***Systematic Review Article***

**COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN HOTELS IN GHANA.**

**Abstract**

Objective: Environmental initiatives and conversations have raised environmental sustainability consciousness among hotel consumers, prompting them to demand that the products and services they use be eco-friendly. This study investigates on the commitment to environmental sustainability in hotels in Ghana.

Methods: A comprehensive review was carried out with the aid of online research journal websites as well as other in-context articles. While conducting this study, the key words in the search query were directed towards the commitment of environmental sustainability among hotels in Ghana. Areas noted in relation to this study was understanding what environmental sustainability is as well as its adoption and commitment among hotels in Ghana.

Results: Hotel businesses engage in environmental management by developing environmental policies, green procurement, adhering to environmental legislation, environmental auditing, ecolabelling and certification, waste management and recycling, water and energy conservation, environmental education, pollution prevention, responsible marketing practices, and community support (Su, Swanson, 2019; Hoogendoorn et al., 2015). According to studies, hotel managers are aware of the environmental issues that the tourism industry faces (Kim et al., 2024). They see their engagement in environmental management strategies as helping to reduce costs through operational efficiency (Salzberg et al., 2019).

Conclusion: In conclusion, putting in place written regulations for sustainable practices may help to standardize operations and ensure compliance with environmental standards. To increase sustainability, hotels should encourage energy-efficient equipment, renewable energy sources, and water-saving technologies. Educating employees about sustainable practices and involving visitors in environmental efforts can help hotels improve their environmental responsibilities. Implementing effective waste segregation and recycling programs may significantly reduce landfill contributions and operational waste.

**Keywords:** Environment, Sustainable, Commitment, Ghana, Hotel, Industry.

**Introduction**

Sustainability is gaining global attention and interest due to growing concerns about climate change, global warming, resource depletion, environmental pollution, and harmful environmental practices, among other issues (Zhang, 2017). Hotel guests are becoming more conscious of environmental sustainability and implementing eco-friendly behaviors and activities both at home and at work (Zeynalova, Namazova, 2022).According to Yusoff et al. (2020), the hotel industry's environmental impact is substantial. He claims that the hotel industry's operations harm the natural environment by causing habitat loss, excessive use of water and energy, and pollution of water and land. Environmental initiatives and conversations have raised environmental sustainability consciousness among hotel consumers, prompting them to demand that the products and services they use be eco-friendly and morally sound (Ollivier et al., 2024).Ghana has grown as a popular tourist destination in West Africa. From 1957 until 1976, the nation's first post-independence president, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, established state-owned hotels in all regional capitals. In 1962, the government established the State Hotels Corporation to oversee the management of state hotels. The hotel business in Ghana has recently seen considerable foreign investment and sustained development, thanks to the government's investment promotion measures and a steady increase in tourist arrivals (Mensah, Blankson, 2013).The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre Act (Act 478), passed in 1994, provides significant investment benefits, such as unrestricted repatriation of profits, remittances by expatriate personnel, and import duty exemptions. This has encouraged international investors and multinational businesses to enter the hotel industry. According to Casentini (2018), investment regulations influenced by the government's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) adopted from 1983 to 1999 promoted foreign investment in the tourism industry, including hotels and resorts.Tourist arrivals in Ghana climbed from 399,000 in 2000 to 698,069 in 2008, while the number of registered hotels increased from 992 to 1,595 during the same period (Adongo et al., 2015), reflecting the increase in visitor arrivals. The geographical distribution of hotels in Ghana is uneven, with the Greater Accra area accounting for around 40% of all registered hotels (Khatter et al. 2019). This is because Accra is the capital city, which includes commercial, political, and recreational activities, as well as required infrastructure. The city is rapidly urbanizing. According to Solarin et al. (2017), the Accra Metropolitan Area accounts for 25% of Ghana's urban population and is growing at a 4.2% annual pace. As a result, hotel development has been irregular, particularly with low-cost hotels that are distributed across the city, frequently breaking town and country planning standards and GTB guidelines. While the rapid construction of hotels in Accra is financially beneficial, it raises worries about the implications for environmental sustainability.Hotels generate significant amounts of waste, including sewage, greywater, and garbage. Hotel operations place enormous demands on natural resources such as power, water, lumber, and minerals. Approximately 75% of the environmental effects of the hotel industry are attributed to the excessive usage of both domestic and imported non-durable commodities, power, and water (Suopajarvi et al. 2016). Furthermore, waste is the most noticeable environmental impact of hotels (Bassi, 2023). The environmental impact of the hotel industry is exacerbated by the availability of additional amenities such as restaurants, nightclubs, shopping malls, swimming pools, parking lots, and golf courses, all of which contribute to indirect and induced environmental effects.Customers' concerns about climate change, global warming, environmental pollution, and hazardous corporate practices influence their hotel selections and intent to return (Hsiao et al., 2014). As a result, customer participation in environmental sustainability initiatives, as well as the expectation that businesses operate in an environmentally conscious and ethically responsible manner, may provide a significant impetus for the fight against pollution and the implementation of sustainability practices by hotels. It is plausible to assume that consumers' attitudes toward sustainability and participation in sustainability efforts may influence hotel adoption of sustainability programs and practices (Khatri, Tyagi, 2014; Hsiao et al., 2014). As a result, if all other factors were equal, environmentally conscious consumers would prefer green hotels over non-green. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate on the commitment to environmental sustainability among hotels in Ghana.

