

## Hoteliers' Perceptions of the Impacts of Green Tourism on Hotel Operating Costs in Zimbabwe: The Case of Selected Harare Hotels

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study was to determine the possible relationship of green hospitality and operating costs in Zimbabwe's hotels. To achieve this, it looked at practices in hotels and their effect on operating costs and also on the awareness levels of the employees on the subject. The study showed that there is both a negative and positive relationship between green hospitality and operating costs as perceived by the hotel employees. The findings also revealed that employee awareness is important in the discussion of green tourism as a measure of controlling costs as they (employees) are the key drivers of the green revolution.*

**Keywords:** *Green hospitality, green tourism, operational costs.*

### INTRODUCTION

After rapid industrialisation and civilisation, man realised that his practise are damaging the planet earth in an irreversible manner (Mensah, 2004). The tourism and hospitality industry is known for intensive use of water and energy, and for generating a lot of waste. If not managed they have a negative impact on the environment and also on the operating costs of an organisation. Tourism is one of the leading growth sectors of the global economy but the tourism industry's growth through the years has created an increasing amount of stress on the environment. This saw the emergence of the green tourism concept and it being introduced in urban hotel facilities and lodges (Kostuch2002).

Sustainability and environmental concerns have become the most critical issues facing many industries as well as the hotel industry. While it was considered that the hospitality industry does not cause much environmental stress, research has now shown that the industry is just as bad as the manufacturing industry. The hospitality industry is a continuous business that operates on daily basis hence consumes considerable amounts of water and also energy. Also, according to Foster (2000), the hotel industry is one of the major parts in tourism development, so it consumes considerable amount of resources and energy. In as much as all the uses and practices damage the environment, they have a direct impact on the performance of the hotel itself. Many countries, especially in the developed countries, are now advocating for green assessments and certification, and according to a survey conducted by American Hotel and Lodging Association, 90% of American hotels have adopted green activities so as to acquire some of the benefits of going green.

However in developing countries this has not been the case as some hotels have not yet adopted some green practices and hence they have never enjoyed the benefits of going green. Only a few countries such as South Africa have adopted green hospitality hotels are green graded and environmentally friendly practices are being encouraged. Green hotels conserve and preserve by saving water, reducing energy use, and reducing solid waste. They have seen benefits such as reduced costs and liabilities, high return and low-risk investments, increased profits, and positive cash flows.

In Zimbabwe, hotels produce much waste and consume large amounts of energy and water, which contributes to their financial performance. This is common in all hotels as evidenced by a research that was done in Toronto between 1991- 1993 which showed that hotel waste consisted of 46% food waste, 25.3% paper, 11.7% cardboard, 6.7% plastics, 5.6% glass and 4.5% metals ([www.zerowaste.org](http://www.zerowaste.org)). Green tourism, despite all the statistics and research, is still being carried out at lower levels in Zimbabwe and also there is not yet a documented framework on green hospitality by the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). This study therefore sought to explore hoteliers' perceptions of green hospitality in Zimbabwe.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The hospitality industry incurs huge operating costs due to its nature of consuming large amounts of energy and water resources. Hotels incur huge costs in the operational departments of housekeeping, kitchen and laundry. For example, Meikles Group financial report (March 2012) shows that operating costs contributed to 51, 59% of the total expenses (Meikles IES, 2012). The operational nature of the hotel business, open 365 days per year, makes it consume more energy and water, thus they experience high operating costs (Foster, 2000). This has an impact on the profitability of the organization and its competitive advantage. Despite the availability of much literature which suggests that green tourism can reduce operating costs, the practice seems not to yet have taken root in Zimbabwe's tourism sector. Therefore, using a qualitative approach, this research sought to explore hoteliers' perceptions of the effects of green tourism on hotel operating costs.

The research was guided by the following objectives:

#### **Main Objective**

To explore the relationship between green tourism practices and hotel operating costs.

