

**Critically Assessing the Implementation of Marriott International's
Sustainability Practices:
A Case Study of Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead**

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AI Declaration

I confirm that in completing this assignment, I have used ChatGPT as a tool to support my research. Specifically, I utilised ChatGPT to help clarify concepts and theories as well as assist with referencing. However, all final content presented in this assignment is my own.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my beloved daughter for her support and patience throughout my degree. Her encouragement and understanding have been invaluable, particularly during times of stress and demanding deadlines.

Abstract

This dissertation critically examines the implementation of Marriott International's global environmental sustainability strategy, Serve360: Doing Good in Every Direction, at a local level through a qualitative case study of the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. As sustainability becomes increasingly important in the hospitality industry, this study explores how corporate frameworks are translated into meaningful practices within a real-world hotel setting. The research was guided by two questions: (1) How effectively have Marriott's sustainability practices been implemented at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead? and (2) What are the key challenges and successes associated with embedding Marriott's corporate sustainability strategies at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead? A multi-method qualitative approach was employed, combining document analysis, ethnographic-style observation during a work placement, and netnographic analysis of online reviews and digital communications. Findings reveal strong alignment with Marriott's global sustainability goals in areas such as food waste reduction, energy and water efficiency, and staff engagement. The hotel holds a Green Key eco-certification and a Gold rating from The PLEDGE on Food Waste. Operational practices include FIFO stock rotation, composting, and staff meals from surplus food. Online promotion of initiatives like Veganuary and Food Waste Action Week was also observed. Challenges include limited guest engagement, inconsistent recycling behaviours in certain areas, and staff discomfort with food reuse. These issues suggest that while policy and managerial intent are robust, behavioural change remains a critical gap. The study concludes that full integration of sustainability goals depends on communication, engagement, and the local adaptation of global

strategies. Practical recommendations are offered to enhance training, guest participation, and the use of technology, providing insights for hospitality practitioners and scholars alike.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Marriott International has taken a leading role through its “Serve360: Doing Good in Every Direction” strategy, which aims to embed sustainability across environmental, social, and governance dimensions (Marriott International, 2023). However, a key challenge lies in how effectively such global policies are embedded at the local level. This dissertation addresses that challenge through a case study of the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead.

The study assesses how Marriott’s global sustainability policies are translated into daily operational practices at the Gateshead site. It evaluates the successes and challenges encountered in this process and explores the impact of these initiatives on the hotel’s environmental, economic, and social performance. Practical recommendations are also proposed to improve local integration.

1.1 Research Questions

The study is guided by two research questions:

- (1) How effectively have Marriott’s sustainability practices been implemented at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead?
- (2) What are the key challenges and successes associated with embedding Marriott’s corporate sustainability strategies at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead?

1.2 Contextual Profile of The Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead

The Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead occupies a prime location with a strategic significance. Situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, directly opposite Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the hotel benefits from strong transport links, cultural attractions, and a vibrant economic setting (Marriott.com, 2025). Although the hotel is frequently associated with Newcastle due to branding and proximity, it is firmly located within Gateshead, a town that has undergone extensive regeneration and is increasingly integrated with its neighbouring city (NewcastleGateshead.com, 2025).

Gateshead itself presents a complex socio-economic landscape. It has an ageing demographic, below-average household income and relatively high levels of deprivation, ranking 47th out of 317 English local authorities (ONS 2023). Life expectancy also trails national averages, and around 22% of residents report health-related limitations in daily life. However, positive shifts are evident, such as a decline in unemployment and gradual improvements in self-reported health and disability levels (ONS, 2023).

Both Gateshead and Newcastle have made bold commitments to climate action. Gateshead Council (2022) has pledged to achieve net-zero carbon emissions and encourages sustainable business practices. Similarly, Newcastle City Council (2025) prioritises low-carbon development and improved energy systems. These commitments shape the operational expectations for hospitality providers like Marriott.

The people of both boroughs are widely recognised for their resilience, warmth, and strong community ethos. Regionally, organisations such as TEDCO Business Support (2023) and the North-East Chamber of Commerce (Armanino, 2024) actively promote sustainability, innovation, and green growth. However, for global hotel brands like Marriott, engaging meaningfully with this evolving landscape requires navigating fragmented national and local policy frameworks (Censoro, 2024).

Against this backdrop, the dissertation critically examines how Marriott's Serve360 sustainability strategy is being operationalised at the Gateshead hotel. It evaluates the extent to which global sustainability principles are translated into local action, contributing to both academic literature and practical insights into place-based implementation of international strategies.

1.3 Research structure

This study is divided into five chapters, each building upon the previous to offer a comprehensive analysis of Marriott's sustainability practices at a local level. Chapter One introduces the research by presenting the background, aims, research questions, and the overall significance of the study. Chapter Two provides a critical review of existing academic and industry literature on sustainability in the hospitality sector. It examines relevant theoretical frameworks, explores corporate sustainability strategies, and evaluates Marriott International's global initiatives, identifying gaps that this study aims to address. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the qualitative case study approach employed. It explains the data collection methods, analytical frameworks, and ethical considerations that underpin

the research design. Chapter Four presents the findings and discussion, using thematic analysis structured around the Triple Bottom Line framework to critically assess the local implementation of Marriott's sustainability strategy. It highlights key areas of success, as well as challenges and inconsistencies that emerged. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the study by summarising the main findings in relation to the research questions and offering practical recommendations for enhancing the integration of sustainability practices at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Sustainability in Hotels and Hospitality

Sustainability is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p.41). In the hospitality sector, this concept has evolved from a peripheral concern into a central strategic focus, shaped by escalating environmental challenges, resource scarcity, and social inequality. The hotel industry, known for its high energy and water consumption, waste generation, and carbon emissions, is under growing pressure to align its operations with sustainable development frameworks (UN Tourism, 2024). Public awareness has been amplified by influential figures such as Greta Thunberg, whose global activism has propelled environmental issues into mainstream discourse shaping public expectations and corporate behaviour (Hutt, 2020).

Hotels are increasingly integrating sustainability through both Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks. For example, Hiltons Travel with Purpose (2022), IHGs Making a Difference Everyday (2023), and Travelodge's Better Future (2024), illustrate this broader industry trend. CSR reflects voluntary ethical commitments to environmental protection and community engagement, while ESG offers measurable indicators used by investors and policymakers to evaluate a company's sustainability performance and risk exposure (Cardillo and Basso, 2025). Together, these approaches inform industry efforts such as energy-efficient building design, sustainable food sourcing, and water conservation (Pajot, 2024).

Furthermore, sustainability in hospitality aligns with broader global priorities, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Leading brands like Marriott and Hyatt are pursuing certifications such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) to demonstrate accountability (Green Key, 2024).