**Methods**

A comprehensive review was carried out with the aid of online research journal websites as well as other in-context articles. While conducting this study, the key words in the search query were directed towards the commitment of environmental sustainability among hotels in Ghana. Areas noted in relation to this study was understanding what environmental sustainability is as well as its adoption and commitment among hotels in Ghana.

**Ghana Hotel Industry**

Ghana has seen significant investment in its hotel business from both domestic and foreign enterprises. This can be attributed to the country's political stability, macroeconomic expansion, physical infrastructure improvements, overall peace and security, and initiatives by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) and Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) to promote the country as an appealing investment location and tourism destination, respectively. Furthermore, Ghana's growing middle class has boosted domestic tourism. According to Machete and Morakinyo (2017), the total number of licensed hotels in Ghana was 2,723 in 2017, as per the hotels outlook report for the year 2017-2021. This figure encompassed star-rated hotels, budget lodgings, and guesthouses. Nonetheless, the bulk of these have medium-to-low star ratings based on their amenities, property size, and overall service quality. The Greater Accra Region is the hub for elite hotels, with the majority of three-, four-, and five-star properties. As new, higher-tier hotels open in Cape Coast, Takoradi, and Kumasi, the quality of regional hotel offers improves. Along with star-rated hotels, the country has 137 guesthouses and 1,176 budget hotels. Hotel occupancy rates, particularly at star-rated places, have regularly increased over the last decade. According to the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the average occupancy rate for four-star hotels is over 80%. In recent decades, many hotel companies, including Kempinski, Marriott International, Mövenpick, Accor (Novotel), and Ibis Styles, have developed subsidiaries in Accra. This hotel proliferation has also happened in other locations, notably in the Western and Northern regions (e.g., Best Western Atlantic Hotel and Zaina Lodge). Accra welcomed 897,000 tourists in 2015, with a 67% occupancy rate, an average daily rate (ADR) of US$201, and a revenue per available room (RevPAR) of US$134, according to STR Global, making it one of the highest statistics in the area. Nonetheless, RevPAR fell 44.5% in 2016 due to the installation of Kempinski and Ibis Styles buildings. Improved economic circumstances and political stability in the country may boost the hotel industry. Given the sector's investment from foreign investors in the form of high-rated hotels, as well as an increasing number of vacationers and business travelers, the industry is expected to expand further (Bassi, 2023).

**Environmental Management in Hotels**

Businesses widely adopted environmental management, which emerged as an important component of management in the 1980s (Kahouli, 2020). Kessler et al. (2024), citing Bluffstone and Sterner (2006), provide a comprehensive overview of environmental management. Environmental management is a process in which both formal and informal, public and private organizations use mechanisms to develop and implement a series of cost-effective priority actions based on clearly defined societal preferences and objectives aimed at preserving or improving ambient environmental quality, providing environmentally derived or related services, and conserving, maintaining, and enhancing natural resources and ecosystems.

