

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: THE CASE OF FIRST LEVEL HOTELS AND LODGES IN GONDAR CITY, ETHIOPIA**

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### **Abstract**

*As a means of sustainability achievement and balanced assessment of positive and negative impact of tourism and hospitality industry, taking responsibility towards the silent stakeholder (environment) emerged as a new phenomenon in the late 1980s. The main concern of this paper is to identify the environmental responsible practices of the hospitality industry in the special focus of first level hotels and lodges in Gondar city, Ethiopia. All the ten first level hotels and lodges were used as research target areas. Data for the study was obtained from the hotel employees (through questionnaire) and from the managers (through semi-structured interview). The study found that, the hotels and lodges engaged more in saving water activity in all area, management of waste and Conserve energy/example light usage, use of energy efficient equipments. Relatively, they engaged in the less extent level in the issues of involving in environmental issues in the city and giving environmental information on its services and activities to the stakeholders. In addition to these the establishments involve in specific internal environmental practices like reusing, design of the construction for compatible waste and water saving and FIFO(First In First Out) and externally, sponsoring environmental concerned nongovernmental and governmental organization practices. Very few establishments practice the environmental concerned guideline of HACCAP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). Based on the finding of the study, the researcher recommend scholarly recommendations including the establishments engage more in the external environmental practices besides the internal environmental good practices.*

**Key Words:** *Environment, Social Responsibility, Hotels and Lodges, Sustainability, Gondar*

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### **Introduction**

Globally tourism is a major economic sector with increasing growth potential (World Tourism Organization report, 2013). According to United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report of 2014 the number of international tourist's arrival reached in 1.14 billion. Besides its positive impact on the three pillars of

sustainable tourism (Economic, social and environmental areas) it has also an adverse negative impact on them unless we take responsibility (Swarebrook, 1999)

Under the tourism industry hospitality sector is also multibillion-dollar industry, serving millions of people globally, and is expected to grow significantly within the next few years (Mattera and Melgarejo,

2012). The global hotel industry is formed by various types of lodging structures and accommodation services from luxury hotels to bed and breakfast operations, inns. These establishments may be owned and/or managed by independent operators, multinational chains, insurance companies, pension funds, governments and other investors. These businesses have considerable impact on social, economic, and environmental conditions around every destination in the world, and enterprises in this sector had the potential to substantially contribute to sustainable development (International Labor Organization, 2010). Responsible tourism and Social Responsibility are not longer a luxury but a necessity in the global marketplace (Menente, 2013). The concept of responsible tourism and sustainability push the hotel industry to be socially responsible concept and development. Thus, social responsibility gains a considerable business strategy in the world. Most of the time social responsibility term used as corporate Social Responsibility while the term associated with the large company but, there is a notion that the concept is the practice of all business enterprises not only the large multinational companies applicable business concept (Visser, 2010). For this matter the researcher wants to prefer to use the word social responsibility throughout this paper.

Taking responsibility towards the environment related with the concept of sustainability movement emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s in tourism industry (Swarbrook, 1999). Social responsibility forum of Taiwan define SR as open and transparent business practice that are based on ethical values and respect for employees, communities and the environment. Social responsibility (SR) is a concept where by a company's integrate

social and environmental concern in their business operation and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntarily basis. Being socially responsible means not only meet legal obligations to which no doubt every enterprise has to meet, but go beyond this performance by investing on human capital, environment and caring relationships with agents of interest (Commission of the European Communities, 2002). While the government provide a regulatory framework governing issues such as environmental protection/law, employment right, fair operating practices; however SR goes beyond the compliance of these legislative issues and create a shared value in collaboration with all stakeholders. When creating a tourism product, hotel companies should be environmentally sensitive, have a deeper sense for the community, and respect their culture. (Golja and Nižić, 2010).

The long-term success of tourism companies depends on the ability to address the needs of those affected by the operations of a tourism company. To alleviate poverty, to guide the tourism and hospitality in the sustainable way practicing social responsibility practices is play one of the wing of sustainable tourism development (Marinela and Nižić, 2010; Forsyth, 1997; Kasim and Scarlat, 2007). Rodriguez and Cruz (2007) shows the hotel industry use of SR in its corporate strategy and daily practice is imperative due to symbiotic nature of its relationship with the surrounding natural, economical, social and cultural environment.