In parallel, consumer preferences also influence this trajectory, as eco-conscious travellers increasingly demand transparency and authentic sustainability efforts (Booking.com, 2024; Chemmanur and Fenech, 2024). As such, sustainability has become central to the future viability and competitiveness of hotels, reshaping how they are built, managed, and experienced (Jones, 2017; Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2021). This shift not only enhances brand reputation and guest loyalty but also improves operational efficiency and long-term resilience (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, developed by Elkington (1997), remains foundational in guiding sustainability. It expands the traditional focus on profit by emphasising three interconnected dimensions: People, Planet, and Profit. In the hospitality sector, this means delivering financial performance while also supporting social equity, such as fair labour practices and community engagement, and minimising environmental harm through actions like reducing energy use and waste. By integrating all three pillars, hotels can create long-term value and operate more responsibly in a sustainability-focused market (Jonker, 2023).

Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory broadens this by recognising that sustainability outcomes depend on the interests and influence of multiple groups, including guests seeking ethical experiences, employees advocating for fair labour conditions, local communities impacted by tourism, investors demanding responsible governance, and regulators enforcing standards. Engaging these stakeholders effectively enables hotels to co-create sustainable value and improve legitimacy.

Institutional Theory explains how large hospitality organisations embed sustainability by responding to external pressures, such as legal requirements, industry norms, customer expectations, and institutionalising these practices through policies, routines, and corporate culture (Dodds and Smith, 2025). This helps explain why global chains like Marriott adopt structured sustainability frameworks to align multiple properties worldwide.

Finally, the PESTLE framework, encompassing Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental dimensions offers a holistic tool for organisations to anticipate and respond to external forces. In particular, the Environmental dimension has become increasingly significant, as it directly shapes the sustainability policies and practices that businesses must adopt to stay competitive (FasterCapital, 2025). Rising climate regulations, carbon taxes, water scarcity policies, and sustainability certifications drive hotels to innovate and comply, while social trends towards ethical consumption and digital transparency shape market demands (Johnson et al., 2023).

While all four frameworks offer valuable insights into sustainability, the TBL appears the most appropriate for the critical assessment of sustainability practices at Delta

Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. This choice is justified not only by its conceptual alignment with Marriott's sustainability objectives but also by its capacity to integrate economic, social, and environmental analysis in a balanced and applicable way.

Critically, the TBL framework provides a multi-dimensional evaluative lens that resonates strongly with how sustainability is operationalised in hotel management. Marriott International's own sustainability strategies as outlined in their Serve360 report, are explicitly framed around people (social responsibility), planet (environmental impact), and profit (business viability). This structure directly mirrors the TBL model and allows the researcher to systematically interrogate the extent to which sustainability efforts at the Newcastle Gateshead site are effectively implemented across all three pillars.

However, it should be noted, PESTLE is best suited to macro-level environmental scanning. While its inclusion enhances the study's understanding of external influences, such as environmental regulation and consumer trends, it does not offer a sufficient evaluative framework to critically assess how Marriott implements sustainability internally or strategically.

2.3 Implementing Sustainability Practices in Global Hotel Chains

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in hotels refers to the commitment of hotel companies to operate in an ethically responsible and sustainable manner, balancing business success with social, environmental, and economic considerations (Goffi, Masiero, and Pencarelli, 2022). It means that hotels are not just focused on profit,

but also on protecting the environment, supporting communities, and ensuring ethical labour practices (Moyeen and Mehjabeen, 2024; Ferreira et al., 2024).

In terms of sustainability, hotels typically consume significant energy and water and generate large amounts of waste (Brozyna and Walsh, 2025; UN, 2022), CSR efforts aim to reduce this impact. To help with this, many hotels work towards Eco-certifications like Green Key, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), and EarthCheck, as they provide recognised frameworks to measure and enhance performance. These certifications are respected for their rigorous criteria and help hotels benchmark progress, attract eco-conscious guests, and align with broader CSR and circular economy goals (European Parliament, 2023; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). Achieving certification involves a structured process, assessment, implementation, and third-party audit, which requires investment but yields long-term reputational and operational benefits (Green Key, 2024a). Core criteria include energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste management. For instance, the Radisson Blu Hotel Faridabad (2024) achieved LEED Gold by using solar panels, rainwater harvesting, and efficient lighting systems. Eco-certifications also promote responsible water use, such as drought-resistant landscaping, rainwater reuse, and guest towel/linen reuse initiatives (Green Key, 2024a; Smarter Business, 2020; Ali et al., 2008), and effective waste strategies like recycling, composting, and minimising single-use plastics (Green Key, 2024). Tools like Winnow AI help hotels reduce food waste by tracking kitchen surplus, allowing redistribution to food banks, particularly relevant amid economic crises (Hilton, 2024; UK Parliament, 2023). Sustainable menus also contribute by using local, seasonal, and plant-based foods to lower environmental impact (Climate Trade, 2023).

2.4 Barriers to Sustainability

Unfortunately, implementing sustainability in hotels faces several key barriers (EHL Graduate School, 2024). High initial costs for modern technologies and infrastructure can deter investment (Sustainable-Hospitality-Alliance, 2021). Furthermore, organisational change is complex, requiring clear communication, strong leadership, and employee engagement to overcome resistance, as highlighted by Kotter's (1996) leading change model. Lastly, managing sustainable practices across global supply chains continues to be challenging due to varying standards and oversight difficulties (Gruchmann et al., 2023).

Additionally, sustainability efforts can succeed or fail based on guest perceptions (Zareh et al., 2025). While many travellers express support for environmentally responsible hotels, research shows a persistent "value-action gap" where guests may favour green practices in principle but still prioritise comfort, convenience, or price when making bookings (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Alyahia et al. (2024) highlight that visible initiatives such as eco-labels, digital key cards, refillable toiletries, and energy-saving technologies can enhance a hotel's image as environmentally responsible. However, they also caution that if these efforts are perceived as superficial or symbolic ('green tokenism'), they may backfire, leading to guest scepticism and reduced trust. Tokenistic actions, such as promoting sustainability while still offering single-use plastics or failing to embed practices across all operations, can undermine the credibility of green claims. Clear, transparent communication and consistent integration of sustainable practices across all guest touchpoints are therefore essential to building genuine engagement and shaping positive guest responses (Sustainability Directory, 2025).

These internal and consumer-facing challenges are further compounded by external political barriers. Despite global advocacy for climate action, political leadership can act as a hindrance, for instance, under the current presidency of Donald Trump, the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement marks a significant retreat from international sustainability goals (Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, 2025; Environmental and Energy Law Program (EELP), 2025).

2.5 Sustainability Policies at Marriott International

Marriott International is a leading global hospitality company, operating over 8,800 properties in 139 countries and employing more than 350,000 people (Marriott International, 2024; Statista, 2024). With assets exceeding 25 billion US dollars, it holds considerable global influence while positioning itself as a values-driven organisation committed to social and environmental responsibility (Murphy and Tucker, 2023; Marriott International, 2024). Central to this commitment is its Serve360: Doing Good in Every Direction platform, launched in 2017, which aligns Marriott's operations with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and is structured around four key sustainability pillars (Marriott International, 2018; United Nations, 2015; UNWTO, 2023).

The first, 'Nurture Our world', supports community development and resilience. By the end of 2025, Marriott aims to contribute 15 million volunteer hours globally, with 50% focused on supporting at-risk and disadvantaged children and youth, while also ensuring that 80% of managed hotels and 50% of franchised hotels participate in community service, and that half of all reported volunteer efforts are skills-based.