Hotel businesses engage in environmental management by developing environmental policies, green procurement, adhering to environmental legislation, environmental auditing, ecolabelling and certification, waste management and recycling, water and energy conservation, environmental education, pollution prevention, responsible marketing practices, and community support (Su, Swanson, 2019; Hoogendoorn et al., 2015). The primary environmental management approaches in the hotel industry include cost reduction, waste management, recycling, and energy and water conservation (Mensah 2020; Abdul Zalim et al., 2020).The environmental performance of hotels is heavily influenced by the hotel management's and/or owner's attitudes toward change, their awareness of the benefits of environmental practices, and their interactions with the external environment (Yusoff et al., 2020).Senior management's commitment to environmental management varies depending on how they view environmental concerns (Nasif, 2021).

According to studies, hotel managers are aware of the environmental issues that the tourism industry faces (Kim et al., 2024) and rate the environmental impact of their actions as minor to significant (Wang, 2018). They see their engagement in environmental management strategies as helping to reduce costs through operational efficiency (Salzberg et al., 2019). Existing literature frequently shows that larger hotels are more proactive and committed to environmental management (Koliouska, Andreopoulou, 2023; Duan et al., 2019; Qian, Schneider, 2016; Han et al., 2019). Koliouska and Andreopoulou (2023) attributed this to small and medium-sized lodging companies' failure to provide the financial resources or organizational frameworks required for successful environmental management. It is assumed that large firms have spare resources, adopt a more systematic approach to environmental management, and benefit from economies of scale in rubbish disposal. They have higher visibility, face more environmental performance difficulties from many stakeholders, and are more vulnerable to reputational loss (Leszczynska, 2016).

**Environmental Sustainability**

The World Commission on Environment and Development defines a sustainable society as one that meets present demands without risking future generations' ability to meet their own needs (Murray et al., 2019). According to Osiurak and Reynaud (2019), without realistic, attainable goals, the concept of sustainability allows for the continued expansion of present economic and technical systems while ignoring the inevitable restrictions on quality of life or maintenance costs. The author contends that the sustainability of human civilization is dependent on individuals' willingness and ability to adopt behaviors that improve, conserve, and protect the integrity of the environment, thereby improving the planet for both present and future generations (Osiurak, Reynaud, 2019). This emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability for human existence and the continuation of civilization.Despite its lengthy history, sustainability lacks a coherent and commonly accepted definition. The idea of sustainability has been described from several perspectives, with the primary aim requiring the conception of sustainability as a dynamic phenomenon.Osiurak and Reynaud have long argued that without understanding its multiple meanings, differences, and repercussions, the word risks becoming meaningless (Osiurak, Reynaud, 2019). Odilo et al. (2024) define sustainability as a multifaceted concept that encompasses environmental, social, economic, and organizational concerns. Ollivier et al. (2024) define sustainability as a concept based on intergenerational solidarity, equity, ethics, and precaution, advocating for individual accountability to reduce risks to others and the community while requiring a reassessment of organizational values and member beliefs.Sustainability has been considered from its inception via the lenses of growth, development, and environmental preservation. The importance of protecting the environment has emerged as a crucial issue in global debate (Salleh, 2014). The hotel industry is actively involved in the current discussion of sustainability, which remains a hot subject in global talks (Baral, Pokharel, 2016). The idea's application in the hospitality business, notably in the hotel sector, has mostly focused on adopting behaviors and practices that enhance resource efficiency and protect the environment from harm and pollution (Zabala, 2021; Raza et al., 2018). Despite being a service sector, the hotel industry significantly contributes to environmental deterioration.

**Areas of Sustainable Initiatives in Hotel Industry**

Hotels have gradually incorporated several sustainability initiatives in response to worldwide demand and consumer concerns about environmentally friendly business operations. There is no internationally recognized set of sustainability policies and standards that hotels are required to apply worldwide. Nonetheless, the hotel industry in the United States and some European and Asian countries has undertaken steps to incorporate sustainability into hotel operations; yet, these programs are neither comprehensive nor mandatory (Yusoff et al., 2020). According to Zabala (2021), some of these projects focus on the environmental side of sustainability, as evidenced by the development of global eco-labels such as ISO 14001 and the European Regulation EMAS.According to studies on sustainability practices in the hotel industry, global eco-labels and certification programs mostly focus on energy and water conservation, representing the environmental aspect of sustainability (Coles et al. 2013). The economic and social components of sustainability appear to be of little importance to hotels, as they strive to incorporate it into their operations.

