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## Essay: The buy-green trend in hospitality and tourism

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### Trend Description

In the past few years, the word 'green' and 'sustainable' are the keywords that receive a lot of concern from every industries. Especially for hospitality designer, according to Roger G.Hill, sustainable design practices are becoming common place in pursuing Green Design, creating value, reducing dish and solving problems for their customers as each of them become aware of their social and environmental responsibility. In addition, ecotourism is 'the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.'" (The International Ecotourism Society, 1990). There are two types of forms to reach this trend is eco-friendly tourism and nature-based tourism. While nature-based tourism is ' a form of tourism that use natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form' (Fennell, 2008) was so popular and used by a large

number of resorts all around the world because it not only conserve the environment, but also reduce the initial investment cost. On the other hand, eco-friendly tourism new approaching way turns resort itself into a huge environmental protector, with the same purpose of protecting environment but eco-friendly resort does that every minutes in their operation process, to be specific, the resort uses the latest environment-friendly technology to replace the normal furniture of the resort. For example, recycled material such as wool, glass and natural stone is successfully being used for interior finishing materials, other interior products such as steel, ceramic and carpet can be recycled into new products and used for the next project. Paper and plastic using in the resort are also being produced from vegetables like corn and potatoes, all of which are bio-degradable ( Joshua 2011 ).

## 2.2. Trend Impact on the International Resort Sector

As John Holdren, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science said that "People increasingly, all over the world, want to buy green. They want to buy products that they can use not only with immediate benefit but in good conscience, and it's increasingly clear that marketing green is a successful strategy." As the result, hospitality companies have to get familiar with this new trend, many resort had environmental management systems, some developed under the international standard such as the International Standards Organization (ISO), etc. In addition, all the resorts belonging to the big corporations realise that environmental management system can bring significant benefits and comply the environment-protecting rules can reduce legal costs and liabilities. Research shows that, the source of the industry's largest impact on the natural environment is obvious- it's the building that house hotels and resorts ( Bob 2010 ). For example, the pesticides and fertilisers used in landscaping for a new resort are a source of pollution that may poison fish and other aquatic life forms in the surrounding area ( Chuck 1996, p.80 ) also the factors such as footprints, elaborate land planning, landscape can make a big difference to the environment. This trend leads to a high demand for a green building method, the introduction of LEED ( Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design ) can be a good example, the number of membership increased from 1900 to 2600 members in only 9 months of establishment ( U.S Green Building Council ), but thanks to new technologies in construction science, the green-method is always available to respond to the resorts which want to have a eco-friendly design to maximising both profitability and environmental conservation. International resorts show the changing not only through its building but also through its golf courses, they are designed to be friendlier to environment by applying non-chemical pesticides for grass, using partially treated water instead of potable water, implementing the alternative energy sources such as solar and hydrogen cells for golf carts power.

## 2.3. Resort Sector Response to This Trend

The impact of the eco-friendly trend is the change as well as opportunities to challenge businesses of hospitality industry. This powerful variation shown extremely clear if we have a look at the changes from the leading group on the industry. From 1995, the former CEO Scandic Roland Nilsson of Hilton had a very innovative thinking of combining initiatives with environmental friendliness in their business model. Their rooms were created with 97% recycled materials such as wood, wool and cotton instead of synthetic resin and metal, only by that efforts, their business has reduced its water consumption by 13%, energy consumption to 24% and created a large gap in profit between them to other enterprises in the industry.

A typical example for corporations which promote the environmental issues, have to mention the Marriott. With the leading business like Marriott, they increasingly realised the importance of sustainable development with the environments as a competitive advantage. Marriott announced that the company has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 70,000 tons from January 2006 ( hotel executive n.d) and has nearly 200 hotels and resorts are certified Energy Star for energy efficiency, which non of the hospitality groups have.

## 3. Health and wellness resort

### 3.1. Trend Description

About 30 years ago, when the word 'spa' just began to be known, the most luxury hotels and resorts which have spa facilities just only comprise an indoor swimming pool, plunge pools, saunas, steam rooms, treatment rooms ( Palsgrave, 2007), at that time, the concept of wellness was not really common. However, in

