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Sustainable travelling: A case study of Green hotel

Maslina Resort in Hvar

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Abstract:

This research is about green marketing and how it pertains to the hotel industry. Research has shown that the world is moving towards more sustainable living. It has led many industries to consider operating within the sphere of sustainability. This research investigates how hotels have used green marketing to boost customer patronage and show their dedication to environmental protection by providing sustainable environments to meet the needs of that growing segment (customers that are environmentally friendly) of the market. The hotel industry is an industry that needs to be improved when it comes to sustainability since the sector is responsible for a significant amount of waste and must be improved to achieve the sustainable development goals set out by the United Nations. This paper also looks at the adverse effects of green marketing in hotels and organizations that have devised means to curb these harmful effects. This case study focuses specifically on the Maslina resort in Hvar and its strategies for sustainability and the environment.

Resumo:

Este case de estudo desenvolve-se em torno de uma abordagem sobre marketing verde (green marketing) no contexto da indústria hoteleira que, de acordo com estudos recentes, procura adotar práticas de gestão sustentável. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a implementação de práticas de marketing verde na hotelaria através das quais as empresas do sector procuram conquistar o apoio dos públicos e mostrar a sua dedicação à proteção ambiental. A hotelaria é responsável por uma pesada pegada ecológica pelo que deve implementar ações concretas que permitam contribuir para, de forma ativa, atingir as metas de desenvolvimento sustentável estabelecidas pelas Nações Unidas. Estas questões são analisadas através do caso do resort Maslina em Hvar, na Croácia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of "green marketing" emerged in the late 1980s (Peattie and Crane, 2005) and described an organization's efforts at designing, promoting, pricing, and distributing products that will not harm the environment (Pride and Ferrell, 1993). Welford (2020) also defined it as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying the requirements of customers and society profitably and sustainably. This concept stems from a market environment where companies face limited natural resources while individuals and organizations have unlimited needs and want (Polonsky, 1994).

Green marketing ensures that consumers are satisfied using these resources, but simultaneously, the sales organization's objectives are achieved (Polonsky, 1994). The evolution of green marketing is divided into three phases. The first phase is called "Ecological" green marketing, where marketing activities help to solve environmental problems and provide solutions to these problems. The second phase, "Environmental" green marketing, focuses on clean technologies that care for pollution and waste problems. The third phase is "Sustainable" green marketing, which came to the fore in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Mishra and Sharma, 2014). According to Pride and Ferrell (1993), "Sustainable" green marketing focuses on an organization's efforts at designing, promoting, pricing, and distributing products that will not harm the environment.

Green marketing, as a phenomenon of the time, focuses on environmental protection in implementing all marketing operations concerning the environment. Companies worldwide have put in the effort to reduce the impact of products and services on the climate and other environmental parameters (Mishra and Sharma, 2014). The hotel industry is no exception.

The main reasons green hotels began to appear were related to compliance with government regulations and saving money by reducing waste and energy consumption. However, nowadays, a green hotel is demanded by environmentally conscious customers. According to a study by the International Hotels Environment Initiative and Accor, 90% of hotel guests would prefer to stay in a hotel that cares about the environment (Lee et al., 2010).

Some studies have tried to identify the driving forces behind the implementation of green marketing. For instance, Shearer (1990) indicated that one of the main driving forces is that some organizations perceive it to be an opportunity to achieve their objectives. Other driving forces include a company's moral obligation (McIntosh, 1990), pressure from governmental bodies and

competitors (Delmas & Toffel, 2008), potential to improve revenues (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Kuo & Dick, 2010), cost-saving (Kuo & Dick, 2010), and building a positive image (Saha & Darnton, 2005).

Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) stated that marketing a hotel's environmentally friendly practices can increase its competitiveness by helping to position it differently in the competitive arena. As people are becoming more willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products (Kapelianis & Strachan, 1996; Laroche et al., 2001), a green image is believed to play a critical role in customers' decision-making and their behavioral intentions (Prendergast & Man, 2002).