The second pillar, 'Empower Through Opportunity', promotes inclusive hiring and workforce development. Marriott has committed to investing at least £30 million to expand and strengthen opportunities in the communities it operates, with a focus on developing hospitality skills and supporting local workforce development.

Next, 'Sustain Responsible Operations' focuses on reducing waste, energy use, and carbon emissions. This year, Marriott aims to reduce its environmental footprint across key areas, targeting a 15% reduction in water intensity, a 30% reduction in carbon intensity, a 45% reduction in landfill waste and a 50% reduction in food waste, all from a 2016 baseline. The company also plans to source 30% of its electricity from renewable energy, certify 100% of its hotels under recognised sustainability standards, and have 650 properties pursue LEED, BREEAM, or equivalent certifications (Marriott, 2024a). Additionally, Marriott is committed to responsible sourcing 95% of its top 10 procurement categories, including food, textiles, and amenities.

The final pillar, 'Welcome All and Advance Human Rights', includes policies on diversity, equity, and preventing human trafficking. Marriott will ensure that 100% of on-property associates complete human rights training covering topics such as human trafficking awareness and ethical recruitment and sourcing practices. The company also plans to embed human rights criteria into its recruitment and supply chain policies, while collaborating with the wider industry to address risks during hotel construction (Marriott, 2025).

2.6 Challenges, Gaps, and Justification for Research

Despite Marriott International's strong global commitment to sustainability, a persistent gap exists between corporate sustainability goals and their implementation at the hotel level. Research highlights several challenges, including limited tracking mechanisms, insufficient internal communication, and a lack of incentives or training to support meaningful change. These issues are compounded by structural factors such as decentralised operations and the variability of ownership and management models across properties (Baum, 2021). Many hotels face practical obstacles such as unclear operational guidance, limited resources, and staff who are either untrained or unconvinced of the value of sustainability initiatives (Pham et al., 2020).

There is also a notable gap in academic research that investigates how global hotel brands implement sustainability practices at individual sites. To address this, the current research will critically examine the implementation of Marriott's sustainability practices at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. This study aims to explore how corporate sustainability strategies are translated into local operations, identify key challenges and successes, assess the environmental, economic, and social impacts of these efforts, and offer recommendations for more effective integration.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Case Study Approach

This research employs a qualitative case study methodology to investigate how Marriott's global sustainability strategy, Serve360, is implemented at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead, where the researcher completed a work placement. A case study is defined as an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Hancock, Algozzine, and Lim, (2021).

Both Hancock, Algozzine and Lim, (2021) and Çakar and Aykol (2020) ascertain case studies enable a comprehensive understanding of the subject by incorporating varied data collection techniques such as document analysis, observation, and online sources. Using multiple sources allows for triangulation, which enhances the credibility and depth of the findings.

However, case studies also have limitations. The focus on a single case may limit the generalisability of the results, and the researcher's involvement can introduce bias (Çakar and Aykol, 2020). To mitigate these issues, this study employs transparent data collection procedures and analytical frameworks to ensure rigour and reliability.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This research employed a multi-method qualitative approach, drawing on secondary sources, documentary analysis, observational insights, and online data. Key documents, including Marriott's corporate reports, press releases, and sustainability frameworks such as LEED and GSTC, as well as relevant industry publications,

were critically analysed. These materials provided essential insight into Marriott's global sustainability objectives and corporate social responsibility initiatives, forming the foundation for assessing alignment between corporate strategy and local implementation.

Complementing the documentary analysis, the researcher maintained reflective notes during a work placement at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. These informal observations captured visible sustainability practices embedded in daily operations. While anecdotal in nature, they offered authentic and grounded perspectives on how sustainability is enacted at the hotel level. The observational data were later organised thematically to support structured analysis.

To further enrich the data, netnography was employed to explore customer perceptions and wider stakeholder engagement. Publicly accessible digital sources such as TripAdvisor reviews, Marriott's social media content, and online media references to the Delta Marriott, were analysed. This unobtrusive method enabled the researcher to capture real-time sentiment and public discourse surrounding the hotel's sustainability efforts.

Recent developments in netnographic research have expanded its applicability across diverse digital platforms (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2023). Nonetheless, limitations such as self-selection bias in online reviews and the absence of contextual depth remain concerns (Mkono, 2012). To address these challenges, netnographic findings were triangulated with documentary and observational data, enhancing the reliability and interpretive depth of the overall analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was adopted to interpret the collected data, structured around the TBL framework. This facilitated both inductive and deductive analysis: while emergent themes arose from the data itself, predetermined categories based on TBL triple Ps (People, Planet and Profit) shaped the overarching analytical lens.

Themes such as energy conservation, staff training, waste management, and local partnerships were first identified through coding, then evaluated for consistency with Marriott's global Serve360 objectives. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model of thematic analysis provided a structured yet flexible process, including familiarisation, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting.

This dual-layered thematic and TBL-based analysis enabled critical interrogation of how well Marriott's sustainability pillars are translated locally, where gaps or tensions exist, and whether sustainability is embedded or performative (Font and Lynes, 2018; Dodds and Smith, 2025).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Although this study does not involve direct human participants, ethical integrity remains a priority. Observational insights are based exclusively on the researcher's experience and do not include personal identifiers. All netnographic data were drawn from publicly accessible platforms, and no usernames, photographs, or identifiable content have been used. Academic integrity is maintained through proper citation of all secondary and online sources.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This section presents the thematic analysis of how Marriott's Serve360 sustainability strategy is reflected at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. Findings are drawn from observational insights during a work placement, online brand, and property materials, and netnographic analysis of public digital content, such as guest reviews and social media posts. The analysis is organised into five key themes:

4.1 Resource Efficiency

The Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead is Green Key certified, having received the award in 2023 (Green Key England, 2023). Green Key is a leading international eco-label awarded to tourism and hospitality establishments that meet strict criteria on environmental management, sustainability education, and resource efficiency. This certification signifies the hotel's commitment to reducing its environmental impact through measures such as water and energy conservation, sustainable waste management, and promoting eco-friendly guest practices (Green Key England, 2023).

Green Key certification acts as a credible external validation of sustainability practices, reflecting positively on the local implementation of Marriott's Serve360 strategy. According to Nakaishi and Chapman, (2024) and Blackman et al. (2015), eco-labels enhance brand credibility and consumer trust, particularly when supported by transparent communication. The award suggests effective top-down alignment with Marriott's corporate goals. However, as Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2008) argue, certification alone does not guarantee consistent, on-the-ground application; instead, it must be supported by ongoing training, investment, and monitoring. This

raises questions about whether such recognition translates into meaningful behavioural changes among staff or guests, especially given later observations of implementation gaps.

Several measures aimed at reducing resource consumption were observed by the researcher during the placement. In terms of water conservation, they observed that low-flow toilet flush systems had been installed in both staff and guest areas, contributing to Marriott's global goal of a 15% reduction in water usage between 2016 and 2025 (Marriott Serve360, 2025). These systems are designed to reduce water usage per flush (Stauffer, 2019), however, in practice, they were frequently ineffective. Toilets, particularly in staff areas, would often fail to clear waste fully or become completely blocked. Since only two toilets were available to staff, this led to staff using guest facilities more frequently. When malfunctions occurred, maintenance teams prioritised guest toilets over staff ones, creating a disparity in resource access and maintenance response.

