

# Contemporary Theme: Sustainable Tourism

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BMIH6001: CONTEMPORARY THEMES IN THE HOTEL &  
HOSPITABILITY SECTOR

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# 1. Introduction

Marriott International and other hotel chains have prioritized sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is responsible travel that protects the environment, culture, and community. Hotels and hospitality play a major role in global tourism (Li et al., 2021). Its hotels, resorts, and lodges affect millions of travellers worldwide. However, the sector's growth has raised concerns about its socio-cultural and environmental implications, advocating for sustainable approaches. Marriott International is dedicated to ecotourism. The company has a comprehensive sustainability plan called "Serve 360: Doing Good in Every Direction" (Marriott International, 2021). This endeavour focuses on community participation, employee empowerment, environmental sustainability, and responsible sourcing. Marriott International has ambitious goals to reduce garbage, carbon emissions, water, and energy consumption globally.

The hotel and hospitality industry, and particularly Marriott International, are impacted when sustainable tourism occurs. To begin, it satisfies the desire of customers for eco-friendly and sustainable travel. More and more vacationers are looking for lodging options that are socially and ecologically responsible (Buckley et al., 2019). Second, Marriott International may be able to save money, increase efficiency, and improve customer impression by employing environmentally friendly practices (Marriott International, 2021). In this study, Marriott International's initiatives to promote sustainable tourism will be analysed, along with their benefits and drawbacks. The sustainability activities of Marriott International will be analysed, along with how those efforts fit into the larger contexts of environmental protection and responsible tourism.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on sustainable tourism is essential and urgently needed (Holden, 2016). This is because sustainable tourism has the potential to solve the socioeconomic and environmental issues that are caused by tourist activities. According to Saarinen (2006), it involves striking a balance between respect for the natural, cultural, and social environments, on the one hand, and the contentment and enjoyment of tourists, on the other. Warbrooke (1999) defines sustainable development as "a philosophy that encourages the simultaneous expansion of the economy, society, and environment without compromising the demands of present-day populations." Sustainable development is a philosophy that encourages the simultaneous expansion of the economy, society, and environment. The concept of sustainable tourism was at first conceived as one component of this overarching concept. Butler (1993) was the first person to conceptualize what would later become known as the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model. It is hoped that the phases of expansion, plateau, and contraction that tourism destinations go through may be identified and analyzed. The purpose of this action is to bring attention to the critical role that environmentally responsible tourist practices play in ensuring the continued viability of these destinations.

According to Mihali (2016), sustainable tourism covers a number of aspects, including ecological, social, and financial sustainability. It is imperative that the tourism industry adopt practices that are ecologically sustainable if it is to cut down on harmful impacts on the environment, such as pollution and the depletion of natural resources. The primary purpose of sociocultural sustainability is to preserve and improve the pre-existing social norms, practices, and social structures of a specific location. This is the overarching objective of sociocultural sustainability. According to Bramwell and Lane (2013), economic sustainability ensures the continuing survival of the tourism sector by fostering the expansion of fair trade and the economy of the local community. This is the conclusion reached by the authors of the aforementioned study. Several studies have demonstrated the challenges that are inherent in the process of putting sustainable tourism principles into effect. According to Buckley et al. (2019), one of the most common problems in the industry is that local communities, visitors, and policy authorities aren't acquainted enough with the concept or don't fully grasp it. This is one of the most common causes of problems in the sector.

Despite the challenges, there remains a significant amount of untapped potential in sustainable tourism. (Tosun, 2001) found that studies have demonstrated that sustainable tourism may act as a catalyst for socioeconomic progress, particularly in nations that are still in the process of developing. According to Buckley et al. (2019), another benefit is that it has the potential to enhance the quality of life for the communities that act as hosts, maintain the integrity of the natural and cultural environments, and give visitors memorable experiences. Because it is possible to offer solutions to the problems that are caused by traditional methods of tourism, sustainable tourism has emerged as an important field of research and field of activity. The focus of research in the future should be on generating solutions that can be implemented to put global sustainable tourism policies and practices into action.

