THE ROLE OF THE “GREEN CHAMPION” IN INFLUENCING GREEN TECHNOLOGY USE IN HOSPITALITY

Historically, the hospitality industry has been slow to adopt green innovations and technologies. However, as the marketability and cost-saving benefits of green technology become ever more apparent, organizations are now more motivated to investigate ways to speedily and affordably implement sustainable tech. Dr. Cynthia Mejia from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management looked at the primary mechanisms that influence the implementation and use of green technologies in the hospitality industry.

As the second highest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the tourism sector, the hospitality industry has been widely criticized for a lack of willingness to adopt more sustainable practices and reduce its carbon footprint. However, a recent increase in consumer awareness of environmental issues, coupled with more stringent government regulations, has made the industry rethink their historically tentative approach to sustainability and adopt more green initiatives.

In recent years, the evident advantages in marketability and long-term cost savings have been key drivers in the hospitality industry for adopting green technologies. Not, the burden of introducing these technologies into the industry falls primarily on facilities managers. Facilities managers are responsible for the industry’s operations. The adoption of introducing these technologies into the hospitality industry falls primarily on facilities managers. Yet, the burden of introducing these technologies into the hospitality industry falls primarily on facilities managers. However, as the marketability and cost-saving benefits of green technologies have been widely criticized for a lack of willingness to adopt more sustainable practices and reduce its carbon footprint. However, a recent increase in consumer awareness of environmental issues, coupled with more stringent government regulations, has made the industry rethink their historically tentative approach to sustainability and adopt more green initiatives.

In Dr. Mejia’s study, multiple participants remarked on how their organization’s environmental outcomes. In the hospitality context, competitive advantage, as firms attempt to be greener than their rivals. Green organizational innovations tend to fall into two categories: proactive and reactive. Proactive green innovations are the more favorable method of innovation, allowing for more rapid adoption of new green technologies and additional improvement of the green identity, and therefore the overall brand of a company. Reactive green innovations are closely linked to organizations that have a strong green culture within them. Reactive innovations, in comparison, are driven by pressure from regulation or customers – these are not formulated in advance. However, reactive innovations do also still help to cut costs and achieve environmental goals.

GREEN TECHNOLOGY

The umbrella term, green technology, refers to any innovation or technology that conserves or protects the resources of the environment. In the hospitality context, the most well-known green technologies include energy-saving lighting systems, such as LED bulbs; energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC); and electronic green waste and water systems. The primary barrier to the implementation of these technologies is the high capital costs of new energy-efficient HVAC systems or LED lighting. More cost-effective green technologies can be used in the short term – such as placing window tints or insulation on south-facing walls – but they are less effective than the more expensive long-term solutions previously mentioned.

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GREEN IDENTITY, CULTURE AND INNOVATION

In previous sustainability studies, the levels of green identity and green culture were seen as strong indicators of whether an organization will adopt green initiatives and technologies. Green organizational identity is the public facing side of a company, i.e., a company with a green identity will market their green credentials to their customers, whereas a company that has a green culture is one that promotes environmentalism within the internal structure of the organization. Companies with a green organizational structure are more likely to offer environmental training and have more environmentally aware staff. Green culture is linked to the proactive use of green technologies and general positive environmental outcomes.

Innovations in green technologies are becoming a source of competitive advantage, as firms attempt to be greener than their rivals. Green organizational innovations tend to fall into two categories: proactive and reactive. Proactive green innovations are the more favorable method of innovation, allowing for more rapid adoption of new green technologies and additional improvement of the green identity, and therefore the overall brand of a company. Reactive green innovations are closely linked to organizations that have a strong green culture within them. Reactive innovations, in comparison, are driven by pressure from regulation or customers – these are not formulated in advance. However, reactive innovations do also still help to cut costs and achieve environmental goals.

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resulting in the organization having a less effective and faulty system. Although the purchase of less expensive equipment is currently encouraged, organizations should aim to proactively source the best applicable equipment they can afford, which would over the long-term result in both the best environmental and cost-saving outcomes. The use of green technologies is highly dependent on the green facilitating conditions within an organization. Green leadership, coupled with a strong green culture within the organization, is essential – when either is weak, conflict and poor environmental and financial results follow.

THE “GREEN CHAMPION”

Many of the facilities managers who took part in the study indicated that a green organizational leader is critical to the implementation of green technologies. However, one facilities manager recognized the limitations of a formal green leader – they must have the ability to engage with staff across the organization. Furthermore, green leaders and facilities managers are not always present to educate all staff; to combat this barrier, informal green champions could assume the role of stewarding a green organizational culture through passion and belief in sustainable and green initiatives. The beauty of a green champion is that they can exist at every level and in any department within an organization.

IMPLICATIONS

Dr. Mejia’s novel study brings a unique insight into the perceptions and experiences of hospitality facilities managers when green technologies are implemented or considered. Building on previous research, she gives further evidence of how green facilitating conditions – such as organizational green culture and formal green leaders – are the primary drivers to green technology adoption. Additionally, the study also significantly contributes to the field with the discovery of how effective informal green champions can be in supporting the adoption and use of green technologies. The study creates a more complete, nuanced picture of what influences green technology implementation, and uncovers previously unconsidered factors.

This research by Dr. Mejia reveals how green technologies can be better implemented in the future, with the important findings applicable for influencing future organizational green technology adoption strategies. The study may encourage further research on the extent to which informal green leaders could be used to inspire the adoption and use of green technologies in hospitality organizations. Dr. Mejia’s research brings clarity to how the hospitality industry can be more sustainable, demonstrating that when organizations cultivate a strong green culture and appoint green leaders, informal green champions will reveal themselves and drive the sustainable ethos throughout the industry – with environmental and financial benefits.

Green leaders drive green technology adoption.

Staff training is key to engage the workforce.

Dr. Cynthia Mejia gathers insight into the acceptance of green technologies in hospitality from a facilities manager point of view.

REFERENCES


PERSONAL RESPONSE

Why do organizations with a robust green culture and proactive green technology implementation have a competitive advantage?

Hospitality organizations with a robust green culture and a proactive green technology implementation strategy enjoy first-mover advantage, which translates into a source of competitive advantage as firms strive to gain market share. Successful early adoption of green innovations and technologies satisfies both the regulatory ‘push’ factors and the consumer demand ‘pull’ factors.

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