

## INCREASING GUEST LOYALTY AND REFERRAL THROUGH SUPPLY CHAIN SUSTAINABILITY

According to a 2012 study of 5,000 Expedia consumers, 93 percent of travelers surveyed would choose a hotel based upon its use of sustainable design and furnishings over a comparable property emphasizing operational sustainability, such as energy savings and water reduction.

The Courtyard by Marriott in Rancho Bernardo put the research findings to the true test - impact of environmentally preferable renovations on guest loyalty and referral. The \$2 million project included complete renovation of the lobby and public spaces, 2,400 square feet of meeting space, and soft goods renovation of the 210 guest rooms. Products used in the renovation were sourced from suppliers evaluated through MindClick's supply chain sustainability index.

MindClick implemented a guest communications campaign called Rest Better™ highlighting some of the featured products including:

- Seating made from responsibly harvested wood and toxin-free, water-based materials, and manufactured within 100 miles of the hotel
- Meeting room tables made of 70% recycled aluminum
- Carpeting made from recycled content, which required 40% less energy to produce
- Wall covering backing made from recycled plastic bottles

Property owner, Apple REIT explained there was no difference in the renovation's cost by using sustainability sourced items instead of traditional products.

A hand in a dark suit sleeve is shown from the bottom right, holding a glowing, translucent sphere. The sphere is filled with a network of white dots and lines, similar to the background graphic, and has a bright light source inside, creating a lens flare effect.

A research study was conducted measuring loyalty and referral rates among guests who were aware of the Rest Better™ campaign as well as a control group unaware of the campaign, staying at the hotel during the same time.

A total of 396 guests were surveyed - 215 who were aware of the campaign and 181 in the control group. Guests aware of the campaign rated the property 150% higher than the control group and cited the following reasons for their ratings:

- “I like that hotel is taking the initiative and not putting all the responsibility on the customers.”
- “The information that was presented was outstanding. Simple signs. People get it and they appreciate it.”
- “You don’t want to say somewhere and think that you’re harming other people by your vacation. It’s nice to know that [these products] are made responsibly.”
- “It’s not just use less water or recycle this bottle.”
- “its much better than hang up your tools to conserve water. The hotel is really making the effort. They’ve purchased products to help the environment.”
- If I was choosing between two hotels, that would definitely be a factor that would outweigh another hotel.
- People are very health conscious right now. This is taking it one step above.
- Makes me feel a lot better knowing I’m staying at a place that is so conscious of our future.

“Partnering with MindClick demonstrates the ways we are taking care of our guests and the environment through our purchasing choices.” Mari Snyder, Marriott vice president of social responsibility and community engagement.