the 1990s, started from the bad habits such as eating junk food, relying on the convenience of technology and lacking of physical activities, which lead to the explosion of obesity, heart disease and high blood pressure, people generally concerned about their physical status and healthy life style to enjoy their life in the more fulfilling way and maintain their life time. As the result, wellness tourism is booming, recent figures show that \$1 in every \$7 spent on tourism goes on wellness pursuits ( Bodyandsoul n.d ). The idea of going for vacation means more sleep, more food, more parties, more alcohol was no longer exist, people is now seeking to improve their life by staying more healthier. Seizing this opportunity, hospitality industry is developing to make sure that all customers still keep their wellness while they are travelling. In addition, resorts choose to combine spa and wellness together, showing their ability to provide healthy holiday not only in the spa department, but also in all other aspects of the resort such as rooms, food and beverage. For example, resorts offer facilities like massage chairs which good for the spine, aromatherapy and sleep-aiding amenities in all rooms, always ready for every requirement of food from paleo to gluten-free, vegetarian menu, trendy juices, etc, all to ensure healthy-living needs of customers.

### 3.2. Trend Impact on the International Resort Sector

According to The Global Spa & Economy Monitor for 2014 ( SRI International), healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss is a \$ 574 billion industry ( Eleni 2015 ), seeing this potential revenue makes hotels and resorts in the world desire to have health and wellness sector in their business. However, this new profitable market have a very competitive environment that creates huge changes in the customer approaching way of health resorts worldwide. There are some changes which due to the influence of healthy living trends, are increasingly concerned by hospitality business to apply in order to maximise profit. First thing to mention is the returning of hot spring bathing, it may sound like and old spa experience, but in this competitive time, it is a big strength if the business apply it in a appropriate way, because of its affordable, popular and therapy effects. Other change is controlling stress, although health and wellness resorts are there to help soothing customer's stressful from the hard-working time, now they are offering specific exercises to reduce stress with special treatments and healthy nutrition. Customers will enjoy the benefits of participating in the activities available in the resort such as yoga, cooking, cycling that they can use to relax themselves at home even after the vacation. The last new change which is Thriving during life's transitions, is earning a lot of positive response from the customers. Normally, resort is the place where people enjoy the peace, have a rest and get healthier. With elderly people who is the largest customer group, resort might be the place where they can start thinking about their life, the resort also can help them tackle the ageing worries ( Spafinder Wellness, Inc n.d). Besides, the resort provides long-term staying and psychological specialist for people who have shocks in life like illness, divorce, being fired, etc. The idea is new, but it does bring benefits for both the customers and the business.

### 3.3. Resort Sector Response to This Trend

Leading the development of this health and wellness trend trend over past several years, can not forget to mention two big hospitality brands which are InterContinental Hotels Group and Starwood Hotel& Resorts, they both have very strong foundation in health and wellness that is recognised by a growing contingent of traveler ( McKenna 2014 )

EVEN hotels & resort of IHG used four pillars: Keep Active, Rest Easy, Eat Well and Accomplish More showing through every well-equipped departments for customers to have great mentally and physically experience. All the food and beverage are all from the most fresh and healthy ingredients like freshly-squeezed orange juice, 'bean to cup' coffee, organic and gluten-free meal. Moreover, EVEN created the physical activities program everyday from manager-led morning runs to yoga class, all under the guidance of EVEN staffs. By targeting the travellers who are looking for wellness feature and luxury design, the majority of EVEN customers customers choose a premium- class to keep them on track, this make EVEN outstanding than those of other upscale brand and have many advantages for future expansion.

On the other hand, the Element of Starwood hotel & resorts aim for the customers who desire to live healthy and care about environmental issues. All the customers are satisfied with not only the organic food but also a chance to enjoy workout facilities which minimise the impact on the environment. The most special factor of Element, which highlight Element to other brand, is the entire electric system of the building can be replaced by pedal power from the fitness centre. As the result, customers choose to stay with Element to take care of their health and improve the environment.

## 4. Social Media

### 4.1. Trend Description

Social media is one of the most powerful trends which have a huge affect in the hospitality industry because of its own strength that none of the other trend have. It reaches global audience, touches every corner of the world and is available anytime and anywhere. It is a powerful tool to run the business but it is also can push the business on the verge. According to McIndoe, any hospitality business can not monitor social media is similar to willingly flying blind. Social media needs to be concerned carefully because the online reputation of a property is business critical, besides, it also can be an extremely effective way to promote the brand to the customer. Social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube today is being embraced not only by teenagers but also members of generation X who will soon become the biggest chunk of the spending population, as well as by members of Generation Y who are on the brink of joining the workforce (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). When it come to travelling, before booking reservation, customers often do some research online to find the appropriate resort or hotel. Marketing vie Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, creates a easier way for the resort to get close to the customers as well as somehow influent their choice before they make any booking decision ( wishpond n.d). Besides, it is important to identify the type of customer that the resort want to target to, are they a business people or normal employee? Single, couple or family? Affordable or Luxury?, etc. The information posted on social network will compete with a lot of other advertising so that they need to be done done clearly and prominently right at the beginning. Marketing through social media help the resort to be known in a much faster way without investing too much on advertising.

