Review

Challenges and Solutions for Environmental Sustainability in the Hospitality Sector

Ajay Khatter [ID]

William Angliss Institute, Melbourne 3000, Australia; ajay.khatter@angliss.edu.au

Abstract: This study aims to investigate the process by which hospitality organisations can initiate their pursuit of environmental sustainability, utilising a literature review as the primary research method. This study explores the notion of environmental sustainability within the context of the hospitality industry and its diverse range of stakeholders. This study aims to identify the challenges encountered by the industry in attaining sustainability goals and proposes potential strategies for fostering a sustainable future. In recent decades, there has been a notable increase in industrial activity, including within the hospitality industry, which has occurred without consideration for environmental consequences, consequently leading to environmental degradation. The issue of environmental sustainability is a matter of concern for stakeholders in the hospitality industry, and a comprehensive understanding of its long-term implications needs to be improved. The significance of environmental sustainability is growing in tandem with the expansion of the global population, industrial activity, and the observed phenomena of global warming, environmental degradation, and climate change. In recent years, there has been a notable endeavour by hospitality enterprises to minimise the ecological consequences of their operations on the surrounding environment. This research will investigate the obstacles to the hospitality sector achieving environmental sustainability. It will also propose novel strategies to enhance guest service and contentment, bolster the organisation's reputation, and foster fresh revenue streams and competitive advantage. The implications of the study's findings extend to various stakeholders within the hospitality industry, including businesses, guests, and other relevant parties, as well as the broader environmental context.

Keywords: environment; sustainability; hospitality industry; stakeholders; policy

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has significantly influenced the global environment. The hospitality industry is characterised by its significant consumption of energy and natural resources to cater to the needs of its clientele [1]. The hospitality industry is confronted with two significant challenges, namely the impacts of global warming and the subsequent reduction in biodiversity [2]. Due to the inherent unpredictability of future events and the dynamic nature of the climate, evaluating the potential hazards, feasibility, and financial implications associated with operating a hospitality enterprise poses considerable challenges [3]. Business entities possess a comprehensive understanding of the environmental consequences of delivering their goods and services, and they acknowledge their obligation to contribute to mitigating this phenomenon. This assertion applies to enterprises across various sectors, including the hospitality industry [4].

Over the last decade, there has been much emphasis on "going greener". Many of these practices are now ingrained in the collective psyche. It is becoming increasingly common for hospitality businesses to use low- or non-toxic cleaning and pest control products and reduce the enormous waste generated daily in their establishments [5]. These tactics have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to increase profits for operators who apply them correctly. Many changes are taking place in today's businesses because of the fast pace of the hospitality industry. The demand for high-quality, consistent products in a

welcoming and attentive environment is more significant than ever. Still, operators are also beginning to see that they have greater responsibility. To meet customers' expectations, they must provide a high-quality, consistent product in a welcoming and attentive atmosphere.

Despite abundant guidance and recommendations, the hospitality industry still exhibits a sluggish pace in fully integrating environmentally sustainable practices into its daily operations [6]. Numerous factors impede the ability of the hospitality industry to undertake environmentally beneficial practices. Daily management of a small business can be a strenuous task for most sole proprietors and individuals who own businesses in the hospitality industry. Small hospitality business owners need more understanding of the long-term implications of non-toxic cleaning chemicals, effective waste management practices, and the financial benefits of investing in energy-efficient equipment [7]. The prevailing opinion among operators is that expedient solutions are more favourable than long-term benefits. Small business owners consistently express apprehension regarding the cash flow of their respective companies, as it significantly influences their operational practices [8].

There is a prevalent misconception that adopting environmentally friendly practices incurs higher costs. In most instances, this phenomenon can be attributed to a breakdown in communication. Numerous operators need more time or willingness to acquire knowledge in this area, as the tangible outcomes are less promptly discernible than for other challenges they encounter. The primary impediments to achieving environmental sustainability encompass constraints in terms of time, financial resources, and available resources. The main factors that drive environmental sustainability include financial gains, owners' interests, customer satisfaction, marketing advantages, and a commitment to environmental protection [9].