Green marketing, green hotel

Many companies worldwide have put in the effort to reduce the impact of products and services on the climate and other environmental parameters (Mishra and Sharma, 2014). It was inevitable because of the growing awareness of the impact of industry operations on the environment.

The hospitality sector is characterized by the fact that it consumes a considerable amount of resources, such as water and energy, and is responsible for a large amount of waste produced. For example, a Reconomy study in 2018 estimates that British hotels produce 289,700 tonnes of waste annually (Open Access Government, 2018). It has led to the creation of green hotels that echo consumers' concerns about sustainability (Han & Yoon, 2015) and seek to operate in a more environmentally friendly way that incorporates initiatives and processes to protect the environment (Green Hotel Association, 2014). It was found that conventional hotels can cause enormous damage to the environment through excessive consumption of non-recyclable goods, water, and energy for heating, ventilation and air conditioning (e.g., electricity and gas) (Ijasan et al., 2016). The hotel industry relies on natural resources and consumes a considerable amount of energy. Electricity, water, and non-renewable resources produce many greenhouse gas emissions, mainly carbon dioxide, significantly impacting the environment (Bechen & Patterson, 2006).

The growing interest in green and responsible consumer behaviour increases awareness about green marketing. The Green Hotel Association defines a green hotel as an environmental-friendly property that implements initiatives to conserve water and energy and reduce solid waste while saving money to protect the environment (Arun et al., 2021).

Hotel operators are encouraged and motivated by customers' desire for eco-oriented products. As the public is aware of the environmental damage, consumers are more inclined toward green products (Ijasan et al., 2016).

The purchasing behavior and attitudes of environmentally conscious consumers are changing, and the number of individuals voicing their concerns about the environment is growing dramatically (Ijasan et al., 2016). Under these conditions, hotels should continue to develop green marketing actions, such as reducing raw materials and minimizing energy consumption, providing product and service certifications, and participating and cooperating in sustainability-related events (Mecade Mele et al., 2019).

2. CASE DEVELOPMENT

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Select Green Hotels organization is guided by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (17 SDGs) of the United Nations (Select Green Hotels, 2022).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the world's shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and protect the planet by 2030 (United Nations Foundation, 2022).

United Nations (2022) is describing the concept of 17 SDGs; the company Select Green Hotels meets these goals:

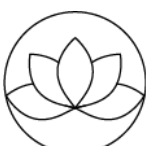
- **Clean water and sanitation** → Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **Affordable and clean energy** → Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy.
- **Decent work and economic growth** → Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- **Industry innovation and infrastructure** → Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- **Sustainable cities and communities** → Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- **Responsible consumption and production** → Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- **Climate action** → Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- **Life below water** → Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Life of land** → Protects, restores, and promotes sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manages forests, combat desertification, and halts and reverses land degradation and biodiversity loss.
- **Partnership for the goals** → Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

GSTC Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) defined criteria as the GSTC Criteria (GSTC, 2022). Based on these, Select Green Hotels defined eight sustainability criteria for choosing the hotels, which are:

Figure 1. GSTC Criteria applying for hotels

Symbol	GSTC Criteria	Description of Criteria
	Community	Form partnerships and support vulnerable communities; offer employee training programs; hire staff from the region where the hotel operates; purchase locally and actively support local projects to help people in need.
	Conservation	Focus on the conservation and regeneration of the environment. Commit to marine and wildlife conservation, appreciation and use of local handicrafts, and strive to preserve cultural heritage.
	Energy	Clean energy consumption, use renewable energies and take energy-saving measures. Possibility to use solar panels to help with heating or cooling or use A+ appliances to keep consumption low. Hotels should be CO2-neutral or climate-positive.
	Food	To reduce CO2 emissions by sourcing regional and seasonal products, e.g., local, seasonal, and organic ingredients for cooking. It is possible to use a hotel rooftop, indoor garden, or farm to grow herbs and vegetables.
	Materials	The company chooses hotels with organic building materials and architecture that adapts to the natural environment using regional materials and furniture.