Social responsibility and the environment are interrelated. This is because; human beings do not only assimilate with their surroundings but actively adjust them according to their needs (Polasek, 2010). They interact with

their environment and live together. The responsibility towards this 'silent'/ 'mute' stakeholder (environment) is imperative (Capron, as cited in Branco and Rodriguez). Traditionally the responsible body for the environment is the government sector thought regulation and creating a healthy environment. But the problem of environmental change increased in alarming rate the private business sector involved and the public sector also call the business sector to take responsibility for the environmental conservation. This paradigm shift from the government responsibility to partnership responsibility over the environment reached in the highest level due to the emergence of sustainable development in 1970s (Ryan and Page, 2000; Swarbrooke, 1999; Wahab and Pigram, 2005; Polasek, 2010).

Since the concept of SR practice is new in business sector especially in the hotel industry (Kasim and Scarlat, 2007; Bohdanowicz and Zientara, 2008; Velentzas and Bron, 2010), it is not considered as a large company and lacked an extensive research works (Golja and Nižić, 2010). But it has a good position to practice socially responsible whatever the sizes it has (Garay and Font, 2011).

As indicated earlier the modern hotel industry in Ethiopia increased in an alarming rate. In Gondar city the history of modern sense of hotel industry emerged during the Italian occupation. The first hotels in Gondar city were Ethiopia hotel, Goha hotel, Fogera hotel, Terara hotel and Qwara hotel (Sewunet, 2013). According to Gondar city administration culture tourism office there are 32 first, second and third level hotels. Therefore, the major

objective of this study is describe the environmental practices of the first level hotels and lodges in Gondar city.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher followed a descriptive type of research. This descriptive type of research was studied in cross sectional because the information was collected from the sample only once (Kothri, 2004).

### **Study Area Description**

Geographically, Gondar city is located in Semein Gondar Zone of Amhara region. It has a latitude and longitude of 12°36'N 37°28'E with an elevation of 2200 meters above sea level (Amhara culture, tourism and park development bureau, 2011).

The climatic feature of Gondar city lies on the subtropical high land region and the average temperature varies from 22 degree centigrade up to 29.5 degree centigrade. Gondar city get a rain fall during summer from June to September. Topographically, the city is rugged plateau of ups and down. Agriculture is one of the dominant economic sectors in Gondar town. The main crops are barley, teff, wheat, maize beans and potato. The main livestock are sheep, cow, oxen, goat, hen, beehive and equines. Trade is the other major economic activity in Gondar. Both wholesale and retail businesses are a huge part of the economy. There are also small-scale enterprises that are part of the entrepreneurship efforts. The small-scale enterprises are categorized as food production, urban agriculture, and textile, building construction, wood and metalwork service trade and handicraft (North Gondar Zone Culture and Tourism Department, 2009).