2. Literature Review

This study's research question pertains to "how hospitality organisations can initiate their pursuit of environmental sustainability, effectively address the obstacles encountered, and successfully implement viable solutions". This study aims to address this question through the utilisation of a literature review methodology.

As Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, emphasised, for the tourism, hospitality, and travel industry, sustainability is important because:

"The environment as nature's capital is the greatest single resource for tourism, and this provides a powerful incentive for the industry to protect it. It makes green tourism a necessity for the industry, not merely a fringe issue too often receiving more lip service than real commitment. Yet there is within the industry a disturbing tendency towards what we call 'green washing'. This clearly undermines global efforts to protect the environment on which tourism, indeed all life, depends. The industry must integrate 'green' as an absolute necessity for its own future and the responsibilities it has for the entire human future. Simultaneously, this new travelism vision and its commitment to action must be integrated into the mainstream movement for radical global change" [10].

Over millennia, the actions of humanity have exerted a discernible impact on the Earth's ecosystem. However, the adverse outcomes resulting from these actions, coupled with increasing apprehension regarding climate change, global warming, and environmental issues, have propelled the notion of sustainable development to the forefront during the past twenty years [11].

The interplay between the three dimensions of sustainability, namely social, economic, and environmental, has been a subject of scholarly enquiry. However, it is worth noting that the focus on social and economic sustainability has been more pronounced compared to environmental sustainability, as evidenced by existing literature [12]. There exists scepticism among specific individuals regarding the ability of sustainability to fully realise its stated objectives, owing to the correlation between population growth, heightened economic activity, and subsequent environmental degradation. The interplay between these three dimensions is inevitable due to the limited availability of the earth's natural

resources. The present generation must take measures to guarantee the availability of these resources for future generations [13,14].

Organisations have influenced the societal dimension of sustainability by establishing employment opportunities, providing employee training and education, enhancing working conditions, and engaging in various social initiatives [15]. The increasing growth of the economy has led to a heightened recognition of the economic dimension of sustainability. The economic dimension has garnered significant attention due to its positive impact on societal happiness, well-being, and social welfare, resulting in an enhanced quality of life [16]. Significant investments have been made in infrastructure, manufacturing, and the acquisition of plant and machinery. This has facilitated the achievement of the company's primary objective, which is to generate increased financial returns for its proprietors and shareholders. Economic activity has contributed to the enhancement of social sustainability, creating additional employment opportunities and developing a more proficient labour force [17]. Throughout history, human societies have actively utilised and discarded natural resources and waste materials to enhance the stability of their economies and societies [18]. The abovementioned activities have resulted in environmental pollution, particularly regarding air quality, and have disrupted the intricate climate systems crucial for sustaining life. Our current consequences result from our failure to achieve a harmonious coexistence among the three pillars of sustainability [2]. In such circumstances, a range of environmental concerns may arise, including climate change, the escalation of sea levels, erratic weather patterns, deforestation, the decline of biodiversity, the depletion of resources, the generation of toxic and persistent waste, increased pollution, global warming, and the potential loss of natural habitats. It is widely believed that environmental preservation and economic growth objectives are inherently incompatible [2]. To effectively address climate change and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, it is imperative to prioritise environmental sustainability over economic and social sustainability [19]. To achieve sustainability, these three dimensions must operate together and exhibit interdependence [20].

Although the presence of hospitality guests may not directly contribute to environmental harm, it is essential to acknowledge that the products and services provided by the hospitality industry can potentially have adverse effects on the environment [21]. The hospitality industry must debunk the misconceptions surrounding the costliness of green operations and the perceived lack of environmental concern among customers [22]. Adopting environmentally sustainable practices in the hospitality industry may only sometimes be advantageous, as it often necessitates substantial financial investments. There may need to be more than the potential cost savings from adopting environmentally friendly practices to compensate for the initial expenses [23]. If producing environmentally friendly goods and services incurs higher costs, it may be deemed economically unviable, particularly if the organisation needs more resources, time, and effort to implement such practices [24].