	Waste	Refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, or rot are the organization guiding principles regarding waste management. It is important to avoid waste in the first place. Striving for a plastic-free environment and favouring biodegradable products.
	Water	Depending on the location, water quality differs enormously. The company verifies if the hotel has its rainwater collection system and a filter system and if it takes measures to reduce water consumption.
	Wellness	Using holistic spa products and treatments, providing programs for body wellness, yoga, meditation, or Ayurveda. Availability of organic shampoos and skincare in hotel rooms.

Source: Select Green Hotels (2022)

The Select Green Hotels organization

Select Green Hotels (SGH) is a green-focused company of hotels in Europe that works in terms of sustainability programs, actions and eco concepts. The organization partners with other sustainable brands and cooperate with independently owned hotels and small hotel groups. SGH aims to maintain individual service and personal interaction with customers, and because of that does not cooperate with large hotel chains (SGH, 2022).

The organization's suppliers must follow ethical and environmental standards, whereas the company uses renewable energy and recycled products. SGH knows that travelling produces carbon mono oxide, so they are actively engaged in the reforestation of PEFC-certified forests in Germany (SGH, 2022).

SGH is a member of the GSTC, establishing and managing global standards for sustainable travel and tourism. For a green hotel, it is crucial to have eco certificates, follow international standards, and be officially recognized by GSTC to meet the requirements of an ideally sustainable organization, which SGH fulfils (SGH, 2022).

The following table shows the certificates held by SGH:

Figure 2. Certifications of "SGH"

Logo	Certificate	Description
	Global Sustainable Tourism Council	The GSTC Criteria certify hotel accommodations, tour operators/transport providers and destinations as having sustainable policies and practices. GSTC does not warrant products or services directly but provides an accreditation program through its partner.
	Green Globe Certification	The Green Globe certification is a structured assessment of the sustainability performance of travel and tourism businesses and their supply chain partners.
	Green Key	Green Key is a voluntary ecolabel for hotels, hostels, campsites, holiday parks, small accommodations, conference centres, attractions, and restaurants. The Green Key award is based on compliance with strict criteria in the areas of environmental management (water, energy, waste, cleaning, etc.) and sustainability education (staff, guests, suppliers, etc.).
	GreenSign	GreenSign is the leading sustainability certificate for the hotel industry in Europe. It is established internationally with over 270 certified hotels in 15 countries.

Sources: GSTC (2022); Green Globe Certification (2022); Foundation for Environmental Education (2022); GreenSign Institut GmbH (2022)

Maslina Resort in Hvar

Maslina Resort is located on the popular Croatian island of Hvar in Croatia. The resort was built in 2020 and stretches two hectares of pine forest with the crystalline Adriatic Sea. Maslina resort has fifty-three spacious rooms, suites, and villas with sea and garden views. Using local materials, the interiors are equipped with Brac island stone, terracotta, brushed brass and local wood. They

are dedicated to a sustainable lifestyle, where all amenities are created with organic ingredients and local essential oils (SGH, 2022).

The resort includes 24-hour room service and concierge service and is family and pet friendly with a kid's playroom and various activities. The restaurant and bars of the resort offer traditional Mediterranean dishes made from fresh, local and seasonal ingredients. The Pharamatiq spa is inspired by the Mediterranean lifestyle and Hvar's healing environment, featuring spa treatments (SGH, 2022).

The hotel is close to nature and has a beach, pool and gym, including wellness services such as fitness, meditation and yoga. There are also water sports, e.g., snorkelling or exploring neighbouring islands on a boat (SGH, 2022).

The resort fulfils 7 out of 8 sustainability criteria:

- **Community** → The vast majority of the products used are locally sourced. The hotel supports the Better World Fund, a local animal shelter and victims of the Petrinja earthquake.
- **Conservation** → The resort is built in harmony with the existing nature. Actions to preserve the island's biodiversity are taken, and they do regular beach-ups and avoid harmful pesticides, paints or products.
- **Food** → The restaurant provides vegan food options. The food is sourced locally, and meat and dairy products are organic. Maslina has a vegetable garden and chicken farm.
- **Materials** → The property, built with natural materials, adapt to its natural environment. The room furniture is made of organic materials. Staff wears organic clothes.
- **Waste** → The hotel is single-use plastic free, including in-room bottles and amenity packaging. Organic bathroom toiletries come in dispensers instead of individual bottles—Paper-reduced communication using recycled paper, wood or electronic devices for guest communication. The resort has its composting system.
- **Water** → Water consumption is tracked consciously, and water-saving appliances are installed throughout. Grey water is being recycled and reused for irrigation. The pool is filtered with ultraviolet (UV) light and sand, using less chlorine.
- **Wellness** → At the spa, holistic treatments using local ingredients are offered. All products used for yoga, meditation, and body wellness are certified organic (SGH, 2022).

3. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why does the organization fulfil just 7 of 8 GSTC Criteria? What can the organization do to accomplish all the criteria of sustainability?

The hotel does not fulfil the Criteria of Energy because it does not use natural energy generation, for example, solar panels on the roof to help with heating or cooling. It also does not use A+ appliances to keep consumption low.

The hotel is located in a very sunny and mild climate, therefore should consider purchasing solar panels. The question is whether it would be appropriate to reduce energy consumption for some activities that are not indispensable, e.g., to reduce water consumption by higher flow control in showers. The organization could use renewable energies and take energy-saving measures, e.g., the hotel could become a CO₂-neutral or climate-positive hotels, according to Bio Hotels (2022), which claims that are hotels that offset their CO₂ emissions.

Most of these activities are associated with high acquisition costs. It is also questionable whether this would affect the comfort of customers who might choose another hotel for this reason.

2. Is it as green as it looks, or does it negatively impact in terms of greenwashing?

It is essential for a green hotel to meet the conditions for certification and not just advertise itself as a green hotel.

The hotel is located on an island and is labeled as an eco-friendly hotel. As it is a popular tourist destination, the most common mode of transport is air travel, which is contrary to sustainability and green marketing.

The popularity of the island makes tourists regularly travel there with the need for accommodation. Therefore, it is better to be a green hotel than a conventional hotel, which has worse sustainability and environmental impacts and does not try to offset carbon footprints.

According to Ijasan et al. (2016), conventional hotels caused enormous harm to the environment through excessive consumption of non-

recyclable goods, water, and energy for heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (e.g., electricity and gas).

3. Is it convenient for a hotel to go green?

It is appropriate to become a green hotel in certain aspects. The hotel can differentiate from other hotels by targeting a specific eco-friendly customer segment in the market. A green hotel positively impacts the environment, sustainability, and social responsibility, which builds a good name and prestige for the company. It is also advantageous for the hotel to be environmentally friendly as it reduces the cost of recycling waste. The hotel can save costs by producing less waste and using less energy.

Green hotels have higher costs of obtaining and maintaining expensive certifications. Due to the higher consumption costs, green hotels usually have a higher price for customers, which may be unaffordable. Therefore, the hotel may have an issue gaining a favorable position in the market.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Effective green marketing requires communicating a green message through research, analysis, planning, and coordinating the various components of that message in a profit-driven business environment. A good marketing program can equip a hotel with the skills and knowledge necessary to accomplish these tasks.

The ability to attract more customers through green marketing should not be in a way to trick potential customers into booking a supposedly sustainable hotel (greenwashing). Therefore, the work carried out at SGH is of great importance to potential customers who rely on hotels to research carefully and ensure that they perform as advertised. It helps to minimize the greenwashing practices of some hotels and gives recognition to the hotels that have the well-being of the environment as a primary goal.

This research determines the extent to which sustainability has been incorporated into the hotel industry, stemming from the fact that the hotel industry is responsible for a large portion of waste generated on the planet. Therefore, the industry should embrace the "green" idea.

Some hotels have taken the initiative to become greener and more environmentally friendly. That is respectable, but the industry must do more to convince consumers about sustainability. It can be in the form of incentives, such as reduced rent for sustainable hotel living. The sole aim of any hotel is to make a profit. According to some researchers, going green is particularly costly for hotels that have already been designed and built to operate in a less-than-sustainable manner. With the current consumer inclination towards sustainable living and the many policies that require sustainable practices, the transition to sustainable operations has become necessary. It helps to avoid greenwashing, gain market share and become environmentally friendly.

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