While low-flow systems represent an important effort to meet global water reduction targets (Marriott Serve360, 2025), the practical issues observed in staff areas demonstrate poor implementation at the local level. This mismatch supports Wu's (2020) assertion that infrastructural changes must be accompanied by adequate maintenance and user feedback loops. The prioritisation of guest facilities over staff needs also highlights a tension between customer experience and internal sustainability - an issue raised by Kim et al. (2019), who argue that overlooking staff-centric practices can reduce the effectiveness and legitimacy of green initiatives. These findings suggest that while Marriott's corporate policy is clearly present, local-level operational challenges may limit its impact.

Energy-saving measures were in place, most notably with LED motion-sensitive lighting. Lights in hallways and communal areas only activated in response to movement, reducing unnecessary electricity consumption. This appeared to be an effective system used throughout the premises and supports the global goal of reducing carbon intensity by 30% in 2025 (Marriott Serve360, 2025).

This aligns well with prior research that positions automated energy-saving technologies as effective tools for reducing environmental impact (Mooney, 2022). The successful implementation of this system reflects positively on the Gateshead branch's operational capability and shows strong alignment with global Serve360 goals. Moreover, such interventions support low-effort sustainability - an approach that maximises efficiency without demanding behavioural change (Buhalis and Leung, 2018). However, as argued by Breivik et al. (2020), technological interventions must be part of a broader environmental culture; without guest and staff engagement, their long-term effectiveness may be limited. Nonetheless, this example stands out as a success in local execution of Marriott's global environmental targets.

On the booking website, it is stated that each room at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead has a carbon footprint of 15.75 kg and a water footprint of 498.38L per night (Marriott, 2025). The inclusion of such data suggests that local transparency practices align with global policies.

Publishing footprint data directly to guests aligns with transparency strategies advocated by Ferris (2023), who states that the growing trend of carbon labelling in hospitality has been shown to encourage more eco-conscious booking behaviour.

This is a promising practice supporting Serve360's educational aims. However, the literature also cautions that transparency should be coupled with behavioural nudges to drive maximum change (Bruns et al., 2025). The data's mere presence may not be enough to influence actions unless it is communicated in a more compelling or comparative format.

However, there were some limitations regarding resource efficiency observed by the researcher. Unnecessary towel laundering in the leisure club was high. Guests and members regularly requested towels for single use and no system was in place to discourage this or suggest alternatives like bringing personal towels. Despite this contributing to excessive water and energy consumption, there was no signage or guidance for guests preventing the issue. Similarly, there were no in-room prompts encouraging guests to reuse towels or opt out of daily housekeeping.

These oversights suggest missed opportunities to embed small nudges that guide behaviour without restricting choice which are widely advocated in sustainable hospitality literature (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). In-room prompts to reuse towels are among the most established, low-cost interventions in green hotel operations, with proven effectiveness in reducing laundry loads and water usage (Bohner and Schlüter, 2014). Their absence indicates a failure to adopt well-established practices, reducing the potential to meet corporate water-saving goals. This aligns with Ortiz-Barbachano's (2024) warning that the success of global strategies like Serve360 hinges on the consistency of local-level adoption. From an operational standpoint, failing to encourage towel reuse not only impacts sustainability but may also increase labour and energy costs, highlighting a critical area for improvement at the Gateshead hotel.

4.2 Waste Management

As of early 2024, the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead is certified Gold in The PLEDGE on Food Waste initiative, with an impressive score of 94%. This reflects a strong commitment to food waste minimisation, particularly within its Cast Iron Bar and Grill restaurant (PLEDGE on Food Waste, 2024). This globally recognised certification assesses and supports foodservice providers in reducing food waste through operational improvements, staff training, and customer engagement. The restaurant emphasises fresh, locally sourced ingredients and creative preparation. Social media posts later confirmed the hotel had achieved a 34% food waste reduction since certification (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2024). These developments highlight clear progress in reducing food-related waste.

The hotel's attainment of The PLEDGE on Food Waste (2024) certification aligns closely with global industry best practices and demonstrates how formal sustainability frameworks can effectively guide operational improvement. It supports Marriott's Serve360 targets around waste reduction (Marriott, 2025) and reinforces the literature suggesting third-party certifications increase accountability, stakeholder trust, and employee motivation (Nakaishi and Chapman, 2024; Blackman et al., 2015). However, certifications must be paired with genuine operational change to generate long-term environmental impact and credibility, rather than serve as greenwashing tools (Green Economy, 2024; Alyahia et al., 2024). The Delta Marriott's quantified 34% reduction and visible implementation of practices offer encouraging evidence of authentic progress. These insights illustrate how Marriott's global sustainability policies have been effectively implemented in this area.

During the observation, the researcher noted several waste reduction practices. One such initiative involved the integration of Winnow AI technology to monitor and minimise food waste in the kitchen (see appendix 2). Leftover food scraped from guests' plates in the restaurant was collected, weighed, and sent for composting. This process diverted waste from landfill and supported Marriott's Serve360 environmental targets.

Additionally, a first-in, first-out (FIFO) system was used for food storage. Clear labelling and strict rotation practices helped reduce spoilage and avoid overordering of ingredients (Food Standards Agency, 2025).

These findings reinforce existing research that identifies FIFO systems and composting as effective waste minimisation strategies in hospitality (PRM Waste Systems, 2024). Successful implementation of these requires consistency and staff commitment (Elkhwesky et al., 2024), which was demonstrated in the hotels by the clear operational routines observed in the kitchen on a day-to-day basis. This finding reinforces the value of clear procedures and managerial enforcement in creating sustainable foodservice environments and further highlights local success in embedding Marriott's corporate strategy.

To further reduce waste, leftover food as well as surplus food from events was repurposed into meals for staff in the staff canteen. While implementing a food redistribution system in the hospitality sector significantly reduces food waste (Fernández-López, 2025), the researcher noticed that several staff expressed discomfort, reporting they did not always know what was in the meals and often

preferred to bring their own food. This limited the initiative's effectiveness and may have undermined its sustainability goals through low uptake.

This finding reveals the tension between top-down sustainability initiatives and bottom-up staff engagement and reflects broader literature around internal resistance when sustainability efforts lack clarity or perceived benefits (Kotter's, 1996). The initiative's low uptake shows that even well-intentioned circular practices may falter without strong internal buy-in or clear communication strategies. This example highlights a key challenge associated with embedding Marriott's corporate sustainability strategies at the local hotel level.

Another area of food waste concern noted by the researcher was the self-service breakfast buffet, especially during busy weekends. Guests, particularly families with children, were observed to take more food than they consumed, leading to high volumes of waste. There were no visible interventions in place to address this, such as signage to encourage responsible consumption by linking waste to social impact (see appendix 1), as seen in other hotel chains.