R. Edward Freeman proposed and discussed stakeholder theory for the first time [25]. The stakeholder theory is a theoretical framework in management and business ethics that delineates the principles and guidelines for operating a business by societal norms and regulations. The achievement of this objective is facilitated by taking into account ethical considerations about the responsibilities of stakeholders [26]. Stakeholder theory posits that for an organisation to achieve sustained success, it is imperative to prioritise the concerns and interests of its stakeholders. The interplay between an organisation's actions, objectives, and policies and the interests of its stakeholders can result in reciprocal influence. According to the theoretical framework, stakeholders are defined as the individuals who form the collective body of an organisation. The organisation's primary goal should be to effectively address and accommodate these stakeholders' interests, needs, and perspectives [27].

Stakeholders possess the potential to contribute to the organisation's pursuit of environmental sustainability by emphasising the importance of the matter and acknowledging how environmental issues directly affect their interests. In contemporary business practises, enterprises are conventionally operated to maximise value for shareholders and investors [28]. However, it has become imperative for businesses to acknowledge the

environment as a crucial stakeholder in their operations. Companies are more inclined to adopt environmentally sustainable practices when they recognise the manifold advantages associated with such measures, including improved image and branding, a competitive edge, cost reduction, heightened productivity, adherence to regulatory requirements, and diminished waste and resource utilisation. The various stakeholders, encompassing investors, shareholders, employees, and customers, derive advantages from this [29]. The pursuit of environmental sustainability is currently acknowledged as an imperative and commendable objective, as it establishes a framework for organisations to be answerable to their stakeholders and assume accountability for their conduct [30]. Ultimately, the crux lies in modifying one's behaviour and cognitive framework. To enhance the industry's environmental sustainability, all relevant stakeholders must collaborate and foster an evolving relationship with the owners [2].

Business enterprises have the potential to adopt environmentally conscious practices, thereby displaying the advantages of employing sustainable strategies and consistently implementing innovative techniques and technologies. Implementing alterations to the business model has proven to be a challenging endeavour. While notable achievements have been made over the past ten years, it is evident that further advancements are still required. Progressive hospitality providers must exemplify that adopting a more sustainable business model can yield profitability and gratification [31]. The hospitality industry significantly emphasises environmental considerations, particularly water and energy consumption, and waste management. The hospitality sector is anticipated to experience significant growth shortly, with the potential for accelerated exponential expansion. It is imperative for businesses to carefully evaluate the enduring ramifications of their activities on the natural environment, even when pursuing immediate financial gains. To mitigate its environmental footprint, the industry must embrace ecologically sustainable practices while delivering satisfactory customer service, ensuring customer contentment, and fulfilling other stakeholder obligations [32].

Ensuring environmental sustainability has become imperative for businesses operating in the contemporary era, particularly within the hospitality sector. Companies globally are transitioning towards adopting environmentally sustainable practices in their business operations. Environmental issues encompass a broad spectrum of concerns, from localised to worldwide, necessitating diverse approaches for their mitigation and resolution. A global initiative currently is to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, address climate change, and advocate for clean and sustainable energy alternatives [16]. Local concerns, such as soil erosion, water management, soil quality, and air and water pollution, can be addressed locally rather than globally.

Sustainability emerges as a paramount concern in contemporary global affairs. The hospitality industry has historically exerted a substantial environmental impact due to its high consumption of energy and water, extensive procurement of items, and waste generation [33]. In the hospitality industry, implementing sustainable practices can enhance customer satisfaction and augment the probability of repeat patronage. In addition to enhancing environmental conditions, the practice of ecological stewardship has a positive impact on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth marketing.

The tourism and hospitality sectors are widely believed to exert a detrimental influence on the environment, primarily through the depletion of natural resources. The utilisation of significant quantities of natural resources, such as water, energy, and forests, is observed. Moreover, it produces substantial waste and contributes to atmospheric pollution [34]. The hospitality industry has the potential to contribute to societal well-being through its efforts to address environmental issues and eliminate superfluous and inefficient practices, in addition to promoting its business interests. The stability of their business and the global environment will be enhanced. The imperative for companies operating in the hospitality industry to achieve success has been underscored by the growing importance of environmental, economic, and social responsibility [20].

