

THE PROBLEMS IN FINDING A TRULY GREEN HOTEL



they represent themselves.

Green tourism is an area that many hotels want to cash in on because more and more travellers are becoming environmentally conscious and willing to spend their money on business that they feel share their principles. A TripAdvisor survey from 2012 showed that 71% of those asked aimed to make green choices in the following year. The trouble is that these travellers are struggling to find the information they need to choose the right accommodation and hotels aren't helping in the way

This misrepresentation and difficulty in acquiring information is often attributed to a practise called green washing.

Green washing is when a business brands themselves as being green through clever marketing strategies and gives themselves a general label of eco-friendliness with little meaning behind it. In a way they are simply applying a thin veil of green credentials but have little basis for doing so besides exaggerated claims. While this makes things easier for the company, it can be damaging for the guests if the hotel misrepresents itself as green and has little to show for it. Some hotels can focus too heavily on one element to prove their worth, such a hotel that puts out cards about their towel-washing scheme but cannot back this up with information on social campaigns, locally sourced produce or waste management.

What travellers really need is a hotel ranking system that showcases just how “green” these businesses really are.

The bigger problem is that not only are hotels being a little sneaky with their terminology and potentially misleading guests about how eco-friendly they really are, it is very hard to find any sort of reliable information when choosing a place to stay. Certification programs that are currently being used are vague and rarely show up in internet searches to help people because they carry no weight and have no form of standardisation. Travellers need a structured ranking system that showcases just how green and sustainable a hotel is on a variety of categories that they care about. The best option around right now takes us back to TripAdvisor who are using their own green rating to help visitors differentiate between their options. The reason why this approach is worth looking at further is because the site reaches 40 million viewers a month and is therefore one of the most accessible ratings systems; the problem is that they only rank hotels via environmental choices not by anything related to social or community matters.

One legitimate initiative may be enough to make a hotel stand out as being green in their minds but it is not enough for all their guests with their increasing desire to travel with environmentally friendly brands. Ideally, hotel websites would be completely transparent so that consumers can see for themselves exactly how “green” the company is and there would be one main website compiling all hotels under a consistent criteria to make the ranking system and the acquisition of information much easier for the consumer. With this proposed system to rank hotels and expose their full initiatives and beliefs, hopefully we might soon be able to separate those that green wash from those that truly deserve the tag of a green hotel.

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