**Adoption of Environmental Sustainability in Hotels**

Hotels have various incentives to improve their brand reputation by emphasizing customers' environmental concerns and working on waste reduction, as well as energy and water conservation. Hoteliers recognize that environmentally friendly practices, while beneficial to employees, will boost consumer trust and the hotel's green brand image, protect the environment, and increase hotel revenues. Furthermore, by properly addressing their customers' environmental concerns, hotels may secure long-term market growth and improve their brand image. According to Garcia et al. (2017), there is an increasing customer demand for green hotels, and implementing environmentally friendly practices might serve as a marketing strategy for hotels.As a result, hotels must prioritize meeting the environmental concerns of their guests. As a result, some scholars have noticed the need to investigate how hotels respond to their consumers' environmental concerns. According to Mohamad et al. (2022), as global awareness of sustainability grows and stakeholder expectations for corporate adoption of sustainable practices rise, hotels are increasingly recognizing the necessity of incorporating sustainability concepts into their operations. Hotels use sustainable measures largely to conserve water and electricity and to reduce solid waste (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2017). In addition to these reasons, hotels are encouraged to embrace environmentally friendly practices in order to meet the environmental concerns of their customers while also adhering to governmental and industry requirements.Zhang (2017) explored the motives for hotels to embrace sustainable environmental policies in their study. The primary motivations for hotels to adopt green initiatives include resource conservation (energy, water, and other materials), operational cost reduction, environmental protection, encouraging staff and guests to comply with environmental safety policies, and using a green brand image as a marketing strategy. We aimed to achieve cost reductions by efficiently using energy and water, reducing resource waste, and mitigating environmental deterioration. According to the research, the biggest motivation for implementing green measures is cost savings realized via judicious resource usage, notably water and energy. Some hotel management said that implementing green initiatives in their properties was not driven by a desire to reduce the negative environmental impact of their operations. This shows that the hotels' green initiatives were not mainly meant to address clients' environmental concerns, but rather as a cost-cutting strategy for the hotels.DeWitte and Wissler (2021) explored the reasons that drive star-rated hotels in Egypt to adopt sustainable practices. The study identified the following as the primary motivations for hotels to implement green initiatives and practices: establishing a green brand image to attract environmentally conscious customers, a commitment to environmental sustainability, cost reduction, a marketing strategy to increase market share, and addressing customer environmental concerns. According to the research, hotels prioritize green initiatives in order to reduce operational costs, increase market share, and offset negative environmental consequences.Despite an increasing emphasis on sustainability, hotels' adoption of sustainable practices remains restricted. According to Zabala (2021), less than 1.5% of Spanish hotels are certified for environmental sustainability. A survey done in six European areas found that only about 30% of tourist SMEs reported having a formal environmental strategy (Engel et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Hotel Association of Canada offers "Green Key" accreditation to 14% of Canadian hospitality facilities (Zhang, 2017). Despite getting green accreditation, Sallenh. (2014) shows that some hotels lack an environmental policy. They claim that the majority of Malaysian hotels have green certifications, such as EarthCheck, ISO 14001, and ASEAN Green Hotel. Nonetheless, they did not follow the requirement that certified hotels have a thorough environmental strategy and management framework to guide their sustainable hotel activities.According to Coles et al. (2013), environmentally conscious hotel managers are more likely to pursue sustainability programs that address environmental problems in order to contribute to the global sustainability agenda. According to Zhang (2017), other hotels apply sustainable practices unintentionally. Some hotels use sustainability programs as a marketing strategy to promote their eco-friendly offerings (Martinho et al., 2015).Furthermore, some people view sustainability as a method for mitigating the negative impacts of their activities on environmental, cultural, and social surroundings, acknowledging their reliance on nature and culture for success.The study found that hotels pursue sustainability initiatives for reasons other than environmental conservation. Hotels will assess the economic benefits of their sustainability activities against the accompanying costs. Once more, there isn't enough real-world evidence to show that green hotels bring in more money than just customers saying they're willing to pay more for eco-friendly rooms. This makes the financial case for starting sustainability programs seem unlikely.

