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University of Wales
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Module Name

Sustainable Hospitality & Tourism Management (*BMIH5006*)

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Word Count

2176 words

Executive Summary

Green Key certification and hotel sustainability are highlighted in this report. Becoming socially responsible, obtaining materials in a sustainable manner, minimizing energy and water consumption, and managing waste appropriately are all prerequisites for sustainable certification. Environmental protection, cost savings, reputation enhancement, competitive advantage, and compliance assurance are all benefits of sustainability. Although, the report also addresses the concerns of guests, limited technology, and high startup costs. This report assesses the sustainability practices of boutique eco-hotels and Marriott International. Hilton Worldwide is also examined. It demonstrates the profitability of sustainable projects. Both consumer demand and technological advancements are enhancing hotel sustainability. Going green is competitive and ethical, according to the report's findings. Some of the recommendations include staff training, waste reduction initiatives, and active participation from guests and the community in fostering a sustainable culture.

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1. Introduction

Sustainability in the context of hotels is the systematic approach towards minimization of environmental concerns and maximization of social benefits and organisational financial performance (Harris, Williams and Griffin, 2017). As a result, attaining sustainable accreditation including the Green Key accreditation has become a reality for hotels that are willing and eager to observe high standards of environmental and social responsibilities. Green Key, an eco-label that is global, evaluates hotels relative to energy consumption, water use, waste disposal, purchasing, and community engagement (Silva, 2023). The report will outline the conditions hotels must meet for sustainable certification and also discuss the benefits and challenges of declaring sustainability in hotel processes and the future of sustainability in the hotel and hospitality business. Comparing the findings with best practice examples from other companies and industries, the report will offer a detailed assessment of how hoteling can improve sustainable management initiatives. The analysis of sources, integration of data and ideas, and the application of theory will be important facets, which will result in best practices for hotels to establish and sustain high levels of sustainability.

2. Requirements for Sustainable Accreditation

2.1 Overview of Sustainable Accreditation

Sustainable accreditation refers to a consistent approach that requires the hotels, which aim to achieve sustainable accreditation, to get their sustainable activities assessed and accredited (Costa and Costa, 2022). Positioning an organisation as willing or able to offer sustainable services is not only an asset to the organisation but also to the consumer looking for sustainable accommodations.

2.2 Specific Certification

Green Key is a certification programme initiated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) which is based on a framework of strict guidelines pertaining to such areas as energy use, waste management, water saving, green purchasing etc. (Foundation for Environmental Education, 2023). These hotels, hostels, campsites and conference centres that meet those standards are awarded with this recognition for setting up their commitment to a reduced environmental impact and to the improved quality of services offered to the guests. One of the main benefits of getting Green Key

certification is that accredited establishments will in turn receive better reputation and marketability for customers and also the general public has greater awareness of sustainable tourism.

2.3 Criteria and Implementation

To sustain accreditation in hotels, a number of criteria must be met concerning energy and water efficiency, solid waste minimization, sourcing of raw materials, and social responsibility (Sloan, Legrand and Chen, 2017). All of these areas need detailed planning to achieve compliance and improvement.

Energy Efficiency

The hotel industry has a duty to minimize the use of energy by incorporating solar panels and wind turbines. Energy conservation is also achieved through the use of energy-efficient lighting systems, smart thermostats and occupancy sensors (Oliveira, Silva and Silva, 2024). It is also important to install new more efficient HVAC systems. Savoy Hotel has implemented numerous energy-saving initiatives to protect the environment (Savoy Hotels, 2024). Thus, Savoy's annual carbon footprint was reduced by 275 tons due to these measures.

Water Conservation

Using low-flow fixtures and dual-flush toilets can significantly cut back on water use. There is another effective technique called greywater recycling where recycled greywater can be used for irrigation and other non-potable purposes (Prakash et al., 2023). It is also important for hoteliers to teach their guests how to conserve water in order to get their cooperation during the campaign. By adding low-flow fixtures and dual-flush toilets, the London Savoy Hotel saved 40% on water. Their graywater recycling saves almost 2 million gallons of water annually, helping the environment (The Savoy London, 2018).

Waste Management

The first is an adequate recycling system that involves separation of paper, plastics, glass, and food waste. Eliminating the use of single-use plastics or replacing them with a biodegradable option is a good way to reduce the hotel's waste burden (Morrissey and Browne, 2019). Recycling organic wastes not only helps in reducing landfill wastes but also creates manure that can be used as fertilizer. Strong recycling at the Ritz

London has cut in half the amount of trash that ends up in landfills. When the hotel got rid of single-use plastics and put in recyclable ones, they cut their trash by 30% (Laico, 2019).