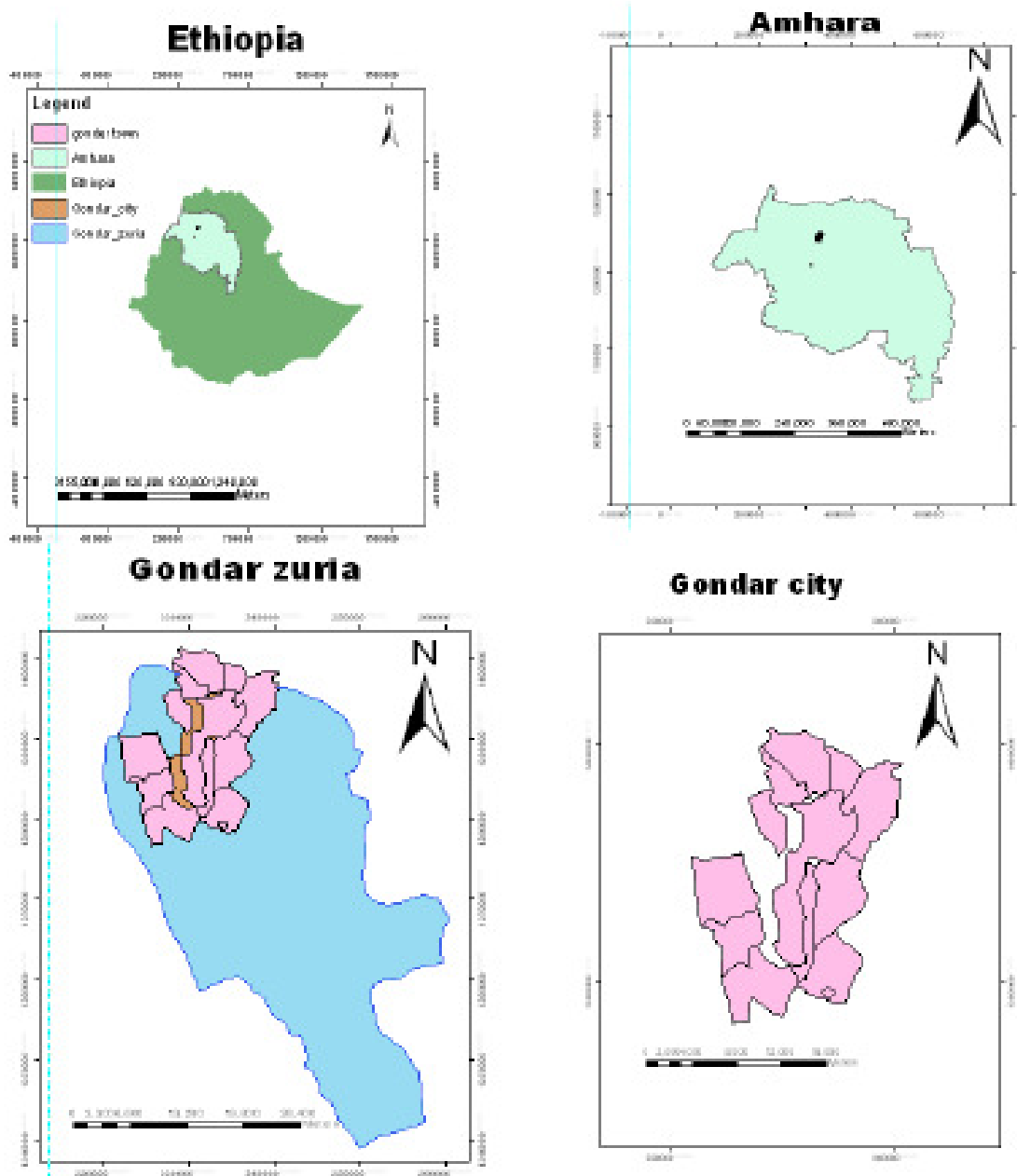


Figure 1: Gondar City map

**Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique**

In Gondar city there are ten (10) first level hotels and lodges (the level and the list of hotels taken from Gondar city culture and tourism office in 2015). The researcher surveys all the ten (10) first

level hotels and lodges. For the questionnaire method of data collection (from the employees), the samples were selected first by the purposive judgment of the researcher by considering their years of services, those who serve in the hotel/lodge more than one year are

included in this research. The researcher believes those who did not serve the hotel/lodge less than a year may not be able to observe the whole practices of the hotel/lodge. The employees who were involved in this research are the permanent employees. The researcher gives equal

chance of selection to avoid sampling bias problem by using simple random sampling method (to select the permanent employees of the hotels as a sample who serves the hotel more than one year). Thirty per cent of the employees with more than one year work experience were sampled.

Table 1 number of hotel/ lodge and the respective sampled numbers of respondents

No.	Hotels/ Lodges Name	Employees number, who serve more than 1 year	Samples (30% or 3/10)
1	AG Hotel	38	10
2	Florida International Hotel	79	22
3	Goha Hotel	71	19
4	Jantekel Hotel	39	11
5	Kino Hotel	21	7
6	Landmark International Hotel	41	12
7	Milyko Lodge	16	5
8	Mintwab Lodge	16	5
9	Quara Hotel	83	23
10	Taye Hotel	71	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>Ten</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>133</b>

**Method of Data Collection**

Mixed research paradigms help to make the data collection and analysis more accurate and the inference more useful because they can represent a plurality of interests, voices and perspectives (Patton, 2002). The data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary sources of data were collected from published and unpublished sources.