The issue of buffet overconsumption echoes findings by The Sustainable Restaurant Association (2024) who identified breakfast buffets as a consistent source of food waste in hotels. They suggested that behavioural nudges such as portion reminders, social responsibility messages, or smaller serving dishes can significantly reduce buffet waste. The absence of these behavioural cues at Delta Marriott represents a missed opportunity to influence guest behaviour. Furthermore, this highlights the hotel's limited use of affective or educational tools, despite the emotional contagion potential of sustainability messaging noted in the literature (Tabatabaei, 2021;

Sustainability Directory, 2025) The lack of interventions in this area suggests partial implementation of Marriott's wider sustainability intentions and illustrates barriers to their full realisation at a local level.

4.3 Sustainable Materials and Packaging

The researcher observed that the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead had implemented several initiatives aimed at reducing reliance on single-use plastics, reflecting a broader industry shift toward environmentally responsible materials management. In guest rooms, refillable toiletry dispensers had replaced miniature plastic bottles, an increasingly standard practice across global hotel chains in response to legislative and consumer pressures (European Parliament, 2019). This not only reduces plastic waste but also streamlines operational costs associated with stock replenishment and disposal.

In public areas such as the restaurant and bar, a transition to paper straws, biodegradable cups, and fabric napkins was evident. These material substitutions demonstrate Marriott's operational responsiveness to its Serve360 commitment, particularly the goal of reducing environmental impact through product design and procurement. The presence of a water refill station in the lobby also encouraged sustainable guest behaviour, aligning with behavioural economics literature that underscores the importance of 'choice architecture' in promoting eco-friendly habits (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). Providing paper cups as an alternative showed an effort to balance inclusivity with environmental intent.

These practices are in line with emerging hospitality norms that emphasise circular material use, substitution of disposables, and guest empowerment as key

sustainability strategies (Bocken et al., 2021). Lifecycle analyses have shown that refillable systems and biodegradable materials significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and microplastic pollution compared to their single-use counterparts (Yadav and Nikalje, 2024). The lobby's water refill point functions not only as an amenity but as a visible signal of environmental values, reinforcing brand identity and prompting sustainable action among guests and staff (Audemard, 2025).

However, these advances were undermined by operational inconsistencies. Notably, plastic bottled water remained available for purchase in vending machines, directly contradicting Marriott's stated global objective to eliminate single-use plastics (Marriott Serve360, 2025). Moreover, sanitary products in public restrooms were not sourced from eco-certified or sustainable brands. These oversights suggest a gap between aspirational corporate policies and their practical implementation on-site, particularly in procurement decisions that are less visible to guests but still environmentally consequential.

This reflects a known challenge in hospitality sustainability: partial or phased policy execution at the property level, often driven by perceived cost, supply chain limitations, or lack of local accountability (Durani et al., 2024). It also supports the argument by Torelli et al. (2020) that inconsistent messaging across customer touchpoints can dilute the perceived authenticity of a brand's environmental commitments. Where sustainability is selectively applied, it risks appearing performative rather than embedded.

Furthermore, the limited expansion of sustainable procurement beyond guest-facing items points to an underdeveloped integration of environmental principles into core

operational routines. Research by Green Economy (2024) stresses that holistic sustainability requires consistent application across all consumables, not just those visible to guests. Failure to do so can diminish the reputational and environmental value of front-of-house initiatives.

In summary, while the Delta Marriott demonstrates clear progress in adopting sustainable materials, these efforts remain uneven and selectively applied. The property's practices indicate a commitment to Marriott's Serve360 goals but also expose the practical complexities of embedding corporate strategies into local operations. These findings directly inform the research question concerning the extent and effectiveness of sustainability implementation at the property level, revealing both commendable progress and critical gaps in execution. Addressing these inconsistencies could significantly enhance both the environmental outcomes and the credibility of Marriott's sustainability branding.

4.4 Staff Engagement and Internal Communication

Sustainability communication efforts targeting staff at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead were evident through environmental posters displayed in staff-only corridors (See appendix 3). While they served as visual nudges reminding staff of environmental objectives, their impact appeared limited by a lack of specificity and contextual relevance. Observational insights revealed that sustainability awareness was uneven across departments, housekeeping and kitchen staff demonstrated greater familiarity with waste sorting and reduction protocols, likely because these procedures were embedded within their daily operational tasks.

However, broader understanding of Marriott's sustainability strategy was low, and there were no observed formal training sessions, internal awareness campaigns, or structured team discussions relating to sustainability. As a result, staff engagement appeared informal, fragmented, and driven by compliance rather than commitment. Sustainability behaviours seemed to be embedded at the task level but were rarely framed as part of an overarching organisational value system. Consequently, many employees appeared to perceive sustainability initiatives as corporate directives rather than locally relevant practices.

This mirrors research by Breivik et al. (2020), who argue that without supportive workplace culture and targeted communication, employees may disengage from sustainability efforts, especially when these are presented top-down. Internal communication is not just about transmission of information but plays a critical role in shaping perceptions, fostering alignment with organisational values, and motivating voluntary participation in environmental practices (Sun et al., 2025). The absence of localised, participatory engagement mechanisms at the Delta Marriott suggests missed opportunities to internalise Marriott's sustainability ethos among staff.

The lack of structured sustainability training also echoes findings from Kim et al. (2017), who emphasise that employee training is a key predictor of environmental performance in the hospitality sector. Without regular, department-wide training or reinforcement, sustainability becomes procedural rather than cultural. This is problematic, as research indicates that staff who perceive sustainability as integrated into their organisational identity are more likely to demonstrate initiative and innovation in eco-friendly practices (Dumont, Shen and Deng, 2017).

Furthermore, employee engagement in sustainability can be strengthened through internal branding, where sustainability values are consistently communicated, modelled by leadership, and embedded into everyday rituals and narratives (Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010). In the case of the Delta Marriott, the absence of leadership-driven dialogue or recognition mechanisms, such as green champions, staff competitions, or feedback loops, limits the formation of a cohesive sustainability culture (Ketprapakorn and Kantabutra, 2022).

While task-specific awareness in operational departments suggests a degree of functional embedding, it cannot substitute for cross-departmental education and strategic alignment. This challenge is compounded by the risk of “decoupling,” where formal sustainability policies are adopted but not meaningfully integrated into organisational practice (Parrique et al., 2019). Although Marriott’s Serve360 goals may be formally embraced, inconsistent internal communication and a lack of employee co-creation reduce the strategy’s local impact and undermine its credibility.

4.5 External Recognition and Public Perception

Externally, the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead has taken steps to make its sustainability credentials visible to the public. In addition to being posted on social media, the Green Key and PLEDGE certifications are displayed on the property’s booking website alongside information on guest room carbon and water footprints, recycling availability, and eco-friendly amenities (Marriott, 2025). This transparency provides guests with environmentally relevant data and supports informed decision-making when booking. Additionally, social media posts highlighted and

encouraged guests to reuse bedding, refill water bottles, and be mindful of food waste (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2024a).