#### **Specific Objectives**

The study sought to identify the practices being carried out at different hotels in terms of water, energy use and waste management; assess the extent to which the practices adhere to the green concept; evaluate awareness levels of employees on the concept of green practices and operating costs; and to develop strategies for hotel cost control through green tourism.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Green Practices**

The term "green" is used to signify "environmentally friendly" (Shrum, 2005) when, in fact, it is much more than that. One of the important aspects that should be understood about green practices is that the range of the term "green" is broad and varying based on perspective. Green was defined from an economic point of view by Gupta (2006) who defines "greening" as corporate environmental performance in meeting stockholders' expectations. Shrivastava (2000) views environmental management as a tool to fit into a social and ecological system. Further, Gupta and Sharma (2002) define green practices as environmentally friendly management principles in which executive levels convert natural resources into better outputs or products.

In the hotel industry, practices associated with green concerns are diverse; they may encompass a variety of activities from pollution prevention to stakeholders' awareness campaigns regarding these activities. However, for the purpose of the study this research views green practices as internal efforts or activities of a hotel to implement environmentally friendly practices towards the goal of reducing its operating costs. The term "green facility or hotel" can be used interchangeably or synonymously with "an environment friendly hotel," "an eco-friendly hotel," or "a sustainable hotel." During the last few decades it has become a common phenomenon to focus on the environmental impact of the hotel industry with each hotel striving to achieve environmental sensitivity even though there is no universally agreed upon definition of a green hotel (Harris & Crane, 2002). Academics, governmental agencies and nonprofit environmental organizations have introduced their own definitions of a green facility. Some scholars defined green hotel as an environmentally sensitive hotel that operates its business in a manner that minimizes degradation of the environment (Iwanowski, 2003). The specific areas of focus are energy efficiency, recycling, water conservation, and clean air practices (Bohdanowicz, 2005). Similarly, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) define a green hotel as a lodging facility committed to ecological practices such as saving of water, energy and waste.

#### **Motives of green practices**

Hotels have different motives of going green. Despite the popularity of being an environmentally responsible hotel, the driving force is arguable (Tzschentke, 2004). Conventional literature explained motivations of the green practices in the context of corporate social responsibility (Hass, 1996). However while corporate social responsibility is an imperative, previous studies identified three major motivations for green practices within the

hotel industry (Chan, 2006). The first driving force is government regulations towards green practices which have pressured the hotels. An example would be of Florida 2008, where state agencies were required not to hold meetings or conferences with hotels unless the properties have adopted green practices (Department of Environmental Protection of Florida, 2009). In extreme cases some countries such as Australia and New Zealand impose financial penalties for a property's noncompliance to green policies (Mensah, 2004).

The second driver involves monetary benefits or financial gains that can be realized from green practices (González & León, 2001). Many hotel organizations have reported financial benefits resulting from going green. Hyatt Regency Chicago, for example, reported that the property saved \$120,000 through recycling hotel items (Enz and Siquaw, 1999). Similarly, the Westinn Hotel in Seattle announced that it reduced its energy consumption by sixty six percent, which is equivalent to \$400,000 annually by using energy efficient appliances (Mensah, 2004). In another example, the Hyatt Regency International Hotel in New Zealand installed an energy saving system. The cost of the system was \$16,000, yet in only a 14-month period, a savings of \$14,000 was realized (Alexander, 2002).

The third motivation for hotels adopting green practices is fostering positive public relations and marketing (Tzschentke et al., 2004). The term "green hotel" aids in attracting more business. Various reports show that corporations want to hold their business meetings at green hotels. The number of firms that considered green facilities for their meetings increased by 10 percent between 1997 and 1998 (Mensah, 2004). This significant growth in attention paid to green practices in the hotel industry is clearly demonstrated in the case of the Saunders Hotel Group which estimated that its promotion of the term "green practices" contributed to bringing over \$2 million of new group business (Glanzrock, 1995).

