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An advertisement banner featuring a photo of a man in a dark jacket and a woman in a green shirt standing outdoors. To the right of the photo, the text reads: "HIS JOB IS TO SAFEGUARD ONE OF SINGAPORE'S MOST VISIBLE LANDMARKS". Below this text is a black button with white text that says "READ NOW" followed by a right-pointing arrow. To the right of the text and button is the "brand studio" logo, followed by a small "x" and the "SSSECURE" logo, which includes a stylized American flag graphic.

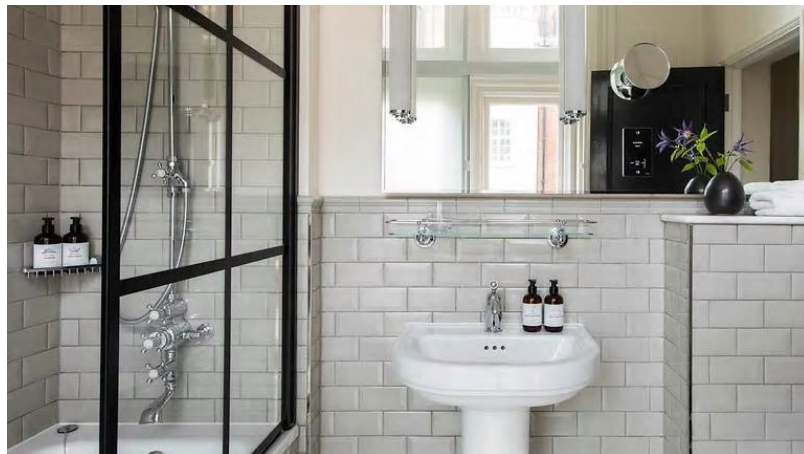
HIS JOB IS TO SAFEGUARD ONE OF
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Singapore

Hotel waste: The huge switch to becoming a more sustainable business



The Intercontinental Hotels Group is planning to replace single use plastic toiletry bottles by 2021. (Photo: Intercontinental Hotels Group)

SINGAPORE: Many travellers checking into their hotels expect amenities such as shampoos, conditioners, bath gels and body lotion in miniature plastic bottles. Toothbrushes, disposable razors and slippers are also the norm at many hotels.

Such items are usually discarded by the hotels after the guests check out, contributing to the mountain of waste generated by the hospitality industry each year, said experts.

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Figures from the National Environment Agency (NEA)

(<https://www.nea.gov.sg/our-services/waste-management/mandatory-waste-reporting>) showed that larger hotels in Singapore – defined as those with more than 200 rooms – have a recycling rate of just 7.7 per cent in 2018.

"The top performers typically segregated common recyclables such as carton boxes, plastic packaging, and newspapers, and operated food waste digesters," the agency said on their website.

Although the recycling rate was an improvement over 2014, experts said the single-digit percentage is low, and more could be done.

► READ: Large hotels recycling less, can manage waste better: NEA (/news/singapore/large-hotels-recycling-less-can-manage-waste-better-nea-10481148?cid=h3_referral_inarticlelinks_24082018_cna)

THE DILEMMA OF GOING GREEN

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This speaks to the dilemma faced by the hospitality industry, said Singapore Institute of Technology Associate Professor of design and specialised business Detlev Remy.

"It's a huge switch (for hotels) to go green, because it has an impact on customers, on the whole hotel living and hotel standards on what you expect as a customer," he said.

He added customers of luxury hotels expect the full set of amenities and services, and it would be difficult for these hotels to completely do away with them.

Using the example of room slippers he said: At "four-, five-star (hotels), you expect this. Now (if hotels) tell customers, we are going green, we want to act sustainable, we don't have any more slippers for you – (customers) wouldn't like it", he said.

Customers "would say fine, but then I go for another hotel".

Perhaps three- or four-star hotels would be able to do away with certain amenities in the name of sustainability, as customers would not expect as much, said Prof Remy.

So mindsets need to change and some pressure exerted on the industry "from a customer perspective, from the government, or from the competition".

From the customer perspective, pressure could be applied by millennials, said Professor Ang Swee Hoon of the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School.

"This generation of consumers are willing to forego brands that do not align with their personal beliefs," she said.

And on the government's front, experts pointed to the mandatory waste reporting exercise which NEA introduced in 2014. It aims to draw greater management attention to the amount of waste produced by large commercial premises like shopping malls and hotels.

The agency determines how well hotels perform by tracking how much of each major type of waste is recycled compared to the total waste generated.