Technology has been regarded as a potentially helpful tool in the effort to promote tourism that is more environmentally responsible. Technology may be used to monitor and minimize the environmental effect of tourism, enhance tourists' awareness of sustainability problems, and help local economies, as stated by Gossling et al. (2019). There has also been research done on the use of digital technologies such as Blockchain with the goal of increasing the amount of openness that is present in sustainable tourism operations (Li et al., 2021). Policy interventions are also highly vital for maintaining a sustainable tourist industry. According to Koens et al. (2018), for sustainable tourism policies to be effective, they need to be created at both the macro (national or regional) and the micro (local or community) levels. In addition, solid institutional capacities and clear policy frameworks are essential to encourage the successful implementation of sustainable tourism policies (Bramwell et al., 2017). This is to ensure that sustainable tourism policies are effectively implemented.

In addition, a significant amount of investigation on the many players in sustainable tourism has been carried out. According to Dodds et al. (2010), the ecosystem of sustainable tourism is dependent not just on tourist providers but also on local communities, visitors, and government institutions. For instance, although the actions and decisions of tourists can have a significant impact on the environmental sustainability of a destination, the participation of the local community is vital to the protection of the socio-cultural sustainability of tourism (Budeanu, 2007). In addition, a study has recently begun to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic may influence ecologically conscious travel. According to Sigala (2020), the

pandemic has presented an opportunity to reassess and reinvent international travel to build a more sustainable future. This may be accomplished by reducing the number of people who travel internationally. However, because of the pandemic's potential consequences on the economy, the short-term deployment of environmentally responsible tourist practices may experience some obstacles.

### 3. Application to the hotel and hospitality sector

Analysis of Marriott International's sustainable construction and design practices will be the focus of this research project because the company is so committed to promoting environmentally responsible tourist practices. The world's largest hospitality company, Marriott International, is aware of the possible environmental repercussions that may arise because of the construction and operation of its properties (Marriott International, 2021). As a direct consequence of this, the company has aggressively pushed and implemented environmentally responsible building and design practices at each one of its locations around the world (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2019).

By using environmentally friendly building practices during construction and interior design, a hotel's footprint on the surrounding environment may be greatly reduced. As a direct consequence of this, Marriott has included environmentally friendly construction certifications and standards throughout its whole portfolio. Notably, it has set a goal that by the year 2025, all hotels that are newly built or considerably refurbished shall be built and accredited to a recognized green building standard (Marriott International, 2020). This goal was created by the company. The buildings' energy and water use will be decreased, indoor air quality will be enhanced, and eco-friendly building materials will be used. Marriott's Global Design principles reflect these objectives and provide direction for the organization as it works to deliver on its commitments. Located in the Charlotte Marriott City Centre in North Carolina, the M-Beta Hotel is a functioning beta hotel (Jacques, 2019). Sustainability and other modern design tenets are discussed in length there. It exemplifies Marriott's dedication to sustainable architecture. The hotel is equipped with technology that allows for real-time monitoring of the impact that energy and water use have. Another illustration of this principle may be seen in the renovation of the San Francisco Marriott Marquis, which reduced the amount of garbage produced as well as the demand for new construction materials by making use of the pre-existing building infrastructure rather than removing it.

There are a variety of positive outcomes that can result from Marriott's commitment to ecologically responsible development and design. By improving the environmental quality inside its buildings, the company not only reduces the negative influence its properties have on the surrounding environment but also advances the well-being of both its customers and its employees (Bramwell et al., 2017). In addition, sustainable design practices typically result

in lower operational costs over the long term as a direct consequence of the energy and water savings that they achieve. By taking these steps, Marriott is contributing to the process of resetting the standards and expectations that the tourism sector has for environmentally responsible travel. The actions taken by the corporation are in line with larger societal shifts as well as increasing demand from customers for travel and lodging options that are less harmful to the environment (Pereira, Silva, and Dias, 2021). These strategies do, however, have a few downsides, including higher initial costs and the demand for specialized knowledge as well as contractors. Marriott International has been actively searching for new approaches to include environmentally friendly building and design practices for a significant amount of time now. For instance, the company has committed to acquiring fifty percent of its furniture, fixtures, and equipment from suppliers that are members of the International Living Future Institute's Living Product 50 initiative (Marriott International, 2021). This program encourages the use of items that are safe for human and environmental use (Marriott International, 2021). Located in Florida, the JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort is a good real-world illustration. Energy-efficient features like LED lighting, low-flow plumbing fixtures, and plenty of windows are just some of the eco-friendly touches included in this report's design. The United States Green Building Council reports that after implementing these changes, energy consumption dropped by 32% and water use dropped by 37% (Jacques, 2019).

