	Chi square	Female Male	.524 .217	Null Accepted
	Medical benefits	Chi square	Female Male	.439 .050	Null Accepted
	Transportation facility.	Chi square	Female Male	.516 .751	Null Accepted
	Leave Travel Allowances	Chi square	Female Male	.697 .862	Null Accepted
	Hiring of greater number of local staff	Chi square	Female Male	.804 .179	Null Accepted
	Improving employee satisfaction, morale and retention	Chi square	Female Male	.689 .501	Null Accepted
	Frequency of meetings held to discuss sustainability	Chi square	Female Male	.016 .253	Null Accepted
	Initial orientation programme to educate on S.P	Chi square	Female Male	.195 .048	Null Accepted
	Participation in S.P	Chi square	Female Male	.174 .225	Null Accepted
	Recognition for achievements towards sustainability	Chi square	Female Male	.642 .715	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to employ people with disabilities.	Chi square	Female Male	.332 .379	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative for the upliftment of the surrounding areas & communities.	Chi square	Female Male	.121 .534	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative	Chi square	Female	.153	Null Accepted

	to assist an NGO or underprivileged segment of society.		Male	.836	
	Hotel's initiative to purchase local products and supplies.	Chi square	Female Male	.043 .342	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to support employment generating vocational training programmes	Chi square	Female Male	.537 .154	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to supports traditional art & craft-work.	Chi square	Female Male	.239 .001	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to contribute donations	Chi square	Female Male	.061 .001	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to build tie-ups with educational institutes and schools to educate them about sustainability.	Chi square	Female Male	.071 .119	Null Accepted
	Hotel's initiative to build strong relations with its stakeholder's.	Chi square	Female Male	.804 .007	Null Accepted

Table 3 represents the test of association between employees support to social sustainability practices and their demographic characteristics (Age and gender). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support/opposition for social sustainability initiatives their hotel undertakes for them and other stakeholders.

Employees support to social sustainability practices is independent of demographic characteristics (Age and gender). A Three-Way Cross-Tab and Chi-Square Statistic for three categorical variables i.e. Social Sustainability Practices, Age and Gender of employees suggests that for both male and female respondents with test statistics at their corresponding degrees of freedom and p value

greater than 0.001 has insufficient evidence against the Null hypotheses. The two variables, Social Sustainability Practices and Age of respondents are independent and not associated in the population from which the sample data was drawn. However there is a partial association of male respondents with certain social sustainability practices such as provision of medical benefits, initial orientation programme to educate new joiners towards sustainable practices, Hotel's initiative to support traditional art & craft-work, Hotel's initiative to contribute donations to the needy organizations and Hotel's initiative to build strong relations with its stakeholders. Similarly there is a partial association of female respondents with certain social sustainability practices such as frequency of meetings held to discuss sustainability issues with the employees and Hotel's initiative to purchase local products and supplies.

Thus, there is sufficient evidence against employees support to social sustainability practices is not independent of demographic characteristics of age and gender.

DISCUSSION

The current findings add to a growing body of literature on employees support and satisfaction in relation to social sustainability practices in five star hotels. These findings enhance our understanding of the impact of social sustainability practices on employee satisfaction derived in the absence or presence of the former. At the same time, it aids in identifying potential practices that all hotels could implement. The findings of this research reaffirm the studies of the previous researchers Albert, (2011), Alcorn, (2014), Kim, Airey, & Szivas, (2010), Parsa, Lord, Putrevu, & Kreeger, (2014) et.al, where, it is asserted that the factor of social sustainability though supported ethically by employees also fetches much support in action. It also adds to the existing findings that there is no difference in the opinion of the male and female employees in relation to their support to social sustainability practices. However, this paper also bridges the existing gap by including social sustainability in the purview of this study to address the issues of employee awareness and satisfaction when the focus of the previous researchers Becker (2009); Gawankar & Rathore (2009) was limited primarily to the environmental aspects of sustainability.

At the same, this paper based on the study done in Delhi serves to fill the deficit of the research work available in order to assess the level of employee's support and satisfaction of social sustainability in hotels, particularly in the Indian context.

This paper will serve as an insight to the hotel managers and developers to consolidate their Human resource agenda of incorporating social sustainability for the welfare of employees and benefits of other stakeholders of the planet and people through various marketing and promotional drives and continuous assessments of the same along with the measurement of the employee satisfaction revolving around the social sustainability driven initiatives of the hotel.

Replication of the study would assist in further validating the results of this study. It would be interesting to compare customers' opinion on sustainability practices in a hotel in NCR and the rest of the parts in India. Another possible area of research would be to develop a quantitative instrument to measure the constructs explored in this study.

CONCLUSION

Hotels are attempting to do their part in retaining their internal customers and safeguarding the interest and development of its stakeholders by implementing social sustainability initiatives. But these initiatives are only successful if they are well received by employees of these hotels who must support and contribute to it. This study set out to explore whether the social sustainability practices by the sampled hotels lead to the satisfaction of employees. The findings of this research paper suggest significant awareness, understanding, critical observations and opinions towards deployment of social sustainability practices by the employees of Five Star hotels in Delhi.

Thus the following conclusions can be drawn from the present study: 1) there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a higher level of satisfaction of social sustainability practices amongst employees of five star hotels in Delhi; 2) there is a significantly positive relationship between most of the social sustainability practices and employee satisfaction; 3) employees support to social sustainability practices is independent of demographic characteristics of age and gender.

Thus, the findings of this research paper suggest growing awareness, interest and seriousness towards deployment of social sustainability practices by Human Resource department of five star hotels in Delhi. The hotel employees and seen somewhat satisfied with these Sustainability practices oriented towards their benefit. Though this development is noteworthy, there is still scope of consolidating the sustainability agenda further.

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