The hospitality industry's extensive utilisation of resources and waste generation has resulted in a significant and enduring record of environmental degradation related to water and energy consumption. Electricity is essential for hospitality businesses, supporting heating and cooling systems, lighting infrastructure, and fuel-related processes. Water is an essential resource for many everyday tasks, encompassing personal hygiene, food preparation, sanitation, and laundering (as well as irrigation, sanitation, and upkeep). Various items such as paper, batteries, light bulbs, furniture, equipment, and appliances are all significant contributors to the waste disposed of by individuals. In alternative terms, it can be stated that the travel and hospitality sectors have consistently exerted a substantial ecological influence due to their extensive dependence on energy and water utilisation [35–37].

The tourism and hospitality industries exhibit a complex interplay between environmental quality and tourism. Individuals who utilise various establishments, such as hotels, resorts, restaurants, and airlines, have the potential to contribute to environmental pollution in some manner [38]. The presence of visitors and the utilisation of mass transit, such as aeroplanes and cruise ships, can harm local and natural attractions, thereby posing negative consequences for these destinations. It may accelerate the depletion of environmental resources at a rate exceeding their natural replenishment capacity [39].

There is a higher likelihood that customers will make purchases from businesses that prioritise environmental sustainability. In light of the growing awareness regarding the environmental consequences of their operations, businesses must adopt more ecologically sustainable practices. Implementing environmentally friendly practices within the hospitality industry can contribute to preserving the environment and enhancing the establishment's credibility among its guests [40]. This situation presents an optimal scenario for all parties involved.

3. Analysis, Discussion, and Recommendations

The initial stage involves formulating an environmental sustainability statement of purpose or policy, displaying the hospitality industry's commitment to environmental concerns and its intention to contribute towards their resolution. The implementation of robust policies can effectively contribute to the maintenance of sustainable environmental practices. Business leaders and managers must perceive environmental stewardship as an intrinsic component of the industry's business model and mission rather than a secondary consideration. They must comprehend the significance and value of sustainable operations through a commitment to long-term investment in such practices. A change in perspectives among operators has occurred due to increased awareness of environmental concerns and individuals' knowledge of potential actions to mitigate environmental impact [31].

An enhanced rapport among stakeholders is a pivotal catalyst for stimulating environmental initiatives and practices. Adopting a comprehensive approach towards achieving environmental sustainability is imperative to ensure that various stakeholders, including the environment, hotel guests, owners, shareholders, managers, corporate offices, staff, and financial returns, can all derive advantages from such efforts. This goal can be accomplished through the collaborative efforts of all relevant stakeholders. Stakeholders within the hospitality industry may potentially contribute to the organisation's efforts in enhancing its environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by acknowledging the significance of environmental concerns and recognising their direct impact on the stakeholders themselves [2]. Traditionally oriented towards maximising shareholder and investor interests, businesses are now compelled to acknowledge the environment as a crucial stakeholder. Companies are more inclined to adopt environmentally sustainable practices when recognising the manifold advantages of such initiatives. These benefits include improved image and branding, a competitive edge, cost reduction, heightened productivity, adherence to regulatory requirements, and diminished waste and resource utilisation [41]. The statement above posits that various stakeholders, such as investors,

shareholders, employees, and customers, derive advantages from a particular situation or circumstance.

Some hospitality guests may opt out of engaging in sustainability practices because they believe these practices do not enhance their overall experience and satisfaction, which are key factors they consider when selecting a hospitality organisation and that they actively seek [42]. Therefore, it is imperative for hospitality organisations to adopt environmentally sustainable practices that actively promote their engagement. Businesses have the option to provide financial incentives to guests or propose donations to charitable organisations as a means of motivating guest engagement in their environmentally sustainable initiatives. There is a necessity to promote guest engagement in environmental initiatives, wherein guests are expected to desire environmentally sustainable practices from hotels and assume personal accountability for their actions. One potential strategy for mitigating this issue involves providing guests with comprehensive information regarding the organisation's sustainability initiatives and the underlying justifications for implementing them. When guests are provided with information regarding the various environmental sustainability initiatives, they may not perceive a slight decrease in the comfort level experienced because of their active participation in promoting sustainability.