The hotel regularly shares sustainability content on its official Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Posts have highlighted initiatives such as zero-waste recipe content (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2025b), and the promotion of vegan menu options during Veganuary (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2025a). The Food Waste Action Week campaign and the promotion of a free zero-waste recipe e-book illustrate further attempts to involve guests and the wider public in sustainable practices (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2025c).

Despite these efforts, guest reviews on TripAdvisor and similar platforms make no mention of sustainability (TripAdvisor, 2025; Booking.com, 2025). Most online feedback focuses on cleanliness, comfort, and service quality, suggesting guests have little interest in the hotel's sustainability efforts. The researcher observed no visible cues, such as signages, digital screens, or in-room leaflets, informing guests of Marriott's environmental goals. Nevertheless, a recent poll conducted by the hotel indicated that 75% of guests were aware of its food waste initiatives (Delta Hotels Newcastle, 2024b), suggesting that communication strategies are reaching some guests even if these practices are not widely reflected in online reviews.

While the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead demonstrates tangible progress in implementing certain aspects of Marriott's Serve360 strategy, particularly in relation to waste reduction and environmental certification, several key pillars of the framework remain underdeveloped at the local level. Notably, there was limited evidence of engagement with the 'Nurture Our World' pillar, which emphasises

community partnerships and employee volunteering. No local initiatives, charity collaborations, or staff engagement in social impact programmes were identified during the research period. Similarly, the 'Empower Through Opportunity' and 'Welcome All and Advance Human Rights' pillars were not visibly embedded in daily operations, with little reference to staff diversity or local employment development. Furthermore, while the hotel has adopted back-of-house technologies to reduce food waste, guest-facing initiatives, such as visible recycling prompts, towel reuse encouragement, or sustainability signage, were inconsistent or absent, reflecting a gap in delivering on the guest engagement aspects. These findings suggest that while top-down policies offer a comprehensive framework, their successful translation into local practice requires deliberate adaptation, continuous staff engagement, and targeted initiatives that reflect both the spirit and structure of the Serve360 strategy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This study critically examined the implementation of Marriott's Serve360 sustainability strategy at the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead. Through a qualitative case study approach, combining document analysis, observational insights, and netnography, it explored how global sustainability policies are interpreted and applied in the UK hospitality context.

The first research question, "How effectively have Marriott's sustainability practices been implemented at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead?" was addressed using triangulated data. The findings indicate strong alignment with Serve360 in areas such as food waste reduction, energy efficiency, and environmental certification. The hotel has achieved Green Key certification and a Gold-level 94% score in The PLEDGE on Food Waste, underlining Marriott's environmental goals at the operational level.

Notable initiatives include reduction in food waste, surplus-based staff meals, and the promotion of sustainability through digital platforms, e-books, and social media. However, challenges persist, particularly around guest engagement and staff consistency. Observations highlighted inconsistent towel reuse and recycling practices, limited initiative visibility, and discomfort regarding surplus food redistribution, emphasising that sustainability is also a behavioural and cultural issue.

Despite visible environmental improvements, guest-facing sustainability remains underdeveloped. Online reviews rarely reference green practices, suggesting a disconnect between operational efforts and guest perception. Recycling participation

was inconsistent, reinforcing the idea that sustainable actions must be clearly communicated and embedded into the customer journey.

Resource efficiency efforts, including energy-saving fixtures and recycling facilities, have had mixed results. While the infrastructure exists, inconsistent application, unclear signage, and behavioural inertia limit their impact. This supports wider research showing that technical solutions require behavioural change strategies to be truly effective.

The second research question, “What are the key challenges and successes associated with embedding Marriott’s corporate sustainability strategies at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead?” revealed both progress and persistent barriers. Internal leadership and engagement in initiatives like Food Waste Action Week indicate a supportive organisational culture. However, communication gaps, particularly concerning surplus food use, led to staff discomfort, while maintenance issues detracted from sustainability objectives.

A recurring theme was the tension between commercial demands and sustainability ambitions. Operational constraints, guest expectations, and profitability targets often shape how global strategies are locally enacted. For instance, buffet waste reduction must be balanced against guest satisfaction and brand standards, echoing broader challenges in adapting corporate goals to site-specific realities.

Overall, while Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead demonstrates meaningful progress in environmental sustainability, effective implementation goes beyond certifications and policies. It requires continuous staff training, consistent

communication, visible guest engagement, and localised strategies that account for cultural, operational, and behavioural nuances.

This study affirms that sustainability is not static but a dynamic, evolving process that must adapt to people, systems, and settings. Although environmental goals have been partially realised, the broader Serve360 pillars, such as 'Nurture Our World' and 'Empower Through Opportunity', remain underrepresented. The absence of community partnerships and staff volunteering suggests social sustainability is yet to be embedded.

This finding reinforces the need for local adaptation to encompass not only environmental but also social and community-oriented dimensions. The following chapter provides practical recommendations for enhancing visibility, inclusivity, and impact, and for ensuring that global sustainability ambitions are translated into meaningful, measurable local action.

In conclusion, while the Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead has made commendable strides in implementing the environmental elements of Serve360, sustainability will only reach its full potential when it is fully integrated into the guest experience, staff culture, and wider community engagement. This dissertation offers insights to support Marriott, and the wider hospitality industry, in bridging the gap between corporate ambition and local implementation.

Based on the detailed findings of this study, three key recommendations emerge to enhance the implementation of Marriott's sustainability strategy at a local level. They address the core challenges identified and provide practical, actionable strategies to improve guest engagement, staff engagement and food waste practices.

1 Enhance Guest Engagement through Communication and Behavioural Nudges

The research clearly highlighted that guests are not meaningfully engaged with the hotel's sustainability efforts, despite numerous initiatives being implemented behind the scenes. To address this, the hotel should adopt a more strategic and visible approach to guest communication, underpinned by behavioural science principles. In-room prompts encouraging towel, and linen reuse should be consistently displayed, accompanied by simple explanations of the environmental benefits. Similarly, clearly marked recycling stations with easy-to-understand instructions should be introduced in both guest rooms and communal spaces.

In the restaurant and buffet areas, smaller serving plates, gentle reminders about avoiding food waste, and engaging signage, can help reduce over-serving. These nudges are non-intrusive but can subtly guide behaviour without compromising the guest experience. The hotel could also introduce interactive digital elements in the lobby, such as screens or QR codes linking to live sustainability metrics or project updates, showcasing achievements such as food waste reduction or local partnerships.

To reinforce engagement after departure, the hotel might include sustainability highlights in follow-up communications such as thank-you emails. These could mention the guest's contribution to recent sustainability milestones or invite feedback on green initiatives.

2 Implement Structured Staff Training and Strengthen Internal Communication

Staff play a crucial role in translating Marriott's sustainability strategy into everyday practices. While there were positive examples of staff involvement in sustainability activities, these were unevenly distributed across departments. To improve consistency, the hotel should implement a structured training programme that is tailored to each team's operational responsibilities. For example, the food and beverage team could receive training on surplus food handling, waste monitoring tools like Winnow, and responsible sourcing. Meanwhile, housekeeping teams might focus on energy-saving routines, eco-friendly cleaning protocols, and how to explain sustainability choices to guests.