### 3.2. Trend Impact on the International Resort Sector

Social media has become a channel that allows interaction and gives companies an opportunity to address the problems and concerns of their customers, which if done effectively, contributes in building the brand (Carragher, Buchanan, & Puia, 2010). However, this interaction also leads to many negative impact if it is not properly managed. Social media is where any individual have freedom to post images, videos, replied and comments so that it is impossible to control every negative opinions from the customers. The resort was being passive in this case and nothing else it can do except fixing the problem immediately when it occur, not when it is already posted on the network. Those bad opinion opinions like that have considerable influence in the customer loyalty, driving it down by 56% on average average ( marketmetrix n.d ). What worse is that, according to the research, customers tend to write a review about a problem 22.6% rather than write a compliment 8.8%. Another impact is the online review on social media actually aggravate the problem and can not show a fair point of view. Comparing TripAdvisor with real customer survey in the same business, at the same time, TripAdvisor data is almost three times lower than the survey, while 5-star rating were understated by 35% ( marketmetrix n.d ). Last but not least, in order to compete with other competitor, staffs were ordered to post and write negative comments about their opponent to ruin that business reputation, or post compliments to their own resort. This happens because social media is not controlled and restricted, thus the business continue to abuse other without customers knowing the truth ( Kelly 2012 ).

### 4.3. Resort Sector Response to This Trend

Thanks to the help of social media, resorts have opportunities to present their brand globally and create connection with potential customers that original advertising method can not do. Ski resorts seem to have a lot of benefit from the online opportunity. One of the most famous mountain resort in the world- Vali Resorts take full advantage of using nearly 80% of the marketing budget into social media advertisement, they opened three website to ensure skies always have information, besides, they run Twitter and Facebook accounts. The Vali Resort Communications Coordinator Hannah Bowling 'when I did a big contest giveaway on Facebook and they saw how our number of fans grew so quickly, we started thinking of future social media strategies that include more contests, making sure our blog is updated with information our customers want to see.' ( mashable n.d )

Using Instagram is also inexpensive marketing tool that hotels and resort choose to increase awareness of customers. For example, Contest Hashtags of Roundtop Mountain Resort , this encourage customers to show how they feel about the resort, the sightseeing, the product. All the customer will be encourage to take a photo of their favourite moments, share it on Instagram and hashtag resort name ( fishpond n.d ). This way

make a big amount of people who follow the contestants knows about the resort as well as the free beautiful picture of it.

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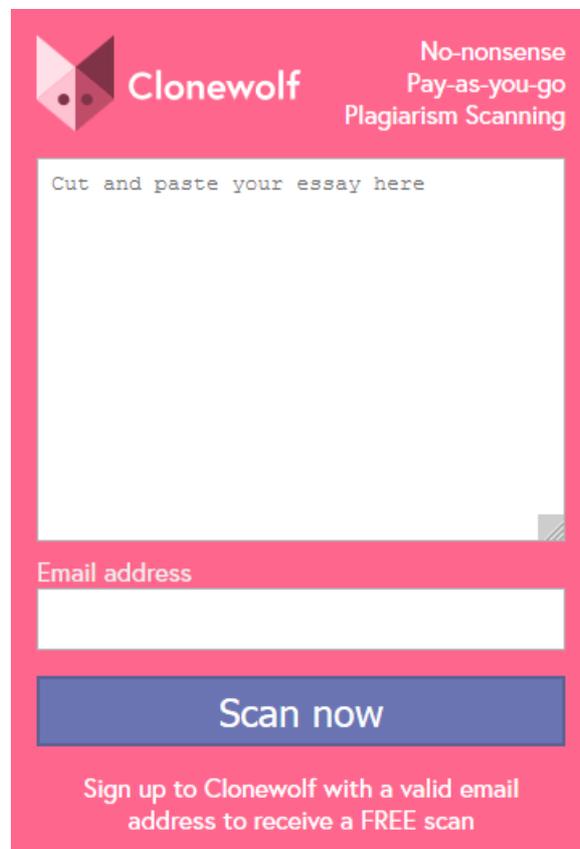
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