eco-credit

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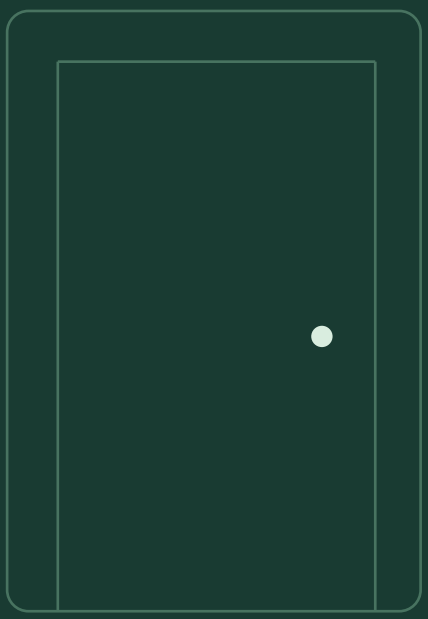
The case for guest-directed housekeeping

Published research on guest choice, hotel operations and resource use



A choice worth offering.

An evidence review for hotel owners, general managers and housekeeping leaders.

The opportunity for hotels

Housekeeping is a service guests value, and one they may willingly decline on selected days. Published field studies show that hotels can reduce routine room cleaning by offering a meaningful benefit or giving guests more control over when service takes place. [1-3]

For a hotel operator, this creates an opportunity to redirect housekeeping effort and reduce the operating inputs attached to services guests choose to waive. The value depends on the hotel's service standard, laundry arrangements and ability to use the released time.

Evidence worth acting on

Published finding	Commercial relevance
A hotel field study reported a 42% reduction in room cleans with a drink-reward offer. [1]	A tangible guest benefit can encourage voluntary housekeeping skips.
Another field study reduced cleaning frequency from 99% to 45% while maintaining guest satisfaction. [2]	Clear communication about guest control can accompany a substantial service reduction.
Pro-invest reported A$158,336 in savings from 11,283 program nights. [5]	A hotel operator has reported financial benefits from incentivised housekeeping opt-outs.

These findings describe different interventions and populations. They establish a credible reason to test guest-directed housekeeping; they are not a combined forecast of participation or savings.

Why this matters operationally

In AHLA's February 2026 survey of 246 U.S. hoteliers, 65% identified labour costs as a major financial pressure and more than half described their properties as understaffed. This is U.S. industry context, rather than a measure of conditions at every European hotel. [4]

A hotel considering an opt-out programme can start with a practical question: which routine services would guests willingly waive, and what would the hotel gain when those services no longer need to be performed?

> eco-credit is preparing its first hotel pilot. The results cited here belong to external studies and hotel programmes. eco-credit has no measured customer results yet.

Rewarding the guest's choice

42%

Reported reduction in room cleans
Drink-reward condition [1]

Direct evidence for an incentive-based offer

Dolnicar, Knezevic Cvelbar and Grün studied voluntary housekeeping opt-outs at a four-star hotel in Slovenia. Their most successful condition offered drink vouchers and explained that the hotel was sharing the savings from a waived clean. The authors reported a 42% reduction in room cleans. [1]

The study covered 324 guest parties and 678 eligible room nights across three intervention conditions. Departure cleans and single-night stays were excluded from opt-out opportunities. Conditions ran in successive weeks, so this was a single-property field study with differences in guest composition, rather than a multi-hotel randomised trial. [1]

A clear benefit gives guests a reason to participate

The reward condition outperformed an environmental appeal alone. Its delivery used check-in explanations, printed materials and door signs. The evidence supports the incentive mechanism; it does not establish an additional uplift from WhatsApp or another digital channel. [1]

For eco-credit, the commercial application is to make the choice understandable and the reward usable. Guests should know which service they are declining, what they receive and how to claim it. A hotel should be able to trace an accepted skip through to the housekeeping team's actual work.

Design the offer around the hotel

A bar reward, hotel credit and a contribution to tree planting offer different benefits. The published drink-voucher result should not be treated as proof that all three offers produce the same response. A pilot can compare guest choices and record whether the offered benefit was redeemed or fulfilled.

The service baseline also matters. Rewarding a guest who would already have declined cleaning does not create an additional service reduction. Existing opt-outs should be recorded before a new programme begins.

