

Moevenpik Hotel, Kuwait

Green is the new black



Nagi Morkos, hodema Consulting Services managing partner, takes a look at hotels that are working on their green profiles and those that are not

Hotels are known for being some of the biggest energy guzzlers. Regardless of local resources and climate, they must provide their guests with hot and cold water, heat or air conditioning and enough electricity to power electrical devices. They also produce large amounts of waste. This situation is particularly noticeable in the Gulf, where hotels use over 200 per cent more energy than those in Europe, according to a study by Farnek Avireal, a facilities and energy management services firm. In a water-scarce region, they range from 650 liters at its lowest to as much as 2,000 liters per guest.

Hotel chains have been working on their green profile over the last four years and are now taking on

green initiatives to curb the tendency. Now the question is not who is green, but rather who isn't. Indeed, most major groups in the region have already set up programs to cut down their carbon footprint. Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has signed a certification partnership with Green Globe based on Agenda 21 principles for sustainable development endorsed by 182 heads of state at the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992. The company's branches in the region participate in recycling initiatives and focus on minimizing waste output. The InterContinental Hotel Group launched a strategy called the 'Green Engage'. Six Rezidor hotels (The Radisson Blu on Abu Dhabi's Yas Island; the Radisson Blu Resort in Sharjah, and Radisson Blu Hotels in Dubai Deira Creek, Dubai Marina and Dubai Media City) have been awarded the Green Key certification, an international eco label for tourism facilities.

Marriott International launched the 'Spirit To Preserve'

program as early as 2006. It is now implemented in six of its hotels in Dubai. Like the Kempinski Hotel Mall of the Emirates, they collect papers, aluminum cans, plastic cups, as well as ballasts, electronic waste, and fluorescent light bulbs. The staff offers guests to reuse linens and towels during their stay. According to Marriott, it saves 11% to 17% on hot water bills involved in laundering operations at each hotel. Some hotels have installed specific showerheads to save water.

Hyatt Hotels, located in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have adopted a green attitude as well. They offer pitchers of water instead of bottles, limit the amount of packages and try to use

locally sourced products. Cristal Hotel is the owner of one of the largest recycling units in Abu Dhabi and regulates water temperature to reduce compressor load.

Greening your hotel helps protect the environment, but can also significantly reduce utility bills. Rotana Hotels save 12 per cent on utility bills thanks to its programs and Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts are saving the equivalent of about \$5 per room per night. But, saving comes at a cost. The Radisson Blu in Dubai invested over \$1.25 million (Dh4.59 million) in green initiatives to be able to save in the long term. Studies show that an extra 20% investment needs to be made in order to green your hotel, but many are willing to make the



upfront investment in order to reap long-term benefits.

Abu Dhabi is particularly proactive in that matter, with tourism becoming a key income. The Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA) launched The 'Green Hotel Guidelines': starting 2011, it will award a green ranking along with the star ranking. Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort has been chosen as the pilot premises to experiment the new guidelines. ADTA also set up the 'Environmental, Health & Safety Management System', which should enable hotels to reduce their energy, water and waste use by 20%. Abu Dhabi also hosts The World Green Tourism event, aimed at promoting the country as an eco-friendly destination, a strategy which is likely to pay off: according to the International Ecotourism Society, sustainable tourism could grow to \$473.6 billion within six years. On the customer side, studies show that an increasing number of travelers are willing to choose and even pay more to stay in a hotel abiding by green standards.

This trend is only one side of the green craze. The widespread effort to go green also involves restaurants and spas, both in terms of architecture and organic



Moevenpick Hotel, Jeddah

products. Contractors now use natural sustainable materials. For instance, bamboo can be found in kitchens, and bronze and copper in bathrooms. The popular US LEED certification provides building owners and operators with a framework for identifying and implementing green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.

The Middle East countries have joined the green bandwagon, with many environmental reforms on the way. The Gulf States were the first to invest in the business; they are now trying to implement sustainable urban planning projects. Lebanon has recently received a significant grant from the European Union to start energy audits, standards and

labels. Jordanian authorities are planning to use 7% of the country's energy consumption from renewable resources by 2015, with the aim of increasing this share to 10% by 2020. With the green trend taking over the world, hotel owners have to make sure that they don't miss out. **hodema.net**



Kempinski Hotel, Mall of the Emirates, Dubai