**Commitment to Environmental Management**

Hotels must establish appropriate environmental policies, programs, and activities to demonstrate their dedication to environmental management. According to Duan et al. (2019), the principles of environmental management are defined within the British Standard (BS 7750) Environmental Management Systems framework, which specifies procedures such as developing environmental policy, obtaining comprehensive organizational commitment, defining responsibilities, and implementing management systems.The development of a written environmental policy is the first stage of the environmental management process (Duan et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, previous data shows that certain hotels lack environmental requirements. Friston et al. (2016) showed that just 29.7% of Macao's hotels had a defined environmental policy. Furthermore, 10% of hotels in Ankara, Turkey, were found to have documented environmental policies (Hoogendoorn et al. 2015). Bohdanowicz (2005) discovered that chain-affiliated hotels, such as Sheraton, Hilton, and Accor, were more aggressive in creating environmental standards than independent hotels.Hotel operations need extensive purchases of various food products, materials, detergents, and other supplies, all of which may have a negative influence on the environment. The need to purchase ecologically friendly items implies ecological buying. Green procurement methods may help a firm reduce waste, replace goods with environmentally friendly raw materials, and prevent hazardous waste (Agyabeng-Mensah et al., 2022).

Green purchasing reduces the risk of harm to employees and customers, thereby avoiding liability (Grama, 2018). The Scandic Hotel chain avoided the disposal of 200 million pieces of single-use packaging over a seven-year period by incorporating a sustainable procurement strategy into its environmental management program (Yusoff, 2020).Ecolabelling, as a voluntary environmental management tool, is gaining popularity, especially in the housing industry. According to Mensah and Blankson (2013), hotels receive 68% of ecolabels in the tourist industry. In 1999 and 2000, about 2,000 hotels, campsites, hostels, and restaurants in Europe acquired certification and ecolabels (Baniya et al., 2022). Ecohotel, EcoMeet, Ecotel, Green Key, Green Leaf, Green Seal, Green Globe 21, and Green Deal are examples of ecolabels used in the tourism and hospitality industries. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO 14000) and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) are two certification schemes aimed at advancing Environmental Management Systems in the tourism and hospitality industries.

According to Slogar and Hrvatin (2023), hotels and resorts throughout the world are using environmental management systems to improve resource efficiency, reduce operating costs, increase staff involvement and visitor awareness, and achieve international reputation in the travel and tourist industry.Management's commitment to environmental activities is an essential prerequisite for effective environmental management (Slogar & Hrvatin, 2023). Several hotels and hotel networks have launched various environmental measures. These include Hilton Environmental Reporting, Accor's Earth Guest Program, Green Marriott, and the Rezidor Group's Responsible Business (Becken & Dolnicar, 2016). Marriott's environmental approach includes community engagement programs such as America's Promise Child Care and Family Services (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Novotel and Hotel Ibis Homebush Bay in Australia have formed a unique partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), with the hotels contributing $1.00 from each room sold per night to support WWF conservation efforts (Uncles et al., 2023).

According to Khang et al. (2024), hotel companies are gradually supporting ecologically sustainable practices and incorporating sustainability into their growth and organizational strategies. The study looked at regional environmental measures adopted by the hotel industry on all continents, excluding Africa.

**Conclusion**

This study investigates on the commitment to environmental sustainability in hotels in Ghana. The awareness among hotel managers regarding environmental challenges in the tourism sector (Kim et al., 2024) suggests a positive attitude toward integrating green initiatives into their operations. The adoption of environmental policies, green procurement, and sustainable practices such as waste management, water and energy conservation, and pollution prevention not only helps hotels minimize their ecological footprint but also enhances their corporate social responsibility. The implementation of environmental management strategies contributes to cost reduction through improved operational efficiency (Salzberg et al., 2019). Energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction measures, and sustainable resource management can lower utility and disposal costs, leading to long-term financial benefits.

In conclusion, putting in place written regulations for sustainable practices may help to standardize operations and ensure compliance with environmental standards. To increase sustainability, hotels should encourage energy-efficient equipment, renewable energy sources, and water-saving technologies. Educating employees about sustainable practices and involving visitors in environmental efforts can help hotels improve their environmental responsibilities. Implementing effective waste segregation and recycling programs may significantly reduce landfill contributions and operational waste.

**Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest in the study.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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