

Deloitte Survey Finds Business Travelers Go Green On The Road

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Forty Percent Willing to Pay More for Green Lodging, Clear Gender Divide Found, Gen Y Least Likely to Act Green on Business

U.S. business travelers are increasingly making daily choices to reduce their environmental impact, and they have specific expectations about the green practices hotels should be adopting today, according to a recent survey commissioned by Deloitte.

The survey shows business travelers have begun do some green practices routinely: nearly seven of 10 business travelers (69 percent) say they always turn off the lights and one out of three (31 percent) always adjusts the heat/air conditioner when leaving the room.

Roughly a third of travelers surveyed are keenly concerned about green travel. Some 34 percent 'seek out hotels that are environmentally friendly,' just as 38 percent have researched green lodging facilities either online or by asking friends and relatives. Similarly, 28 percent say they would be willing to pay 10 percent more to stay in a green lodging facility.

'Our survey shows that green concerns have made their way on to the business traveler's agenda,' says Adam Weissenberg, the Deloitte Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure leader. 'Business travelers understand the issues and are trying to do their part in being more environmentally responsible when they are on the road.'

Hotels: True Green?

The top five environmental actions business travelers expect lodging facilities to be taking are (in order):

Recycling (77 percent)

Using energy-efficient lighting (74 percent)

Using energy-efficient windows (59 percent)

Placing cards in rooms to let guests request that sheets/towels not be changed (52 percent)

Using environmentally safe cleaning products (49 percent)

Additionally, more than seven in 10 (71 percent) say they believe the lodging industry is only 'somewhat' green, with an additional 23 percent saying the lodging industry is 'not at all green.' One in five (20 percent) say they have stayed at a hotel that didn't allow them to be as green as they wanted to be, while approximately 30 percent say they have requested sheets and/or towels not be changed, but the hotel changed them anyway.

'Today, sustainability is a market imperative as customers increasingly hold the nation's hotels accountable for green practices,' says Neale Redington, the Deloitte Hospitality leader. 'We found there is often a discrepancy between what travelers expect of hotels and the green initiatives that hotels ultimately undertake. Those that do the best job of delivering on their promises of sustainability will win the day with tomorrow's increasingly discerning business travelers.'

Gen Y: Least Green of All

The survey found that Generation Y business travelers are the least likely to be taking a range of green actions identified in the survey. Among the seven green actions - requesting that bedding not be changed, requesting that the towels not be changed, turning off the lights when leaving the room, adjusting temperature when leaving the room, conserving water, conservatively using the toiletries, and using public transportation and/or hotel buses - Gen Y was the least likely to do the first four actions. 'Yet, ironically, this same group was the most likely to consider themselves green while on business,' Weissenberg said. Boomers were the most likely to act green while traveling.

Clear Gender Divide

The survey found a significant split along gender lines on some key questions: Seventy-two percent of females say they always turn off the lights when leaving a room versus 66 percent of males. Similarly, 36 percent of female business travelers always adjust the heat or air conditioner when leaving a room versus 26 percent of males. More than half of female business travelers say they frequently or always use public transportation or hotel buses (52 percent female versus 42 percent male).

About the Survey

The survey was commissioned by Deloitte and conducted online by an independent research company between April 8 and April 9, 2008. The survey polled a sample of 1,155 business travelers, defined as having taken at least one business trip in the past year that involved staying overnight at a lodging facility. The survey has a margin of error of +/- three percentage points.

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