Study detail: the paper's conclusion reports 42%; its aggregate eligible-night opt-out rate for the reward condition is 41%. The report uses the authors' published headline rather than treating the two summaries as separate findings. [1]

Preserve the guest experience

Control over service can reduce cleaning requests

Zinn, Greene and Dolnicar tested messages accompanying a change to housekeeping on request. Their 2024 paper included an online experiment with 800 participants and a field quasi-experiment in an Australian hotel. The field intervention combined the default change with a message emphasising the guest's control over cleaning days. Cleaning frequency fell from 99% to 45%, while guest satisfaction was maintained. [2]

The result concerns a combined service policy and communication approach. It does not isolate the effect of messaging alone. In the online experiment, a default change without a theory-based message reduced satisfaction, reinforcing the need to explain the service clearly. [2]

Privacy and flexibility can be part of the benefit

A separate 2024 field study by Trabandt, Lasarov and Viglia examined on-request housekeeping at a European midscale hotel, including stays of at least four days. Its financial condition offered a EUR 5 drink voucher for each skipped clean. [3]

Condition	Mean cleaning-request index
Daily-service control	1.00
Environmental appeal	0.55
Environmental appeal plus privacy/flexibility benefits	0.41
Financial incentive	0.38
Financial incentive plus privacy/flexibility benefits	0.41

An index of 1.00 represents daily cleaning requests. These are the study's reported means, not eco-credit participation rates. Overall guest satisfaction did not differ significantly between conditions, and the three lower-request intervention groups did not differ significantly from each other. [3]

Application to an opt-out programme

A voluntary reward offer can explain both the guest's choice and its benefit. Daily cleaning remains available unless the guest agrees to skip an eligible service. The on-request studies provide useful evidence about communication, but their results should not be promised for this different service model.

Hotel teams should make requests and exceptions easy to handle, and monitor cleanliness feedback alongside participation. A reduction in cleaning requests is commercially useful when guests remain comfortable with the service they receive.

The commercial case

An operator-reported example at portfolio scale

Pro-invest's FYE 2019 sustainability report records 11,283 A Greener Stay nights and A$158,336 of financial savings across four Holiday Inn Express properties. Guests staying more than two nights could decline housekeeping in exchange for 500 IHG Rewards Points. The report describes an outsourced housekeeping operating model. [5]

Property	Reported programme nights	Reported savings (A$)
Sydney Macquarie Park	2,863	38,772
Brisbane	3,021	53,823
Adelaide	5,013	60,149
Newcastle	386	5,592
Total	11,283	158,336

Source: Pro-invest Annual Sustainability Report, FYE 2019, p. 6. Newcastle had only three full months of programme performance in that reporting period. [5]

This is primary corporate reporting, with less evidentiary weight than a controlled research study. The published passage does not provide a complete gross-to-net cost reconciliation. The figures demonstrate reported commercial precedent; they do not establish a current euro saving per skip. [5]

Where a hotel's benefit can arise

Avoided outsourced services or laundry volumes may reduce invoices where contracts charge for the work actually performed. For an employed housekeeping team, fewer tasks can release time for departure rooms or other work. Whether that changes payroll depends on scheduling and paid hours.

The hotel's own assessment should distinguish cash costs avoided from staff capacity released. Both can be useful outcomes. Counting the same employee time as both a payroll saving and redeployed labour would overstate the benefit.

Account for the reward

A credit's face value, redemption and incremental cost are different quantities. Rebating a purchase the guest would already have made can reduce revenue; an additional purchase can have a different contribution. Evaluate actual transactions and programme costs before claiming a net financial return.

No standard euro saving, annual return or property-value uplift is assumed in this report. A property-specific business case should be built from the hotel's contracts, service records and reward transactions.

A credible environmental benefit

A published estimate from a studied hotel

The University of Queensland's account of its hotel research describes approximately 35 litres of water, 100 millilitres of chemicals and 1.5 kWh of electricity associated with a full daily room clean at the studied four-star hotel. The described service included fresh bedsheets. [6]

Resource	Figure reported by the university	Interpretation
Water	About 35 L	Resource use associated with the described full clean
Chemicals	100 mL	Chemical use; not a measurement of harmful runoff
Electricity	1.5 kWh	Electricity; not a total including every heating fuel

These figures are useful context for the resource intensity of housekeeping. The university account does not disclose a sufficiently detailed water calculation to apply the same number to every hotel or every skipped refresh. It is a research-linked estimate, not an eco-credit measurement. [6]

Measure the laundry that is actually avoided

The U.S. EPA's WaterSense guidance estimates laundry water use from the weight processed and the equipment's water-efficiency factor. It also describes differences between laundry technologies and operating practices. [7]

A hotel can apply that approach to its own programme by recording which linen and towels would normally have been washed, then checking how much washing the skip actually removes. Items washed later must be accounted for. A supplier's documented water use per kilogram can support an estimate where direct metering is unavailable.