Primary data were collected through the administered structured questionnaires and interview. The administered questionnaires distributed to the employees of the hotels and lodges. Semi structured interview was conducted with the managers of the hotels/lodges in order to understand the in-depth environmental social responsible practices of the establishments. For this research the researcher approached all the managers but 2 managers were failed for face to face

interview rather they prefer the written form of interview. Therefore, based on their preference the researcher gives a written questionnaire for the 2 managers.

**Result and Discussion**

**Environmental Social Responsible Practices of First Level Hotels/Lodges in Gondar City**

As shown in Table 2 the respondents indicated that their hotel/lodge practiced saving water activities in all areas of day to day activities (mean value = 4.02; SD = 1.01) and in the management of wastes (mean value = 3.99; SD =1.09) in the highest level of engagement areas of SR. it is clear from Table 2 that the most commonly practiced SR practice of the hotels and lodges was water saving practice with 81.1 % (Frequency = 99) of the respondents agreed. Equally, for the statement of ‘waste management’ example in the composing of kitchen waste, the

majority (77.8 % Frequency = 95) of the respondents are agreed for the statement. Energy conservation appears to be another common environmental practice with 65.1 % (Frequency = 80) of the respondents was agreed. The result of this research also related with other studies. Sweeney (2009), found that waste minimization, water saving and energy conservation were common practices of the firms surveyed in Ireland. Similarly, Kasimu *et al.* (2012) found that energy management, waste management and water conservation through different mechanism was the

major common practical areas of environmental related SR practices with high mean value in seven point Likert scale measurement in Klang valley, Malaysia in hotel industry. Similarly Efiong *et al.* (2013) found that the hotels in Nigeria case study achieved high performance in the environmental sector of SR. Alzboun (2015) also found that the Jordanian hotels greatly (63 %) involved in specific water saving practice in their operation.

Table 2: Environmental related SR practices mean and SD of each items and percentage and frequency value for each scale

Items	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	Total
			% & Freq	% & Freq	% & Freq	% & Freq	% & Freq	
Conserve energy / example light usage, use of energy efficient equipments	3.58	1.17	8.2 % 10	11.5% 14	14.8% 18	45.1% 55	20.0% 25	100% 122
Management of waste (example: composing of kitchen waste)	3.99	1.09	3.3% 4	10.7% 13	8.2% 10	39.3% 48	38.5% 47	100% 122
Involve in environmental issues in the city. Example greening program	3.39	1.16	8.2% 10	13.9% 17	26.2% 32	34.4% 42	17.2% 21	100% 122
Give environmental information on its services and activities to the stakeholders	3.40	1.12	5.7% 7	15.6% 19	29.5% 36	31.1% 38	18.0% 22	100% 122
Saving water activity in all areas is practiced (example: low water volume toilets)	4.02	1.01	3.3% 4	7.4% 9	8.2% 10	46.7% 57	34.4% 42	100% 122
Grand Mean	3.67							

Note: 1=strongly disagree 2=disagree 3=unsure 4=agree 5=strongly agree

In order to satisfy the customers and to decrease the environmental impact of the establishments only one hotel complied with the international guideline of HACCAP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point). This technique is a well known international guide line for waste

minimization and customer health and safety issue.

For the issue of using of power saving light bulbs all the interviewed managers are indicated that their hotels/ lodges use power saving fluorescents light bulbs in their establishment. In terms of their implementation of the usage of the power

saver fluorescent light bulbs the majority (6 hotels/ lodges) 100 % install this new technology to save the power. Some of them also install 80 % or 75 % and they have a plan to replace the old and traditional light bulbs to reach in 100% implementation. In connection to this some hotels also use technologically advanced power saver electronics card key. As one manager told me for the importance of this electronic card key “when the customers not in the room automatically with in 20 second all lights and televisions and any other opened equipments are closed/ switched off/ shuts off”.