Sustainable Sourcing

The quest for employing local and organic foods also reduces carbon emissions due to the exclusion of transportation aspect and boosts local economies. Recycling waste and biodegradable products for cleaning and for items left for guests are very important in sustainable sourcing (Cooper, 2021). Hotel companies should source their raw materials from partners with similar initiatives to those of the hotel in question.

Social Responsibility

Some issues include fair labour practices and violence and discrimination at the workplace. Hotels should get involved in community work like charity work and cultural events. Offering guests an opportunity to get involved in the hotel's volunteering projects may also contribute to having a positive impact on the community (Haski-Leventhal, 2018).

3. Benefits and Challenges of Integrating Sustainability

3.1 Benefits

Environmental Impact Reduction: Hotels may simply minimise their carbon footprint by using energy-efficient equipment, saving water, and managing solid waste. Solar panels, wind turbines, energy-efficient lighting, and smart thermostats cut fossil fuel use. Low-flow fixtures and greywater collecting conserve water (Morosuk, Tsatsaronis and Koroneos, 2016). Green Accreditation requires hotels to use renewable energy, install efficient technology, and improve waste management.

Cost Savings: It is worth noting that even though sustainable technologies may require an initial hefty investment, long-term returns are eventually greater. This involves installing efficient energy-consuming appliances and renewable energy systems to minimize utility bills (Sloan, Legrand and Chen, 2017). Recycling programs like The Ritz London reduce costs because they reduce the amount of waste that is thrown away. In addition, it has been clearly explained how sustainable sourcing, for

example, buying locally and seasonally, can reduce the costs of transportation and benefit the local economy (Tortato, Frankenberger and Leal Filho, 2021).

Enhanced Reputation and Customer Loyalty: It is important to note that sustainability efforts help improve the hotel's image. The implementation of sustainable practices in hotels offers eco-friendly consumers more value and benefits, contributing to higher occupancy rates. Green certifications like Green Key and LEED help to promote the hotel to guests that are environmentally conscious (Wai Lai, 2019). Such positive feedback from customers and referrals to the hotel also improve its position in the market.

Innovation and Competitive Advantage: Sustainability pushes for innovation where hotels are challenged to come up with new products and services. For instance, developing a green facility or implementing a green meetings package is a competitive advantage (Costa and Costa, 2022). Developing sustainability leadership may also provide opportunities to partner with other business and not-for-profit entities to capture new markets.

Regulatory Compliance and Risk Management: Several countries are increasing regulations on the environment. Hotels can also see to it that they will be able to comply with current and future regulations on sustainability without incurring penalties and legal repercussions (Kholijah, 2024). Additionally, sustainable practices reduce the business risk emanating from resource shortages and climate change.

3.2 Challenges

High Initial Costs: Another problem that arises when ensuring sustainable tourism is that it is very capital intensive in the beginning. The installation and maintenance of alternative energy systems as well as infrastructure upgrades require substantial capital costs, especially for SME hotels that do not have massive working capital streams (Leslie, 2016). The issue of access to the finances needed for overcoming sustainability adoption barriers still looms large for many establishments.

Technological Limitations: Technology limitations make sustainable management techniques impossible in remote places with weak infrastructure and underdeveloped technologies. Hotels may not have access to renewable energy sources or environmentally appropriate garbage disposal channels, making it harder to apply

sustainable resources (Raihan, 2024). Overcoming these difficulties requires sustainable technology developments and investments.

Balancing Guest Expectations: Making guests happy and at the same time trying to save the environment at the same time may prove hard. Potentially not all guests will see the importance of such sustainability activities like reduced amenities or water usage instead they may consider it as a loss in their experience (Berezan, Millar and Raab, 2020). The only approach to accomplish sustainable goals without jeopardising guest satisfaction is thought to be to invest in a dependable communication channel and inform guests about relevant subjects.

3.3 Comparison with Successful Corporations

The comparison between sustainable tourism linked to Green Accreditation and other successful corporations in other industries is presented in this table and shows similarities and differences in their strategies toward sustainability.

Aspect	Sustainable Tourism (Green Accreditation)	Successful Corporations in Other Industries
Environmental Conservation	✓	✓
Enhanced Brand Image	✓	✓
Cost Savings and Efficiency	✓	✓
Initial Investment and Operational Costs	✓	✗
Complexity and Compliance Burden	✓	✗
Guest Perceptions and Preferences	✓	✗

Source: Author

Among some of the successful tourism companies, TUI Group and Thomas Cook are noted for their creative eco-friendly travel initiatives. TUI Group has implemented its Gibraltar-specific sustainable tourism plan, which reduces carbon emissions, evaluates new biodiversity business opportunities, and achieves positive environmental and economic results from sustainable tourism experiences (TUI

Group, 2023). Also, Thomas Cook provides sustainable trip planning and environmentally acceptable lodging products (CABI News, 2018).