### **Challenges of green practices deployment**

Although the green practice concept is widely accepted by the hotel industry, there are still some questions as to why implementation is minimal. There is the lack of a universally or widely accepted definition of green practices (Harris & Crane, 2002). Several authors and organizations have different opinions on the real definition of green tourism and they take them from different perspectives. Consequently, confusion may arise between a green hotel fulfilling its ultimate goal of green practices and some synonymous terms. For example, a green hotel and an eco-lodge may be confusing due to the similarity of the terms. In Zimbabwe there is no a clear distinction definition of green hospitality.

Additionally, there are some doubts in terms of the financial impact of green practices among practitioners. Bohdanowicz (2006) points out in the study of managers' perceptions in European hotels that doubts have been raised regarding financial effectiveness of green practices because the functional attributes of green practices are highly related to installation of new technologies or systems that increase costs. However, research indicates the fact that the cost of new systems will be offset by savings in water, energy and waste reduction costs within a few years (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007).

Another point is that the hotel industry has expressed concerns regarding decreasing service standards. Some green practices may present an impression of compromised quality (Heung et al., 2006; Kirk, 1995). In fact, Dagmar (2004) notes that conservation practices such as using shampoo dispensers may reduce waste, but may be contrary to guest expectations of indulgence and comfort.

### **Green practices and operating costs**

According to Bohdanowicz 2005, green practices are identified through energy efficiency, water conservation and waste management. These practices have an impact on the operating costs that a hotel can incur and also affect the performance of the hotel.

**Energy Efficiency** - due to the nature of hotels of providing comfort and service to guests, the hospitality industry is one of the most energy consumptive industries (Bohdanowicz et al., 2001). However the level of energy consumption varies based on types, size, and range of the facilities. This means that the hotel industry consumes much energy in trying to enhance their quality and image. For a study that was carried out in the United States for both hotels and motels on their practices and operating costs energy only represented roughly six percent of all the operating costs (U.S.A EPA, 2007). The hotels were mainly relying on electricity in all the practices such as cooling and heating. Positively green tourism practices that promote energy efficiency resulted in a 10 to 25 percent reduction in expenditures on energy when using energy efficient equipment (Heung, 2006).

**Water Consumption** - the hotel sector consumes much water through the use in various departments such as the laundry, kitchen and housekeeping. Grossling, (2005) postulated that global direct water consumption by

international tourism for accommodation only in hotels and lodges was estimated to be 1.3 billion cubic liters per year. UNEP (2003), also estimated that in the USA, tourism and recreation consumes 946 million cubic millimeters of water per year, of which 60% is linked to lodging which is mostly spent on guest consumption, landscape and property management and laundry activities and other 13% to food service.

Internal water efficiency and management programs and investments in water-saving technology in rooms, facilities and attractions reduce costs. Greater efficiency and improved management allows for the increase of number of rooms/visitors in water-constrained destinations. With regard to direct water use for tourists, Fortuny et al. (2008) demonstrated that many water-saving technologies relevant to hotels and other businesses have short payback times (between 0.1 to 9.6 years), making them economically attractive. Investments in water-saving systems, grey water reuse and rainwater collection and management systems can help reduce water consumption by 1,045 cubic meters per year, or a 27 per cent lower volume per guest per night.

**Waste management** - quantity of waste that is produced varies with the occupancy and also property (Pettay, 2001). Waste generation in the hotel industry is very high whereby for one study that was done waste generation was as high as 30 pounds per room within the hotel industry (CIWMB, 2009). Erdogan (2007) also conducted a study to examine environmental practices implemented by Turkish hotels and found that paper and food waste are the greatest amount of waste generated sources of hotels. The food & beverage service area in particular generates various solid and organic wastes such as packaging and food waste, aluminum cans, glass bottles, corks and cooking oils. The housekeeping operation also generates cleaning materials and plastic packaging. In addition to solid waste from front-of-house areas, back-of-house areas also generate a huge amount of solid waste such as toner cartridges, paper and cardboard waste and many other wastes from the hotel facility maintenance department (Baker, 2008).