The careful consideration of environmental sustainability is crucial to yield positive outcomes for the environment, as well as various stakeholders such as guests, owners and shareholders, managers and staff, and financial performance. Although green initiatives and practices have positive environmental impacts, they can potentially result in higher business operating costs, which may subsequently be transferred to consumers. Business enterprises that aspire to positively influence environmental sustainability may reduce their profit margins or transfer the increased operational expenses to their clientele. This scenario exemplifies the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in addressing environmental degradation and effecting positive change. These stakeholders encompass guests, investors, owners, and shareholders [2].

Stakeholders should be educated with the concept that environmental sustainability is a commendable and imperative objective, as it establishes a sense of responsibility for organisations towards their stakeholders and undertakings. Solutions may only sometimes be diminutive and uncomplicated, but their complexity is often mitigated when motivated [43]. Ultimately, the crux lies in modifying one's behaviour and mindset. To enhance the hospitality industry's environmental sustainability, all relevant parties must collaborate and foster an evolving relationship with owners [44].

An essential factor contributing to the effectiveness of environmental sustainability initiatives in staff-intensive hospitality establishments is the implementation of a comprehensive awareness and education programme. This programme aims to equip employees at all hierarchical levels with a deep comprehension of the underlying principles behind environmental sustainability. Furthermore, it emphasises the significance of their individual contributions in mitigating the environmental impact resulting from the operational activities of a hospitality business. The successful implementation of workplace change is contingent upon employees' active engagement and involvement, as their participation is contingent upon comprehending the purpose and rationale behind said change.

The efficacy of environmental sustainability initiatives is contingent upon the comprehensive comprehension of their underlying rationale and the recognition among all employees of how their contributions can effectively alleviate ecological impacts. Employees' engagement in organisational change is contingent upon their comprehensive understanding of the underlying rationale for the change. Furthermore, the active involvement of employees in the change process necessitates a thorough comprehension of the reasons mentioned above [38]. To truly demonstrate their dedication to their mission, hospitality enterprises must possess the capability and willingness to disseminate their commitment and organisational culture about sustainability. Recruiting and training individuals with a congruent mindset can facilitate the alignment between an organisation's culture and actions with its values. Involving employees in a discourse regarding environ-

mental sustainability represents a straightforward and cost-effective endeavour that has the potential to generate substantial returns on investment [45].

The hospitality sector should proactively tackle environmental concerns and demonstrate leadership by embracing ecologically sustainable practices. Organisations deficient in the necessary resources or expertise to actively participate in environmental sustainability can effectively address this issue by obtaining certification [46]. Environmental certification is a discretionary process that entails the adoption of environmental guidelines by a company, whereby it elects to conform to predetermined practices set forth by a certification agency. Certification programmes typically incorporate a visual representation, commonly called an "ecolabel," which identifies products and services that have fulfilled the specified criteria. This form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) enables businesses to display their dedication to mitigating the adverse environmental consequences of their activities or operations through voluntary compliance with externally defined and quantifiable objectives. Numerous companies opt for environmental certification schemes to offer their clientele an ethically good product or service, project an image of corporate responsibility, enhance relationships with stakeholders, and ultimately augment profits, thereby attaining a competitive edge. There are several benefits associated with the implementation of a certification programme. Public spaces can exhibit ecolabels to display to visitors that their offerings and operations have undergone external verification, thereby signifying the company's dedication to environmental sustainability through implementing optimal methods.

Hospitality industry associations comprehensively understand the industry's operational aspects and can provide valuable assistance to businesses needing more resources. Industry associations have the potential to enhance the accomplishment of environmental sustainability by developing an awareness and education initiative that imparts knowledge to proprietors and other relevant parties regarding ecological issues and how their contributions can be utilised to alleviate these concerns [47]. One potential solution to address these issues is to engage hospitality business owners in assessing investments and evaluating returns on investment resulting from energy and other operational cost reductions. The achievement of this cognitive transformation can be facilitated through the process of educating proprietors and stakeholders to perceive these measures as investments rather than expenditures. The attainment of both intangible and tangible advantages can be observed, including but not limited to the facilitation of environmental sustainability efforts and the expansion of market share.