A routine refresh under a multi-day linen policy may avoid different resources from a full clean with fresh sheets. A reduction in allocated laundry water is also different from demonstrating that a particular washer cycle was cancelled.

Build claims from the operating record

Report accepted skips and completed service reductions separately. Add estimated laundry water avoided only when the underlying quantities and laundry intensity are documented. Label estimated quantities clearly and give the reporting period.

Carbon calculations need their own activity data, energy sources and emissions factors. Tree funding or planting should be reported separately from operational resource savings. This report assigns no universal carbon saving to a skip or a planted tree.

Put the evidence to work

From guest choice to a recorded service reduction

The research supports offering guests an understandable benefit and preserving control over their stay. eco-credit applies that proposition through a guest-authorised housekeeping skip, communicated through WhatsApp and a guest portal and connected to the hotel's Mews workflow.

Guests can choose hotel credit or tree planting. Credit entitlement is assigned when an eligible skip is accepted; eligible purchases are later rebated against the available credit. Commercial terms and service eligibility should be agreed with the hotel before the pilot.

What a useful pilot should establish

Question	Evidence to record
Do guests choose the offer?	Eligible opportunities, invitations delivered, accepted offers and reward choices
Does service actually change?	Housekeeping records, exceptions, existing opt-outs and completed skips
Where does the time go?	Observed task time, additional requests, catch-up work and staff deployment
Which costs change?	Supplier invoices, paid hours, reward redemptions and programme charges
Are guests comfortable with the choice?	Cleanliness feedback, service requests and complaints
What resources are avoided?	Net laundry quantities and documented supplier or equipment intensities

These are proposed evaluation measures, rather than claims about existing eco-credit reporting or customer outcomes. Baseline and pilot periods should be compared with attention to occupancy, stay length, room type and changes in staffing or service policy.

Participation needs continued attention

An 18-month study of a different hotel green programme found low overall participation and examined how leadership and employee engagement affected delivery. Its findings underline the operational work required to maintain a programme after launch. [8]

The strongest results in the literature come from particular settings. They justify a well-run hotel pilot without establishing an industry-wide adoption rate. Published research also does not yet demonstrate an eco-credit-specific effect, a WhatsApp advantage or a standard cash saving.

Discuss a hotel pilot with Jesse den Ouden: jesse@eco-credit.nl.

Sources and evidence notes

This is a selective commercial evidence review, completed on 2 November 2026. It prioritises peer-reviewed field research on actual housekeeping behaviour, supplemented by primary industry reporting and government guidance. It is not a meta-analysis. Results from different service models are not pooled, and source estimates are distinguished from observed behaviour.

Peer-reviewed research

[1] Dolnicar, S., Knezevic Cvelbar, L., & Grün, B. (2019). A Sharing-Based Approach to Enticing Tourists to Behave More Environmentally Friendly. *Journal of Travel Research, 58*(2), 241-252. DOI: 10.1177/0047287517746013. Full text. Methods, results and conclusion. Published online in 2017; journal issue dated 2019.

[2] Zinn, A. K., Greene, D., & Dolnicar, S. (2024). Communicating default changes to hotel room cleaning without reducing guest satisfaction. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 483*, 144266. DOI: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.144266. Institutional record. Field and online results are distinguished in the text.

[3] Trabandt, M., Lasarov, W., & Viglia, G. (2024). It's a pleasure to stay sustainably: Leveraging hedonic appeals in tourism and hospitality. *Tourism Management, 103*, 104907. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2024.104907. Institutional full text. Section 3 and Table 1. Cleaning-request indices are reproduced as reported; the study's illustrative cost calculations are not used.

[8] Mitev, A. Z., Pintér-Szabó, L., & Irimiás, A. (2025). Overcoming energy barriers in hotels' green programs. *Annals of Tourism Research, 115*, 104061. DOI: 10.1016/j.annals.2025.104061. Institutional record. Used for evidence on programme implementation and persistence.

Primary reporting and measurement guidance

[4] American Hotel & Lodging Association (2026). Rising Cost, Staffing Challenges Persist for Hotels as Travel Demand Expected to Hold Steady. 17 March. Front Desk Feedback survey; U.S. industry context.

[5] Pro-invest Group (2019). Annual Sustainability Report, FYE 2019, p. 6, A Greener Stay. Operator-reported financial results; not treated as an independently controlled study.

[6] The University of Queensland (2020). When a free drink on vacation can save the environment. 16 June. University account of research; used for attributed resource estimates.

[7] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2023). WaterSense at Work: 3.5 Laundry Equipment. May. EPA 832-F-23-003. Laundry water estimation guidance, including weight and water-efficiency factors.