#### **Waste recycling and production in hotels**

Previous research indicates that the level of hotels' commitment to waste sorting and recycling varies, depending on regulatory pressures and local government's support. For example, European hotels actively implement waste sorting and recycling programs in offices and kitchens, but not in guestrooms (Erdogan, 2007) while Ghanaian hotels are less committed to recycling programs, with only 17 percent of sampled hotels adopting recycling programs (Mensah, 2006). Erdogan and Baris (2007) pointed out that working with local governments and recycling firms can significantly promote the waste sorting and recycling activities among hotels.

Waste production involves different types of materials found in the hotel industry that include paper, food and glass (Alexander, 2002). Among the many components, food waste makes up nearly 50 percent of all waste production (Alexander, 2002; CIWMB, 2009). Unfortunately programs to reduce food waste have not effectively penetrated the hotel industry. The Green Assessment Survey (2008) identified food waste reduction as one of the areas that the industry needs to improve upon. The significant point is that the high percentage of food waste produced by the hotel industry has not decreased even though hospitality organizations are recognizing green practices increasingly. In fact, the result from a waste generation study examining 25 hotels from 1991 to 1993 revealed that food waste comprised 46 percent of the hotels' total waste (Alexander, 2002). Unfortunately, the figures on food waste have not changed since then and most food waste is still not recycled or composted according to a current study of food waste in the hospitality industry (Okazaki et al., 2008). Therefore the food and beverage department especially in the kitchen needs to consider the aspect of green practices so as to reduce the waste and also costs in the hotel. Improving waste management in the kitchens can save money for the tourism businesses and provides business opportunities.

According to Alexander 2002, food waste can be reduced by activities such as donation though sometimes there is controversy on the issue of sanitation and hygiene. The second contributing factor to food waste is related to the nature of the cooking itself. Bohanowicz, (2006) states that overcooking, over preparation, cooking losses or packaging failure quickly lead to the accumulation of food waste. However reduction efforts to reduce solid waste such as non-waxed paper products, cans or plastics are relatively undemanding as compared to food waste reduction.

#### **Green tourism and employee awareness**

There is a need to examine how hotel employees perceive green practices in order to better understand application of green practices to the hotel industry. Previous studies have not examined the employees' perspectives on green practices, but have instead focused on guest perceptions (Goldstein, 2008) and attitudes of managers (Claver-Cortés, 2007). Therefore it will be important to measure the level of awareness of the employees on the concept of green tourism and operating costs. According to Fineman (2006), employees lead

the way to success in creating a green culture because they demonstrate hands on green activities in the work environment. Therefore understanding how hotel employees perceive green practices is critical in implementing successful green programs. According to Stein (2012) awareness levels of employees are mainly influenced by personal attributes such as demographic characteristics, age, and gender and educational level though the employer has a great role to play in influencing the awareness of the employees.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research was done using the survey strategy. A sample of hotel's key informants was used from rooms' division, food and beverage, and accounts departments. The target population for the study comprised all employees in these three major operational departments working in selected twelve three-star to five-star hotels in Harare, Zimbabwe. It is from this target population that a study population was derived. Purposive sampling was used in this study. "Purpose sampling involves handpicking cases to be included in the sample on basis of judgment of their typicality", (Cohen & Manion 1989:103). The cases under study were picked by virtue of their typicality, that is, by virtue of their being employees in rooms division and food and beverage department. A total number of 100 informants were purposively selected for the study. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The questionnaires were personally delivered to the sample and personally collected resulting in 100% return rate. Data was presented and interpreted qualitatively.

## **RESULTS ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **Extent on the reliance on water and electricity**

All the departments highlighted that all the practices and duties relied on water and electricity except on bed-making. General housekeeping and energy usage issues were relevant to the study as they contribute to the knowledge on the amounts of water and energy that can be consumed by the various departments. This has an impact on the costs that can be incurred by the hotel of water and energy. 100% of the respondents depended on Zimbabwe National Water Authority and Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority for water and energy respectively. This is maybe because it is the general option that almost all organizations opt for it has been the traditional sources of water and electricity. However, the accounts department for the interviews that were carried out, the findings revealed that entirely depending on the local authorities for water and energy was expensive as evidenced by outstanding bills that were not yet settled.