Marriott's leadership has taken a thorough and proactive approach to meeting the problems presented by green buildings (Marriott International, 2021). The firm has been collaborating closely with sustainable design specialists in the fields of architecture and construction. This is in addition to the substantial resources that have been invested in the education of the company's own workforce regarding the benefits and use of sustainable approaches (Bramwell et al., 2017). The environmentally friendly architecture and design of the Marriott provide a few benefits, most of which are positive; yet there are also several obvious challenges and constraints. The initial cost of incorporating sustainable design components can be high, but the return on investment is often determined by the amount of money saved over the long term in terms of both energy and water (Mohammadalizadehkorde and Weaver, 2020). There is a possibility that regional problems with the availability of building materials, building standards, and the availability of sustainability-trained design and

construction specialists will emerge (Koens, K., Postma, A., & Papp, 2018). These considerations can have a significant impact on the practicability and cost of employing environmentally conscious building practices. Another challenge is posed by the consciousness and perception of the customer. Even while many customers have a strong appreciation for environmentally friendly policies and procedures, some of them may place a larger importance on other aspects of their hotel stay. As is the case with other hotel companies, Marriott has the challenge of incorporating elements of sustainable design into the overall experience of its guests in a way that is unobtrusive.

In conclusion, the commitment of Marriott International to environmentally friendly building and design provides a valuable case study of the benefits and challenges of implementing sustainable tourism practices in the hospitality industry. The efforts of the firm have resulted in considerable environmental advantages, financial savings, and a good market position in a sector that is growing increasingly concerned with sustainability. The company's efforts have also contributed to the growth of the industry. The experience of Marriott, which also considers high starting costs, geographical differences, and client perceptions, highlights the difficulty of following sustainable design and construction standards even though it considers these factors.

## 4. Future Policies

### 4.1 Future Policy Options

1. **Environmental Standards:** In accordance with Dodds and Graci's (2012) demand for stronger governance and regulatory frameworks to support sustainable development, Marriott may advocate for the hotel industry to embrace stricter environmental standards. This would be in keeping with their proposal for more robust governance and regulatory frameworks. Stricter standards may result in greater up-front compliance expenditures; but they may also yield long-term operational savings and help Marriott stand out as a pioneer in sustainability, which may attract customers who are concerned about the environment.
2. **Incentives for Green Construction Practices:** The company may advocate for the passage of regulations that provide benefits for ecologically responsible construction practices. Delmas and Montes-Sancho (2011) found that firms typically respond to these incentives because they lower the financial risk associated with the implementation of sustainable practices. Because of these incentives, integrating sustainable design components might become more inexpensive for Marriott, which would be a step forward in the company's efforts to develop sustainably.
3. **Employee Education Programs:** According to Bohdanowicz and Martinac (2007), Marriott may decide to strengthen the mandatory sustainability training programs for all its employees. Both the efficiency of Marriott's operations and its image as an ethical employer would increase because of this change. On the other hand, it may entail a significant financial investment in the development and presentation of training.

## 4.2 Future Management Options

1. **Greater Investment in Sustainable Technologies:** It is possible that Marriott will continue to put money into cutting-edge technologies to improve energy efficiency, reduce the amount of water used, and lessen waste. According to Chan et al. (2017), there is the potential for reductions in the costs associated with these expenditures over the long run. Implementing these technologies may require a sizeable initial investment of cash as well as continuous fees for maintenance; nevertheless, there is a possibility that the benefits may outweigh these costs in the long run.
2. **Increasing the Capacity of Sustainable Supplier Networks:** According to the suggestion made by Lee and Brahmašreene (2013), Marriott may put more of its attention into growing its network of sustainable suppliers. If the growth results in a consistent supply of environmentally friendly products and services, the company's reputation for being environmentally responsible may be enhanced. To guarantee that standards are adhered to, the vendors must be selected with care and continuously monitored.
3. **Increasing Customer Engagement:** One management approach that shows promise is increasing customer involvement in activities that are sustainable. According to the findings of a study conducted by Millar and Baloglu (2011), when customers participate in and have an awareness of a company's sustainability activities, they often have favourable impressions of that company. Because of this, Marriott must do a better job of advertising the projects it is undertaking and providing guests with opportunities to participate in activities that are favourable to the environment while they are staying at the hotel. It is necessary to use stringent design and communication strategies to ensure that the initiatives are well received by the guests and do not compromise their level of convenience or enjoyment.

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