

Essay on “Promoting Sustainability in the UK Hospitality Industry”

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Sustainable business practices have become an important topic in recent years. Hospitality businesses can have a significant negative impact on the environment. Sustainable hotel operations can address those negative impacts. Organisations can adopt various CSR activities to achieve the sustainability goals (Cooper, 2020). An organisation, Accor Hotels, is chosen for the essay. The company is a global leader in the hospitality industry. It was established in 1967. It is headquartered in France. Currently, the company operates in more than 110 countries. Its significant growth in the UK hospitality industry presents the importance of sustainability (Accor, 2024). The first part of the essay will explore the CSR activities of the company and the effectiveness of the sustainability practices including theoretical frameworks. The challenges and opportunities of the implementation of Accor's sustainability practices will also be analysed in the last part.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an integral part of the business operations in the UK hospitality industry. CSR activities promote sustainability in the industry in many ways. CSR activities of the hospitality businesses aim to achieve sustainability goals such as reducing the environmental impacts from the business operations, and offering sustainable and eco-friendly hospitality services and experiences (Bosch-Badia, Montllor-Serrats and Tarrazon-Rodon, 2017). The hotel operations can cause significant amounts of damage to the environment, society, and the economy provided that the hotels do not operate responsibly. Hospitality businesses can include environmental management, fair labour practices, ethical sourcing, and stakeholder engagement in their CSR activities to tackle the growing issues regarding the environmental, social, and economic aspects (Jauhari, 2021). Accor Hotels recognises the importance of CSR and sustainability aspects. The company has implemented a number of measures in response to escalating concerns. Ethics and environmental responsibility were instilled in the organisation through the "Planet 21 Programme." The programme advocated for water conservation, energy efficiency, sustainability through support for local businesses, and biodiversity (Accor Group, 2024). By establishing measurable metrics such as water and energy consumption, and waste minimisation, the company can measure the effectiveness of the programme. The company has not

established any such metrics to gauge the progress. It may consider communicating more insights into the programme with the stakeholders using such metrics.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that the performance of hospitality businesses is impacted by corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. A responsible approach to the economy, society, and environment can help hospitality organisations advance (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019). By achieving sustainability objectives and implementing CSR initiatives, Accor Hotels hopes to distinguish itself in the market and gain a competitive edge; thus, the study's findings align with these objectives. CSR activities can guide hospitality businesses to adopt the latest technologies that are energy-efficient and sustainable. These technologies can reduce operational costs and promote sustainability throughout the organisation. Accor Hotels should be more technology-reliant to promote the sustainability aspects. CSR initiatives also utilise the resources efficiently that can contribute to the organisation's profitability (Fu et al., 2022). Hospitality businesses have applied CSR practices as a part of their strategic marketing because effective CSR initiatives and communication with stakeholders can enhance their reputation. Accor Hotels communicates CSR initiatives through its annual report and so customers who value CSR initiatives get loyal to the company (Khan et al., 2021).

Employees are a crucial part of the business because their performance matters to the hospitality industry. Employees can provide exceptional guest experiences and services. They are also responsible to perform the CSR activities of the company according to the plan. Accor Hotels encourages the employees to actively participate in sustainability programmes. Their participation and engagement with the organisation are essential to enhance the job satisfaction of the employees. Employees are satisfied with the organisation when they get recognition for their contributions. Effective CSR activities can develop a strong corporate culture. Team cohesion and collaboration will drive better services and ensure that hospitality businesses can achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the long run (Hayat and Afshari, 2022). CSR reporting needs to be transparent because it develops trust and confidence with the key stakeholders of the organisation. The investors and other stakeholders can assess the performance and the progress of the corporate commitments to sustainability. Transparency can enhance the

positive branding of the company. The involvement of the customers with the CSR activities can increase the effectiveness of the sustainable practices. If customers actively get involved with CSR activities such as participating in resource-saving initiatives, minimising waste, and utilising eco-friendly amenities. Such involvement ensures that organisations can achieve two-fold goals: providing enhanced guest experience and establishing a culture of sustainability (Cooper, 2021).

Ethics, consumer behaviour, the environment, corporate culture, and economic expansion and consumption are all areas in which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives may have an effect. CSR has more impact on environmental management (Lund-Durlacher, 2015). Aside from conserving energy and reducing waste, hospitality businesses like Accor Hotels should focus on protecting wildlife. Accor Hotels and guests need to be encouraged to think and behave more sustainably through the use of sustainable programmes. Sustainability initiatives can be fostered by emphasising on "Inclusion" aspect within the organisation because it will include stakeholders from different backgrounds to support organisation's sustainability programmes (Jones, Hillier and Comfort, 2016). The CSR initiative of Accor Hotels promotes the recycling and conservation of resources among both staff and patrons. Such initiatives are crucial to ensure responsible consumption and utilise less resources as per the circular economy concept. It also protects environment by reducing waste. The programme also seeks to alter their conduct. They recommend that organisations strike a balance between sustainable spending and economic expansion (Sloan, Legrand and Chen, 2017). Giving back to the community via CSR enables the hospitality industry to satisfy customers' demands. For example, the current trend in the hospitality industry prefers sustainable sourcing of materials and amenities. Accor Hotels' CSR initiatives can address the trend by transforming into a new business model. The business model should include local sourcing, collaborating with local partners, and providing a variety of sustainable options to the guests (Farmaki, 2018). CSR can shape eco-friendly tourism that aims to achieve sustainability goals. For that, organisations need to develop the plan and implement the plan to minimise the negative impacts of the business operations. Ethics is one of the most crucial aspects of CSR. It guides businesses to make informed decisions and undertake responsible actions. They need to collaborate with other key stakeholders to

make such decisions (Tuan, 2017). The recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown that CSR can play an important role in crisis management. Hotel businesses including Accor Hotels have helped the local communities, supported them, and ensured the well-being of their employees. CSR activities can shape the organisational culture in the hospitality industry. As organisations develop a culture that considers social and environmental responsibilities while performing the key operations, the effectiveness of their CSR initiatives gets increases (Chen and Hang, 2021). Accor Hotels has embedded the core organisational values in its CSR practices to promote sustainability at all levels of the organisation.

