



Good Practice Story Title:

Conscientious Consumerism through Truthful Communication

Destination:

Sun Moon Lake National Scenic Area

Country:

Taiwan

Submitting Organization:

Footprint Inn

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Established in 2014, Footprint Inn obtained the first CU-GSTC (Control Union - Global Sustainable Tourism Council) certification in Taiwan in 2018. In 2023, we shifted our business model from a full-service hotel to a self-service one with 13 reservable rooms in Jiji, Nantou. Jiji Township is the smallest township both by area size (50 km²) and by its population (under 10,000) in Nantou, the only non-coastal county in Taiwan. As the town is located in between popular tourist attractions, many travelers have chosen to stay overnight in this tranquil spot.



Summary of Good Practice Story:

Footprint Inn is built upon sustainability. Yet it has met a challenge—not many travelers understand the true meaning of sustainability. As we move from an eco-friendly to an environmentally sustainable hotel, we want to provide a space where we can foster renewable relationships between people and our planet earth. With this belief, we have designed our facility to encourage our guests to embrace our earth-friendly experience/environment (beyond eco-friendliness) and consider it be more important than personal preferences. We hope that after staying with us, guests will be inspired and aspire to be more conscientious when traveling.

Issues faced:

The mentality shared by many Taiwanese tourists is “I want...”

They believe that hotels should provide ample materials and services, including in-room toiletry (toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc.), bottled waters, and around-the-clock front-desk and concierge services. Conscientious consumerism is not on their minds, therefore they do not consider themselves to have any responsibilities when taking trips.

At Footprint Inn, we do not believe in “desire-based” services in hospitality as it may increase the negative environmental impact yet overlook what traveling means—having authentic experiences.

Solution:

We have developed and executed a meticulous self check-in protocol. We also provide transparent and clear information about our policy before our potential guests decide to book their stay with us. With this mindset, we declined some partnerships with OTA (Online Travel Agencies) websites which do not meet our standard. We rolled out a procedure to ensure our guests fully understand and adhere to our policy and commitment to the environment prior to booking and during their stays. Additionally, we ask our guests to sign an agreement of “Commitment to Sustainable Travel” before they check in, in return they can earn “Waji Coins.” This helps the guests become more aware of our terms & conditions (T&Cs) and of their share of accountability and responsibility. Footprint Inn believes transparency can help avoid disputes upon arrival, during the stay, and post check-out.

Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

1. Information Transparency

Our policies and terms and conditions are up to date in both our website and other online booking partners. We have clearly outlined our commitment to environmental sustainability, check-in and check-out times, food and beverage services, and other guidelines in both Traditional Chinese and in English. Footprint Inn also discontinued partnerships with OTA websites which do not meet our standard of transparency.



2. Communications Prior to A Stay

- We send out our “Consent Agreement Form” via email or LINE to those who have made reservations. We ask our guests fill out the form and inform everyone to understand and consent to our terms & conditions within three days (one consent form per room should you book multiple rooms at once). If you decline our policy, we can cancel your booking free of charge.
- Additionally, we send out our “Online Check-in Form” three days prior to your check-in date. This helps us understand your preferences on food & beverages and highlight important guidelines during your stay.

3. Reminders on the Date of Arrival (Check-in)

We would provide you the information about your check-in time, how to obtain your room key, parking information, and other necessary directions about your stay on the day of your arrival via email and/or LINE.

4. Onsite Signage- Visual Instructions

We have signage and pamphlets in place on site. You can find manuals in our facilities and our policy to sustainability in each guestroom.

5. Waji Coins & Commitment to Sustainable Travel

Should you decide to sign our Commitment to Sustainable Travel Agreement when you submit your online check-in form, you will receive Waji Coins, which can be used in participating vendors/stores nearby Footprint Inn. Signing the agreement is completely optional.

6. Waji Coin Participating Vendors/Stores

Footprint Inn has carefully curated participating vendors/stores based on sustainability. We prioritize our selection of businesses which focus on local ingredients, adopt reusable containers and utensils, and showcase Jiji’s traditions.

7. Customer Feedback

An online feedback form will be sent to guests on the day of check-out to help us improve and adjust our hotel policies.





Achievements and Results:

Our guests choose to book with us as we take a proactive communication approach at the get-go. This also resulted in 9+ rating (out of a 10-point system) across travel websites.

Surveys conducted amongst our guests demonstrated high satisfaction. 99% of guests would recommend Footprint Inn to others; and 98% of guests said the signage/policy and information are clear and easy to follow.

We also saw 98% of our guests sign our commitment agreement when we included this as part of online check-in process. 70% of Waji coins have been redeemed. Based on our survey, most of the coins are used to purchase souvenirs—we can incorporate this into our collaboration with local vendors moving forward.

As we decline travelers who do not agree with our offerings or our stance on sustainability, we have gained satisfaction within our clientele and believe we have shifted their behaviors to become more environmentally responsible.

We educate our entire staff to follow the spirit of Footprint Inn’s guidelines rather than to be “consumed” by them. This encourages them to take an active role in conversing with our guests and in providing a sustainable hospitality experience. Overall, our staff members feel more relaxed, happier, and invest more energy with this unique approach.

We also reduce the amount of time and energy spent on issues during guests’ stays as we proactively communicate with them about expectations prior to their arrivals. Our guests also learn to be responsible and accountable for their experience through this approach while staying with us.

Lessons Learned and Advice:

Continuing to follow the current way of “desire-based” philosophy would prevent the hospitality industry from moving forward. Instead of deciding which eco-friendly toothbrush we should provide to our guests, we should educate our guests to “bring your own toothbrush.” The state of travelers reflects our world. Let’s break the status quo and continue to pursue sustainability. Through conversations, we can pass down a renewable world and spirit.



Recognitions and Additional References

Official Website - A Letter to Travelers

<https://www.footprint-inn.com.tw/about.php>

Consent Agreement Form

Official Website https://www.footprint-inn.com.tw/about_38.htm

English <https://forms.gle/WupbvFnydZoUeUF78>

Mandarin <https://forms.gle/vTbS9mktVnpNDacb8>

Online Check in Form

English <https://forms.gle/eTzaevtodpPLHF3z7>

Mandarin <https://forms.gle/a7EC4hbrfQqdKreY7>

Commitment to Sustainable Travel Agreement

https://www.footprint-inn.com.tw/about_37.htm

Customer Feedback Form

<https://forms.gle/mZkJ3MpKf4urLmBd6>

Footprint Inn's Certification

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UUDftw8FeHOMy6rtEJueu33TCPYhcylf?usp=sharing>