### **Waste generated from the departments**

Respondents' identification on the kind of waste generated showed that 30% of the waste was from housekeeping. The waste was generally in form of paper and amenity containers of shampoos. Solid waste was mainly generated from the food and beverages departments and constituted of 60% of total hotel solid waste. This is due to the high usage of solid raw material and leftovers from restaurants. The remaining 10% of waste was generated from the laundry may be because they use water to wash dirty linen hence little solid waste is mainly produced. Hence the findings show that the hotel industry produces much waste and this concurs with the assertion by Kirk (1998) and Bohdanowicz (2006) who observed that the hospitality industry has been traditionally considered one that does not have a great impact on the natural environment compared to such industries as gas and oil, and other consumer product manufacturing industries. However, the hotel sector, in particular, one of the main business sectors in the hospitality industry, generates much more negative environmental impacts than the public perceives, consuming a vast amount of local and imported non-durable goods, energy and water, as well as emitting a large amount of carbon dioxide and generating a lot of waste. Baker (2008) also mentioned the food & beverage service area as the major source of organic waste as well as a large amount of solid waste including aluminum cans, glass bottles, corks, and cooking oils.

### **General understanding of green tourism**

The respondents were asked on their general views of green tourism practices and how they could be incorporated in the departments they were working in. The findings showed that most of the employees could not explain green tourism and how it could be incorporated in the departments the respondents were working in. This scenario was most rife amongst the employees who had a long service. A few had a general understanding of green tourism concept but however could not synthesize on how it could be incorporated in their departments. On the other hand the interviews established that all supervisors had a general understanding of the green concept as they highlighted some major issues of recycling, source reduction and reusing. The findings seem to suggest that the management is more enlightened on the green practices than the lower level staff. There also seems to be a relationship between education and the understanding of the green tourism concept among employees. The younger and educated generation is more aware of green tourism than the older generation. To attain the benefits of green tourism practices hotels need to spend more time and effort in communicating their green practice vision to employees through training to improve green practices and to motivate the employees to engage in green practices (Sherman, 2008).

### Green tourism in practice

As most of the lower level employees had little knowledge on green tourism they failed to give comprehensive practices that were being adopted and some green practices that could be incorporated in place of the traditional methods. The supervisors however revealed that they had the sentiments that traditional methods could be better as they had doubts on the financial impacts of adopting green practices. This concurs with Bohdanowicz (2006)'s assertion that managers in most hotels have doubts regarding financial effectiveness of green practices. This is because the functional attributes of green practices are highly related to installation of new technologies or systems that increase costs.

### Alternatives in crisis

90% of the respondents highlighted that the departments relied on generator as their alternative for energy and in some cases would have no option but leave their duties and resume when electricity is back. The findings also revealed that the kitchens had an alternative of using gas stoves. There were no alternatives at all for water as 100% of the respondents gave results that there had no alternative in terms of water shortages and rationing. These findings suggest that the alternative of the generator has expenses that are incurred in terms of fuel use and these are continuous costs due to the frequency of power cuts that the nation is currently facing. However research by Meade & Pringle (2001) contradicts with the findings and their implications as it connotes the idea of green alternatives reaping continuous benefits rather than costs.

### Waste disposal methods

The following were the findings on the responses of how waste was disposed in the various departments: recycling (0%), separation (0%), burning (25%) and dumping (75%). The findings revealed that there were generally two methods that were used in waste disposal which are dumping and burning. Burning is most popular in the housekeeping department other than all the departments. Waste is not separated at disposal and there are hardly any re-cycling programs that are in the departments. This shows that the departments do not have tangible waste management programs and the levels in involvement in recycling programs can be attributed to lack of awareness of how the program can reduce the costs that can be incurred by using the other methods. The finding is also the same as those that were attained in Ghanaian hotels which were less committed to recycling programs, with only 17 percent of sampled hotels adopting recycling programs (Mensah, 2006). However for a report done by Bohdanowicz in 2006 and Erdogan and Baris in 2007, in Europe, 80% of the hotels were involved in recycling programs and hence the level of development has an impact on the level of adoption of green tourism.