The sustainability models and theories are crucial to implement the relevant sustainability practices in the organisation and enhance their effectiveness. They provide a clear understanding of the various sustainability aspects. The most relevant models and theories of sustainability are the Sustainability Value Framework (SVF) and the Theory of Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA). A sustainable Value framework can guide businesses to make the organisational strategies align with the sustainable development principles (UNWTO, 2024). The three crucial dimensions of the framework: economic, environmental, and social are considered while any strategies or approaches are developed for the hospitality businesses. Companies can create sustainable value by integrating these three important sustainable dimensions into the core strategies of the businesses (Jones, Hillier and Comfort, 2016). Accor Hotels can apply the framework to create sustainable economic value for the stakeholders. The company will be able to minimise the negative impacts in these three dimensions. Accor's Planet 21 programme is an example that the company is pursuing sustainability principles (Eco-Business, 2024).

The theory of sustainable competitive advantage explains that hospitality businesses should utilise the resources in such a way that it can meet the needs and preferences of the current generations as well as the future generations (Hossain et al., 2022). It has a long-term perspective. Companies maintain a competitive advantage without compromising the ability to generate future earnings. Accor can apply the theory in its organisational strategies. The company may consider utilising its resources in long-term

investments. For example, it can invest in sustainable technologies that are energy efficient and streamline hotel operations (Korstanje, George and Nedelea, 2020). The company can also adopt sustainable practices to reduce negative impacts from its operations. The application of the theory will help the company to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. It will also provide a leading position in sustainability (Hossain et al., 2021). These frameworks and theories are crucial to integrating sustainability principles into the core business functions and strategies. Accor will benefit from their applications in many ways. Firstly, the company will be able to enhance its reputation. Secondly, it will have long-term viability in the industry. Finally, it will be able to achieve the broader goals of sustainable development in the UK hospitality industry.

Implementing good CSR policies presents both challenges and opportunities to the hospitality businesses. One of the challenges that Accor might face to implement its CSR policies is integration the of CSR into corporate strategy. To integrate CSR into the core corporate strategy is challenging because the organisation needs to transform the corporate view to implement the strategy (Korstanje, George and Nedelea, 2020). CSR activities should shift from the peripheral activity to the central component of the business model. It will take a significant amount of time. Moreover, the company might encounter resistance within the organisation due to the changes. The cost implication of the implementation of CSR activities is another challenge that the company will face. Costs may be incurred from the adoption of the latest technologies that are energy-efficient and eco-friendly. It will have to arrange a community programme that is the key source of the expenditure. The company may be required to provide employee training for sustainable practices. Such expenditure will affect the profitability of the organisation (Inkson and Minnaert, 2018). Accor will find it challenging to measure the impact of the sustainability practices. Establishing clear and appropriate metrics and KPIs is crucial to measure the social and environmental impacts and progress. To engage the stakeholders in the sustainability practices is a challenging task for Accor's management. Because the activity will require them to understand the different needs of the key stakeholders. After understanding their needs, the management has to align the CSR activities with their needs and preferences. The dynamics of the hospitality industry influence the regulations and standards in sustainability and CSR to change over time (Jones, Hillier and Comfort,

2016). To comply with the changing regulations and standards is challenging for the company. Although these challenges may present barriers to the sustainability practices of the company, Accor can leverage on the opportunities to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the long term. The company has the opportunity to differentiate itself from other hotels in the UK hospitality industry by adopting effective CSR policies. Because customers are increasingly showing their concerns for sustainability, they prefer purchasing services and experiences from sustainable organisations (Sloan, Legrand and Chen, 2017). Because energy efficient technologies are implemented in the organisation and the overall costs of the business are reduced from the energy efficiency and waste minimisation, the company is capable of achieving operational efficiency in the long run. It can also manage the resources efficiently. Effective CSR activities can drive innovation within the organisation (Edgell, 2020). Accor will continuously seek to introduce new and innovative sustainable services and experiences for the guests. As a result, the company will have the opportunity to enter new market segments. Most importantly, Accor will have the opportunity to enhance employee performance by providing them the opportunity for continuous training and development. The opportunity to engage with the organisational activities. Increasing employee morale due to a positive workplace culture can enable the company to provide exceptional services and improve guest loyalty (Cooper, 2021).

Accor Hotels can promote sustainability by implementing effective CSR practices in the organisation. CSR activities can be made effective by integrating their key sustainability dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. The company will be able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage if it addresses the emerging issues of these dimensions. Accor may find it challenging to implement effective CSR activities to promote sustainability in the long run. The company should overcome these challenges by creating a comprehensive plan. The execution of the plan may need to invest a significant amount of funds. However, spending such a large amount of financial resources will be justified as the company will have various opportunities from sustainability practices.

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