This training should not be a one-off event, but rather part of an ongoing professional development plan, revisited at regular intervals and embedded into induction programmes for new hires. Short, practical sessions, delivered in person or digitally, can improve both awareness and confidence. Moreover, staff should understand not just the actions required, but the reasons behind them. This will ensure they feel included in, rather than instructed by the hotel's sustainability journey.

Internal communication channels also need to be strengthened. Monthly sustainability briefings or dashboards shared with staff could highlight progress, such as reductions in waste or successful guest campaigns. Visual displays in staff areas and team-led sustainability champions could further build internal momentum. Finally, recognising and rewarding staff contributions, whether through verbal praise, team challenges, or small incentives, can encourage a sense of ownership and pride in sustainability efforts.

3 Localise Marriott's Sustainability Strategy through Community Initiatives

While the hotel has successfully implemented elements of the Serve360 strategy relating to environmental operations, other pillars, particularly those involving community impact and inclusive employment, remain underrepresented. To address this, the hotel should develop targeted initiatives that bring these broader commitments into local relevance.

First, the hotel could build partnerships with nearby schools, colleges, charities, or social enterprises. Opportunities for collaboration may include hosting sustainability workshops, supporting fundraising events, or offering staff time for volunteering. Community clean-up days, educational sessions, or supporting local food banks with surplus ingredients are just a few examples of practical, low-cost ways to enhance social value.

Second, the hotel could strengthen its commitment to inclusive employment by working with local organisations that support underrepresented or marginalised groups. This might involve offering job shadowing or apprenticeships or engaging with local employment schemes. Internally, the hotel could also promote a more inclusive culture by forming staff networks or mentorship programmes, ensuring leadership pathways are open and accessible to all employees.

These locally focused actions help connect the hotel more meaningfully to its surroundings and demonstrate a genuine commitment to social sustainability. By actively participating in the life of the community, the Delta Marriott can embody the full spectrum of their Serve360 framework, not just in policy, but in practice.

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Appendices:

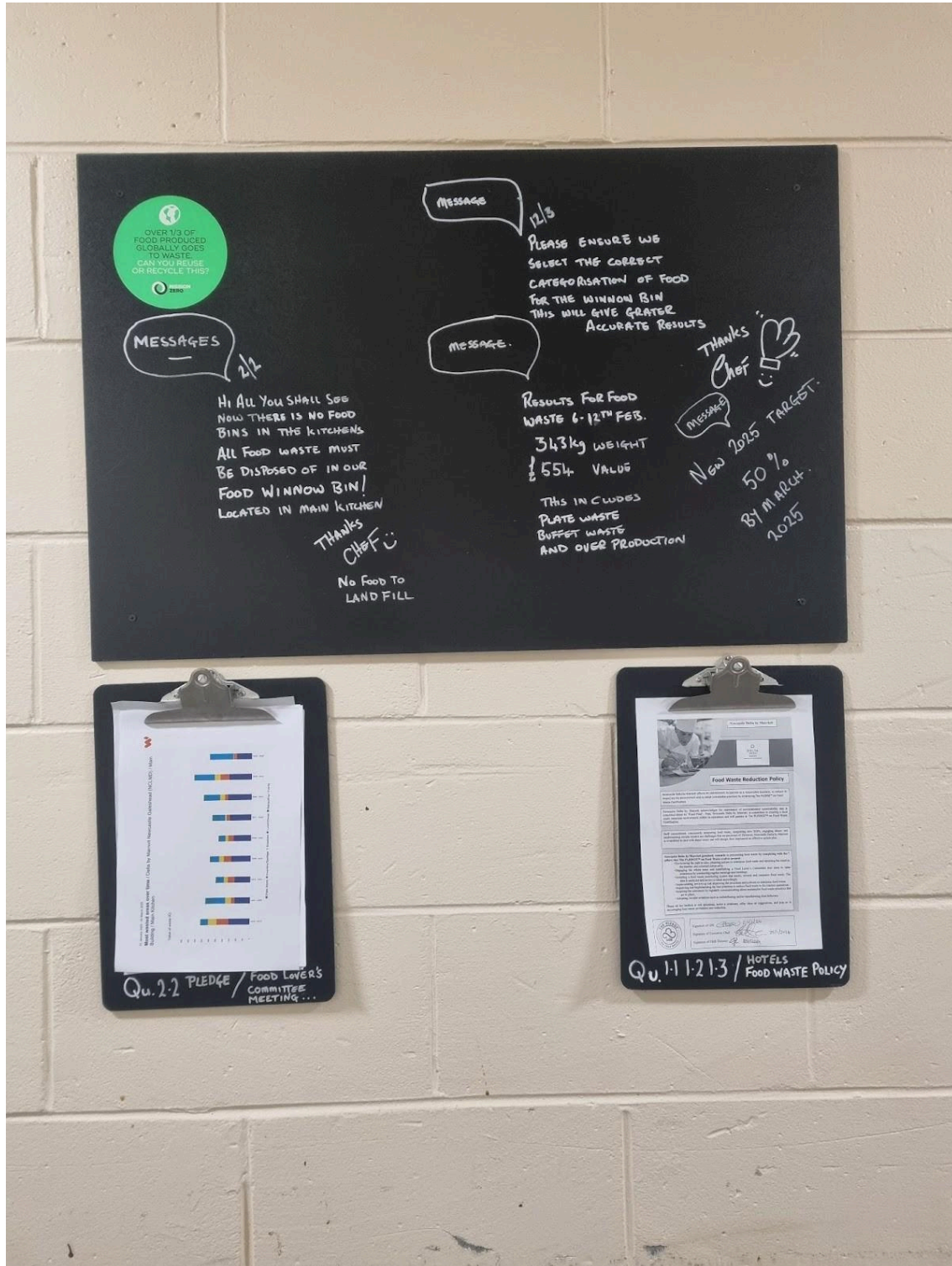
Appendix 1:

A simple but impactful signage to encourage responsible consumption by linking waste to social impact. (Source: Ocean Beach Hotel)



Appendix 2:

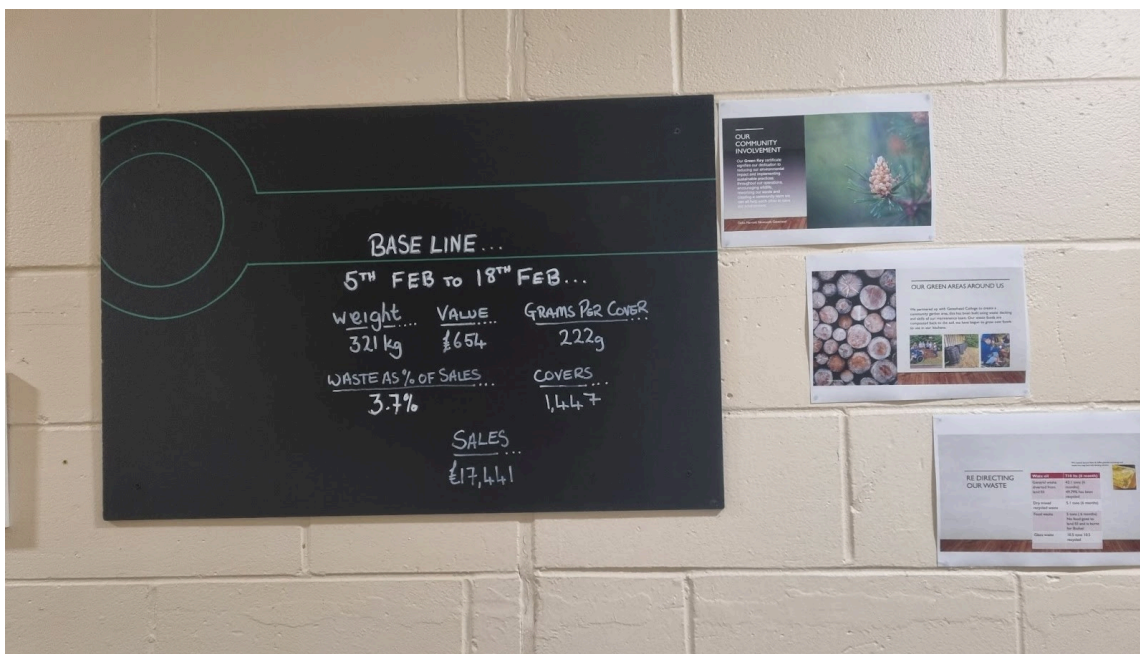
Introduction of Winnow AI technology in 2024 at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead.
(Source: Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead)

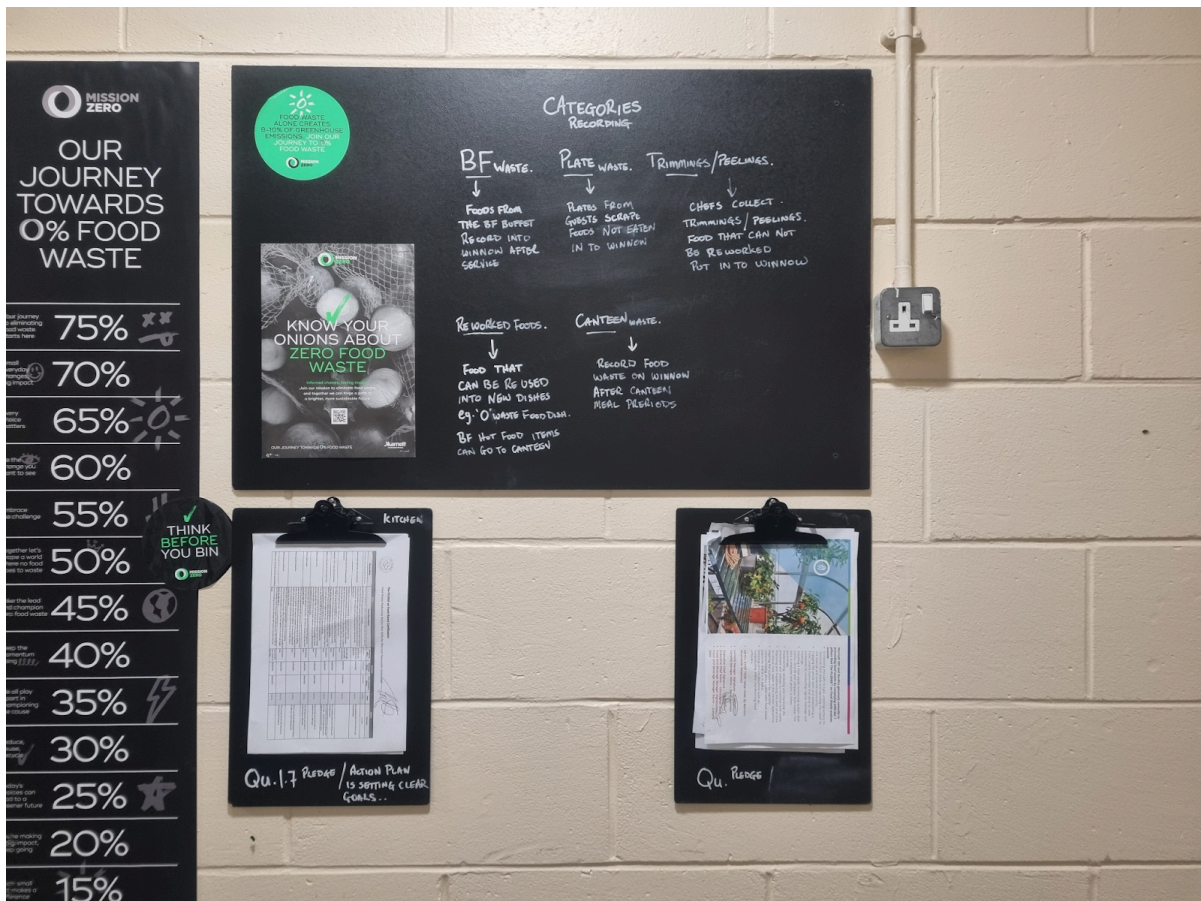


Appendix 3:

Sustainability communication efforts targeting staff were evident through environmental posters displayed in staff-only corridors at Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead.

(Source: Delta Marriott Newcastle Gateshead)





REPORT FEB...
OUR TO IMPROVE WASTE TEL

ZERO FOOD WASTE REPORT YTD
THIS HAS BEEN SHARED WITH OUR SUPPLIERS...
Qu. 1-18

MISSION ZERO

OUR JOURNEY TOWARDS 0% FOOD WASTE

Your journey to eliminating food waste starts here

- 75%
- Small everyday changes by impact
- 70%
- Every choice matters
- 65%
- Be the change you want to see
- 60%
- Embrace the challenge
- 55%
- Together we'll shape a world where no food goes to waste
- 50%
- Take the lead and champion zero food waste
- 45%
- Keep the momentum going
- 40%
- We all play a part in championing the cause
- 35%
- Reclaim, Reuse, Recycle
- 30%
- Today's choices can lead to a greater future
- 25%
- You're making a big impact, keep going
- 20%
- Each small act makes a difference
- 15%
- You're bright, a path leads to a sustainable future
- 10%
- Almost there
- 5%

%

Marriott

FOOD WASTE
ALONE CREATES 8-10% OF GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS. A 1% JOURNEY TO 0% FOOD WASTE

KNOW YOUR ONIONS ABOUT ZERO FOOD WASTE

OUR JOURNEY TOWARDS 0% FOOD WASTE

KITCHEN

Qu. 1-7 PLEDGE / ACTION PLAN IS SETTING CLEAR GOALS...

CATEGORY RECORD

BF WASTE.
↓
FOODS FROM THE BF BUFFET RECORDED INTO WASTE AFTER SERVICE

PLATE WASTE
↓
PLATES FROM GUESTS SO FOODS NOT IN TO WASTE

REWORKED FOODS.
↓
FOOD THAT CAN BE RE USED INTO NEW DISHES Eg. O'WASTE FOOD DASH.
BF HOT FOOD ITEMS CAN GO TO CANTEN

CANTEN
↓
REWORKED WASTE AFTER MEAL