### Relationship between green tourism and operating costs

Most of the employees had the view that there was a link between their practices and operating costs of the hotel. They revealed that as the operational department they need and rely on water and electricity on everything and they could not operate without. They were aware of the fact that the hotel needed to pay water and electricity bills and also pointed out that the practices were in fact contributing to the costs of the department. To establish the relationship the management staff were asked on the percentages that water and energy contributes to the overall operating costs. They produced 2012 group's financial reports and the findings were averaged for the 12 hotels as follows:

**Table 1: Contribution of operating costs**

Operating cost	Contribution (\$000)	%
Electricity and water	(5036)	51,59
Rates	(1 748)	17,9
Premises repairs and maintenance	(1 585)	16,23
Security	(1 391)	14,25
<b>Total</b>	<b>(9 760)</b>	<b>100</b>

The above findings showed water and electricity contributed the highest percentage of 51, 59%. From the total revenue this implies that it has a significant role it plays in reducing the profitability of the organization and this alludes with researches which were once carried out. The findings showed the relationship that was in existence between their practices and the overall operating costs. It had a negative impact as it increased the operating costs of the departments and the hotel as a whole.

**Practices reducing operating costs:**

To establish the awareness level on green tourism and hotel operating costs nine items were identified and a 5 point Likert scale with end points labeled 1= disagree and 3= agree was used to assess the relationship and if the employees were aware of it. The table below illustrates the findings:

**Table 2: Cost reducing green practices**

Variable	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	freq	%
Purchasing from local suppliers	50	50	18	18	32	32
Portion control and donating leftovers	18	18	25	25	57	57
Recycling and composting programs	11	11	36	36	53	53
Use of organic products	43	43	39	39	18	18
Using stair cases rather than elevators	71	71	11	11	18	18
Reducing use of harmful detergents	36	36	11	11	53	53
Reducing the frequency of changing linen and towels	0	0	21	21	79	79

From the figure above the findings show that 50% disagrees that purchasing from local vendors can reduce operating costs, 32% agreed and 18% were neutral/not sure if such a step could reduce costs in the department. Most of them disagreed due to the fact that they are not really involved in the purchasing of materials as it is done by the management and they use processed goods and may not be sure of the costs. The other reason could be the fact that they perceive that local vendors do not produce quality products and are afraid of compromising the quality of the final products. The findings are similar to those of Bohdanowicz et al., 2001; Bohdanowicz, 2006; Heung et al., 2006; Kirk, 1995 who all posited that some green practices may present an impression of compromised quality. However there are conflicting findings of Cortes, (2007) who discovered in 5 hotels in Jamaica that the hotels experienced lower costs in that the products were actually cheaper and low gases were emitted during transportation since shorter distances are involved in delivery.

**Portion control and donating leftovers**

The findings for portion control revealed that 57% agreed; 25% neutral and 18% disagreed to the conception. A greater percentage agreed that portion control and donating leftovers was a practice that could reduce operating costs. Similar findings were also done where portion control and donating leftovers was a way of reducing and managing waste as according to Marlon (2007). However, Riley (2000) argued that the concept does not really reduce costs but employees embrace it only because they are direct beneficiaries of the leftovers and this disagrees with the findings.

**Recycling and composting programs**

The findings above on recycling and composting programs showed that 53% agreed that it reduces operating costs, 36% of the respondents were neutral whilst 11% disagreed. The majority of the respondents also agreed that it could reduce the cost though they expressed reservations on the practicability of the program. Views of the respondents concur with the findings of Hamele and Eckart (2006) who reported the results of an analysis of 36 hotels in the 2-4 stars categories in Germany and Austria that experience a decrease in their cost after establishing compost programs in the kitchen department for biodegradables and used as manure in the garden.

