

Building Supply Chain Transparency into the Tourism Industry

What has a certifier of laminate and insulation products got in common with a certifier of luxury 5-star hotels? A fair amount it seems in the new carbon economy, as Chantal Dunbar discovered.

EC3 Global and Ecospecifier Global, two heavyweights in the certification industry's internationally have formed a unique alliance to help reduce the tourism industries carbon and eco-impacts, product by product, hotel by hotel. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, 12 % of emissions come from built structures such as office buildings and residences. As a result, an increasing amount of attention is being focused on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) at the source.

But in focussing just on carbon, we are attempting to solve just one of the symptoms of 'un-sustainability' rather than offering holistic cure for the problem. While the travel and tourism industry has been quick to adopt operational standards that drive down natural resource consumption, are we overlooking the influence which transparency in sustainable product procurement might have further up the supply chain during manufacturing, on carbon and other impacts?

Items such as the food served in restaurants, the bottled water, papers and soaps found in rooms, and even the beds we sleep in have all come under the sustainable tourism microscope of late.

In 2010, Australian bedding manufacturer Sleep Maker released the FORREST range of beds. They used a soy-bean foam in place of latex and underwent a full Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) during the design and manufacture process. Even Sleepys stores where the FORREST range is retailed engaged in efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions and other impacts.

So if we're already tackling the downstream 'operational' impacts, what about counting the cost of carbon and other impacts from the manufacture of building and other materials?

The question is how do we do this without making the procurement process even more complex? Significant environmental impacts may be associated with the extraction of raw materials and even the production process. The embodied carbon in materials such as conventional 'business as usual' concrete, floor coverings and insulation can be profound; as can the social and environmental costs resulting from their production. The answer to this question can be found in the unique new alliance that brings together Ec3's EarthCheck and Ecospecifier Global GreenTag's Certification systems.

EarthCheck is the travel and tourism industry's largest and most credible certification program. Of its 1300+ clients on over 70 countries, more than 80% are hotels and conference centers.

With sustainability certification becoming commonplace in the RFP process and some countries already requiring mandatory reporting, it may be time for green hotels to darken their shade and flex their purchasing power even further.

Looking to future needs is nothing new for EarthCheck and this week, they partnered with another Australian company also known for their market-leading capabilities. Ecospecifier Global is headed by the multi award-winning eco-architect David Baggs and it manages the Global GreenTag® certification and ratings scheme.

Performing Carbon and whole of Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) on materials used in construction and operations, Ecospecifier helps connect the dots for EarthCheck's tourism asset owners by making LCA audited products easier to access.

"Green Tag provides a robust, qualified eco-profiling methodology to certify and rate green building and other materials simply using Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum ratings," explains Baggs. "Through the EarthCheck alliance, we will be able to provide developers, architects and

operators who work with and within the tourism industry's market leaders with unique, calibrated information about materials and products that can help them enrich their assets and strengthen their green operational claims through sustainable building and other product procurement with real, third party audited sustainability outcomes."

The benefit for manufacturers is a strong competitive edge in a market that's increasingly under pressure on margins. By undertaking the GreenTag LCARate Certification process, they can also reveal how their manufacturing process and the goods they produce result in less waste, require fewer fossil fuels, generate less emissions, have less global warming potential, use less land, and emit fewer carcinogens and toxins than those of their competitors and achieve a rating that communicates simply what is otherwise a complex issue.

ENDS

Editors Notes

Ecospecifier Global GreenTag® is an LCA-based ISO-compliant eco-label certification and rating scheme that has already been used by companies such as InterfaceFLOR, Polyflor, Herman Miller, BASF, Tontine Insulation, Verosol, Pacific Brands' Dunlop flooring and Knauf wall and ceiling linings. Hotels can also use GreenTag® to certify products such as bathroom amenities, sunscreen, sanitary papers, beds and allied items and even cleaners and detergents. www.ecospecifier.com and www.ecospecifier.com.au

EarthCheck is an integrated environmental management and certification program that is used by hospitality leaders such as ACCOR, Dusit, and InterContinental Hotels Group. By partnering with Ecospecifier, EarthCheck is helping travel and tourism industry leaders better manage their carbon footprint wherever they eat, work or play. www.earthcheck.org

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