HOW SOME HOTELS ARE REDUCING PLASTIC WASTE

Some international hotel chains are indeed paying closer attention to the waste they generate and are taking initial steps to address their impact on the environment.

In August, international hotel chain Marriott International announced it would stop providing shampoo, conditioner and body lotion in single-use plastic bottles by December 2020. They will be replaced by pump-topped bottles.

Globally, this results in 500 million less plastic bottles thrown away annually, a 30 per cent yearly reduction from current usage, said Marriot International in a press release.

Earlier in July, the Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) also announced that it would implement bulk-size amenities in all guest rooms, replacing single-use plastic toiletry bottles. This is expected to be completed by 2021.

Currently, IHG uses "an average of 200 million bathroom miniatures" worldwide every year, said IHG in a press release.

The Fullerton Hotels and Resorts' general manager Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale also said that the hotel is "switching (their) in-room toiletries to eco-friendly versions", which will be rolled out in October this year.

The eco-friendly version would be Eco-pure or non-plastic toiletries, and will include a full suite of vanity kits, dental kits, sewing kits, shower caps, combs, sanitary bags and loofas.

► READ: MPs question Government's stand on single-use plastics as Parliament passes new sustainability Bill (/news/singapore/singapore-single-use-plastics-resource-sustainability-bill-11872642?cid=h3_referral_inarticlelinks_24082018_cna)

► READ: Singapore to reduce Semakau waste by 30% under first Zero Waste Master Plan (/news/singapore/semakau-reduce-landfill-zero-waste-master-plan-recycling-bins-11856664?cid=h3_referral_inarticlelinks_24082018_cna)

NOT JUST PLASTIC BOTTLES

A Hilton Singapore spokesperson noted that the hotel has already replaced all plastic straws with paper straws and provide glass bottled water and recyclable or environmentally-friendly dishware for meeting spaces.

"At Hilton, we have committed to doubling our social impact and halving our environmental impact through responsible hospitality across our value chain by 2030," said the spokesperson.

The spokesperson added that Hilton Singapore is also currently working with its parent company on alternatives to other single-use plastics.

► READ: Elaborate mooncake packaging difficult to recycle and damaging to the environment, experts say (/news/singapore/mooncakes-packaging-can-it-be-recycled-environment-11842940?cid=h3_referral_inarticlelinks_24082018_cna)

The Singapore Hotels Association (SHA) added that they have seen more of their member hotels "switching from miniature-bottled amenities to dispensers".

"There is also a strong movement in the industry to do away with single-use plastics such as from plastic straws to paper straws," said SHA president Kwee Wei-Lin.

"As consumers are increasingly more aware and supportive of green initiatives, it only makes good sense for hotels to embrace going green," she said.

NOT JUST PLASTIC WASTE, PLEASE

While applauding the action taken by these hotels, founder of environmental group Plastic-Lite Singapore Aarti Giri noted that this is only one way to reduce waste.

“Consistent and sincere efforts need to be made to eliminate single-use items, be they plastic or paper wherever they are avoidable,” she said.

She suggested that hotels improve sustainability efforts by removing plastic water bottles both in rooms and during conferences, stop supplying disposable room slippers and to only give other toilet amenities such as brushes, disposable razors and sewing kits to guests only on request.

She added that hotels can also make “targeted efforts” to reduce food waste, and also to “invest in their own food digesters/composters with the resulting fertiliser sold to farmers and/or used in their own organic gardens”.

Additionally, hotels can look at donating items as part of reducing waste, said environment group Zero Waste SG’s Pek Hai Lin.

“There are other aspects, such as when they change items like towels and mattresses. For items which cannot be reduced upstream, hotels can look at donating to beneficiaries downstream if they are still in good condition,” she said.

Ultimately, it appears to be a matter of priorities, said Ms Giri.

"As is the case of many private industries, profits seem to be at the bottom-line of the company's overall agenda. This short-sighted profit-based corporate mentality is, I would say, a systemic problem," she said.

She added that companies should focus on making the best use of resources rather than on its own growth, and that "profits made at the expense of the environment is not sustainable".

"The sooner the businesses realise this, the better the chance we have at controlling the damage arising from climate change," she said.

Source:

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 Elizabeth Chau

The Hotel industry needs to act as one, not individually in an effort to educate their customers about being eco friendly and sustainable.

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 Jouke Postma

It is not only about plastic. It is also about electricity use and chemical wastage from cleaning. In our hotel in Kuala Lumpur we were able to reduce our chemical usage by 90%. More info at [aqueous-ozone.com](#)

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