**Use of organic products**

Most of the respondents disagreed that the use of organic products had the potential of decreasing the operating costs that can be incurred by the hotel whilst a few agreed to the practice. This could have been due to the reason that the employees were not trained on the aspect of organic products as a green practice that could reduce the costs as they may perceive it as labour intensive since it involves having your own organic gardens of natural herbs and spices that may be useful especially in the kitchen department. The findings are similar to those that were highlighted by Grossling (2005) that the use of organic products in the hotel industry has raised alarm as there is limited understanding by low level employees.

**Reducing the frequency of changing linen and towels**

79% of the respondents concurred that reducing the frequency of changing linen and towels could reduce operating costs. 21% were neutral about the matter and 0% disagreed to the practices as one that can reduce the

operating costs. The reason could be due to the fact that sometimes employees are made to clean unused linen and if this is stopped it saves water, energy and waste that is likely to be produced thereby reducing utilities. These findings agree with some that were carried out on towel and linen re-use program. According to Marriott International's linen re-use program, encouraging guests to reuse linen and towels during their stay contributes to saving 11 to 17 percent on hot water (Marriott International, 2007).

### **Benefits of green tourism to employees**

Employees were also asked on their views on how they can benefit from green tourism. Most of the employees saw little benefit of green tourism as they had the perceptions that it only contributed to the profitability of the company. They also highlighted that some of the practices increased workloads and could lead to the extension of working hours. According to Henry (2003), green tourism practices can lead to a review of employees' salaries since if successfully implemented a hotel will operate on a profit.

### **Green tourism practices that can be adopted by the departments**

Management staff suggested the idea of conducting training sessions so as to increase the awareness of the employees. Some of the supervisors suggested that the hotels come up with monitoring policies on all departments on waste management, and water and energy use.

### **Conclusions**

Employee awareness on green practices is an important factor in reducing costs. However, employees agreed that most of the highlighted green practices could reduce operating costs, although they are a few practices they disagreed to. This shows that the employees have a general knowledge of practices that can reduce costs however they are not aware that these are actually green practices hence they need to be educated. The findings show that employees are not willing to participate in practices that imply behavior change or that can compromise the quality of the final product. The research findings also seem to suggest that the concept of green tourism has been commonly embraced by hotels. However, practices such as composting and recycling are viewed suspiciously as they may compromise on quality. This study also established that employees perceive green practices negatively mainly because the benefits of the program do not accrue to them.

### **Recommendations**

The hotels can be recommended to adopt green practices in the departments that were under study. The hotels should adopt energy and water conservation programs which are cheaper to implement. These practices include water harvesting during the rainy season and encouraging switching off electrical gadgets which will not be in use. It also includes the use of solar energy for heating and cooling systems. Policies and guided frameworks on using fewer resources are also recommended to the hotel. The current state in the country at the moment is that there is no documented framework but the hotels can formulate their own greening policies at organizational level. A framework will give the employees a guideline of the practices and how the practices can reduce the operating costs they incur in their department.

Employee awareness is an important drive in establishing the relationship of green tourism and operating costs. It would be recommended that green practices and their implications on the costs should be frequently communicated to the employee. By frequently communicating this information to the employees, it encourages more participation and hence in the same way increases their awareness levels. In doing so they should also highlight the benefits of the practices not in the sense of costs but specifically to the employees. This serves as a motivator to the employees to participate actively in the green movement. Hotels on another note should do their best to facilitate employees' participation in green practices. If this is done the employees will not feel disadvantaged or inconvenienced in doing some of the practices such as using stair cases. The hotels can facilitate this by positioning offices or storerooms at convenient positions that would not strain the employees. Training should also be based on needs and interest of departments individually. Hence green goals can be made department specific focusing on their interests and needs. This gives the employees opportunities to give their contributions and ideas and at the same time encourage participation. The use of modern waste management techniques can also be utilized in these hotels which include re-cycling, re-use and transformation.

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