Basically, it is not surprising the hotels and lodges are involved in high level in energy management, water saving and waste reduction practices since, these issues are economical (through cutting of costs), as a common means of interaction with other stakeholders and related with the safety and security of the employees, the customers, and the major challenges that expressed by the interviewees to their social responsibility way. The majority of previous researches indicated that engaging in water saving, waste management and energy conservation practices reduce cost and economical, not only contribute for the environment but also to the organization too. Several studies have indicated that economic benefits can be achieved in hotels through implementing environmental and social initiatives; many with little or no capital.

As Brooks (2013) indicated that “a hotel can reduce its energy consumption by 20-40% without adversely affecting performance.”As found by Kasim (2009); Green practices save money, attract new customers, and help to preserve the natural environment which much of the tourism industry is dependent upon. Thus, by understanding this cost and other

importance of practicing SR in the business it is better to engage more in energy conservation and other environmental issues unless it can not affect the profit margin and performance.

Besides the internal environmental practices, the establishments involve in some extent level but not great as compared with the internal environmental practices. In percentage explanation more than half of the respondents are agreed for the question; the hotels/ lodges involved in environmental issues in the city (Table 2).

The hotel/lodge managers explained that their establishments not greatly involved in external environmental conservation program. The external environmental practices of the hotels/lodges that pointed out by the managers are supporting environmental oriented programs that organized by NGOs and environmentalists indirectly, greening programming. In connected to this one manager explained that “our business is depend on the environmental purity of the surrounding...besides our waste management and saving program internally we support the city municipal for its environmental program and we plant trees in our surrounding by organizing our employees and co-workers from the city” .

To sum up the finding of this research work, the researcher listed out some of the best environmental best practices of the establishments. Construction design of the hotels/lodges, water saving activities, using power saving light equipments, waste minimization(including avoid over purchasing and overstocking, by obtaining feedback from the guests on their preference forecast guests food demand, properly manage food while serve buffet, educating the staff, adopt First In First Out (FIFO) for food storage used to minimize the waste), reusing, awareness raising

program to the internal stakeholders/employees and customers, modernized power saving light bulbs are the most dominate best practices in the hotels and lodges in the city. As a general involvement; the first level hotels/ lodges in the city involved in environmental related SR activities with a grand mean value 3.67 and in a detail explanation from interview in a good condition. It shows that the establishments are involved in the environmental concern in good manner. In the external dimension of environmental issues it is not fully addressed and all the managers are not indicated their involvement in the environment.

### Conclusion

The study found that the most common environmental practices towards the environment are; water saving, waste management and energy conservation. To a lesser extent, as compared to other environmental activities the hotels/ lodges involved in environmental issues in the city example in greening program. The study found that there are also some other environmental CSR activities like HACCP standard, electronics key card system, reusing, awareness raising program to the internal stakeholders/employees, First In First Out (FIFO), and customers and supporting environmental supporting NGOs and programs in some hotels. But for the issues of HACCP, electronics key card, awareness raising program for the employees, FIFO needs more work for the future to insure environmental sustainability in the hospitality industry.

### Recommendations

➤ Training and capacity building programs should be put in the center of the first level hotels and lodges in

Gondar city organizational culture for sustainable environmental program.

- Besides their internal environmental social responsibility (water saving, waste management, energy management, awareness creation program to the employees and customers in relate to environment ...) practices it is better for establishments and the environment as well engage in external environmental conservation program (like greening program, cooperation work with environmentalists...)
- The first level hotels and lodges should share experience each other or read the best SR practices that identified in this research work and adopt the best in their establishment. For example HACCP standards was indicated by only one hotel that initiated to implement, key card system to save energy only adopted by few hotels, reuse linen and towels for saving of water, energy and human resource.
- The government/culture and tourism office of Gondar city should support the first level hotels and lodges in Gondar city by providing technologically advanced equipments and support them in technical issues to raise the know how in the technology usage to be more effective and efficient in energy, water and waste management and other environmental issues.

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