Furthermore, they can assist in industry certification programmes. Industry associations can play a significant role in formulating an environmental sustainability statement of purpose or policy, displaying the hospitality industry's commitment to environmental concerns and its desire to contribute to their resolution. Implementing robust policies can uphold and maintain environmentally sustainable practices [48].

4. Practical and Theoretical Implications

The conclusions and observations presented in this article may provide valuable insights for hospitality industry professionals involved in decision-making processes. When businesses possess a deeper understanding of the environmental sustainability of the hospitality industry, they will be empowered to embrace and implement a greater number of sustainable practices. Various initiatives may be undertaken to mitigate waste, minimise energy and water consumption, enhance recycling efforts, and promote environmentally responsible practices among businesses. This article has the potential to provide recommendations for policy modifications. The findings of this study possess potential utility for lawmakers and governmental entities, as they could inform the development of legislation and financial incentives aimed at promoting environmentally responsible practices among hospitality businesses.

The primary objective of this article is to enhance conceptual clarity, identify prevailing patterns and trajectories, and facilitate greater comprehension of the subject matter for

individuals engaged in sustainability and hospitality. This article aimed to elucidate various strategies through which enterprises operating within the hospitality sector can effectively contribute to environmental sustainability. These factors encompass individuals' behaviour, their treatment of the environment, and their approach to various tasks. This research endeavour has the potential to elucidate the primary factors that exert significant influence on and impede the adoption of sustainable practices within the sector. This article attempted to propose theoretical expansions and modifications by synthesising existing information previously disseminated within the field.

5. Conclusions

In addition to safeguarding the planet's valuable natural resources, adopting environmentally sustainable practices can enhance the reputation and standing of a hospitality business within the community while yielding financial benefits by reducing long-term operating costs [41]. If a corporation endeavours to environmental consciousness, it ought to possess an articulated environmental policy that directs its endeavours towards advancing environmental sustainability. This policy should exemplify a solid dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainability principles. To exemplify a dedication to this notion, hospitality establishments must formulate a purpose or policy statement about environmental sustainability. To achieve sustainability, hospitality organisations must prioritise their needs while preserving the needs of the future. The integration of sustainability into the daily operations of businesses should be regarded as a strategic marketing approach. Nevertheless, such an event is infrequent in the contemporary hospitality business landscape. The treatment of environmental sustainability should not be limited to a mere public relations exercise. To effectively halt and reverse environmental degradation, organisational managers must demonstrate a sincere and intentional commitment towards addressing this issue [20].

According to existing research, the hospitality industry exhibits relatively higher levels of pollution generation and non-renewable resource consumption than other sectors. Consequently, environmental discourse is less likely to prioritise it [27]. A multitude of minor hospitality operations consumes negligible quantities of energy, water, food, and paper, while concurrently generating minimal pollution levels in the form of smoke, odour, noise, and chemical contaminants. When aggregated, these individual, autonomous operations significantly influence the global environment. The issue pertains to persuading hospitality businesses, predominantly small independent establishments, to prioritise environmental management. The combined influence of consumer pressure groups, legislative measures, and the potential financial benefits of waste reduction may serve as catalysts for businesses to prioritise environmental management. Given the prevailing focus on overarching universal incentives and the inherent limitations of implementing environmental sustainability measures on a smaller scale, it becomes imperative to analyse and address the issue of environmental sustainability within the context of the hospitality industry. Implementing environmental sustainability at a micro-level is crucial for achieving success at a macro-level and generating favourable outcomes. It is imperative for small hospitality businesses and industry associations to actively endorse and engage in research endeavours aimed at identifying optimal strategies and approaches that can be effectively implemented to promote environmental sustainability. By doing so, these entities can effectively cater to the demands and expectations of environmentally conscious stakeholders. An opportunity exists to contribute to the existing body of knowledge utilised by the hospitality industry. This study has examined the advantages of engaging in activities promoting environmental sustainability. This study has shed light on both the discernible and less conspicuous advantages.

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