5. Future of Sustainability in the Hotel Industry

Sustainability is becoming increasingly popular in the hotel industry, with modern trends such as smart technology, green building materials, waste management being at the forefront. Green Key certification is a motivation for this change focusing on the environment. Due to the increased pressure from regulations and customer demand, sustainability becomes crucial in hotel business. Interviews with representatives of major fast-food chains indicate that sustainability is possible and has its advantages (University of South Wales, 2019). The future of the hotel industry is sustainability, changing the future of hospitality for good.

5.1 Trends and Innovations

The special criteria Green Key recommends require hotels to subscribe to and apply clever solutions to use water and energy more efficiently and effectively. According to Green Key, Internet of Things devices and automated systems conserve energy and help save the environment (Prakash et al., 2023). Green Key promotes sustainable building materials and their use. This means hotels should use recyclable construction materials that do not harm the environment when demolished. In Green Key-certified hotels, waste reduction requires additional solutions. Composting and waste-to-electricity technology were among these alternatives. These trends demonstrate the industry's sustainability and match Green Key certification areas (Kholijah, 2024). Green Key accreditation requires industrial growth and innovation in sustainable practices.

5.2 Industry Predictions

Experts believe Green Key and consumer demand for sustainability will help the hotel industry move towards sustainability. Green Key certification is likely to be the most effective in popularising sustainable hospitality practices, with hotels offering systematic sustainability services to visitors to meet environmental standards. Certain governments have adopted rules that promote sustainable tourism and penalise hotels that harm the environment (Jauhari, 2021). The Green Key eco-label will help hotels work by representing the highest environmental standards and advancing the sector. The trend indicates that ecologically conscious travellers would seek out Green Key-

certified hotels. In the digital age, hotels' sustainability initiatives will likely centre on the Green Key designation, influencing customer choice and industry trends (Kholijah, 2024).

5.3 Case Studies

Marriott International is a sustainability icon since it uses Green Key's ideas in numerous projects. Marriott's "Serve 360" strategy includes various global hotel sustainability policies (Marriott, 2021). Waste reduction, energy and water conservation, and sustainable raw material sourcing are examples.

Hilton Worldwide's "Travel with Purpose" programme seeks the goal of doubling social impact and halving its environmental impact by 2030. This initiative includes sustainable building, community engagement, and creative waste. Hilton espouses sustainability and uses sustainable business practices (Hilton, 2024). The Hilton and the Green Key tie-up is a good example of how sustainable practices can be easily implemented in a hotel to promote the environment and the community.

Proximity Hotel and Svart Hotel are boutique eco-hotels that meet Green Key's responsible hospitality standards. Both hotels are in Connecticut. Proximity is a LEED Platinum-certified eco-design, and Svart is an energy positivity pioneer (Proximity Hotel, 2023; Jeen, 2024). The models show how sustainability may improve hotel experiences, allowing guests to enjoy eco-friendly stays.

The preceding cases show that environmentally responsible hotels may benefit the community and bottom line. Hotels may succeed in the environmentally conscious hospitality industry by making sustainability a strategic aim, investing in new solutions, and cooperating.

6. Conclusion

This report has outlined how hotels can attain such accreditation stressing on strict standards in energy management, water use and waste management recycling, green purchasing and social responsibility. Implementation of sustainability in the operating model of a hotel produces numerous advantages such as cost reduction, improved organisational image, legal compliance, and improved guest satisfaction. However, there are number of challenges that may be encountered like high initial investment costs, available technology and guest expectations that have to be managed properly.

In the future, sustainability is expected to play an increasingly important role in hospitality organisations due to new technologies, appropriate construction materials, and efficient waste disposal methods. Examples from the best performers such as Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, and boutique eco-hotels demonstrate the applicability and profitability of sustainability solutions. Therefore, the hotel industry is at a crossroads and the adoption of sustainability is not only a matter of ethical responsibility but also of competitive advantage.

7. Recommendations

Hotels should train their workers on green practices and goods so that they can ensure guest satisfaction and engagement on adopt sustainable behaviours.

Using biodegradable or recyclable materials, composting organic waste, and implementing large-scale recycling initiatives can all help to cut waste and increase resource efficiency.

A sustainable culture can be fostered by encouraging staff, visitors and community involvement. Increasing visitor participation in conservation activities and teaching personnel on eco-friendly methods are key to progress.

Source: (Self-made)

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