

Sustainable tourism practices adopted by the hotel sector in Zimbabwe. Hotel managers perceptions

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated hotel managers perceptions of sustainability practices adopted in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe, focusing on hotels in Mutare. The issue of sustainable business practices is driving modern-day business operations, and hotels are leading the adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Managers perceive the adoption of sustainable tourism practices in varied or indifferent manners. This study focused on identifying the extent to which hotels in Zimbabwe have adopted sustainable practices, the impacts of adopting these practices, the challenges hotels face when adopting these practices, and the strategies hotels implement when adopting these practices.

Research Methodology: A qualitative research design was used to understand hotel managers' perceptions regarding the adoption of sustainable tourism practices, with interviews being used to collect data. The study's population comprised managerial employees and supervisors of selected hotels in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

Results: The findings revealed that the implementation of sustainable practices has a positive impact on hotel operations in terms of reduced consumption of water and energy, waste reduction, promotion of the local economy, and empowerment of societies.

Conclusion: Hotels in Mutare perceive sustainability as highly beneficial, not only for cost savings and environmental protection but also for competitive advantages. Training, guest involvement, and certification emerged as essential strategies, whereas resistance, high costs, and lack of knowledge were noted as barriers.

Limitations: The study used only hotel managers in Mutare to represent all hotel managers in Zimbabwe, and it was purely qualitative.

Contributions: The study concluded that waste management undertakings, such as recycling, re-use, or sale of processed or unprocessed waste substances, can also contribute towards efficiency.

Keywords: *Adoption, Hospitality, Hotel, Operations, Sustainable Practices, Tourism*

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, hospitality and tourism firms have to include sustainability in their plans, policies, strategies and organisational culture (Melo, Silva, Melo, & Vo-Thanh, 2022; Shereni & Rogerson, 2023). Sustainability is essential and no longer optional for hospitality companies. Increasing consumer demand for environmentally friendly goods and services and lowering operating expenses are major drivers for implementing sustainable practices in the hotel sector (Apriani, Kamsariaty, Sarinastiti,

Yuliastuti, & Sukmayadi, 2023; Melo et al., 2022; Ngoni C Shereni & Rogerson, 2023). Hospitality firms proactively invent strategies oriented around sustainable practices because of the benefits related to this development idea. The need for renewable energy generation is also driving the implementation of sustainable development practices, with research indicating that 54% of tourism businesses rely on renewable energy (Prakash, Sharma, Singh, & Vijayvargy, 2023). Major benefits accrue to hospitality firms through the implementation of sustainable tourism practices, including a decrease in the usage of energy and water. Sustainable practices improve waste management efforts on hotel premises and decrease carbon gas emissions. Hotels are becoming good corporate citizens and benefiting local communities through job creation and promoting local values (Melo et al., 2022).

Research on the environmental dares of the tourism industry has received far less attention than the manufacturing industry, and the increasing number of environmental laws and increasing market pressures have amplified environmental awareness (Pereira, Silva, & Dias, 2021). Despite the increasing number of studies on sustainable tourism practices, destination sustainable development, particularly for hotels, is wanting (Melo et al., 2022). Other studies have explored local community practices, recycling by backpackers, and other sustainable practices, making this field wide and complex for analysis (Walkowski, Pires, & Tricárico, 2019; Melo et al., 2022). Sustainability practice has also been used to refer to actions analyzed in specific contexts, such as hotel employees' corporate social responsibility practices and tourist shopping practices (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020).

In the tourism industry, the hotel sector provides the most jobs and has the greatest effect on the improvement of the regions where it operates (Makoni, Mazuruse, & Nyagadza, 2023). This sector is also characterized by its high consumption of resources and waste generation (Chiwariidzo, 2024). It can then be said that there is a foreseeable link amid the development of the hotel industry, environmental impacts and the necessity for greater resource efficiency (Geng, Zhang, Gao, Yan, & Chen, 2024; Pattiagedara & Ranasinghe, 2023). Hospitality being the biggest sector of the tourism industry, definitely has the largest impacts on the environment (Grilli, Tyllianakis, Luisetti, Ferrini, & Turner, 2021). Thus, sustainability is imperative and essential, not only for improving the natural environment, but also for sustaining the competitive performance of this sector. As such, there is increasing apprehension about sustainability matters within the tourism industry worldwide (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020).

Due to serious environmental problems such as global warming, governments in diverse countries have presented firmer environmental rules and fortified companies to implement measures to protect the planet (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). Font, English, Gkritzali, and Tian (2021) also noted that obligatory environmental rules, along with monitoring and clear penalties for nonconformity, have proven to be operative mechanisms to reassure companies to increase their environmental performance. Many hotels recognize that implementing green practices is not only ethical but also helpful in reducing costs, creating market differentiation, enhancing their image, and increasing corporate social responsibility (Mabhandu, 2024; Sgroi, 2020). Font et al. (2021) observed that eco-management of a hotel aids in customer retention and profitability, builds a good reputation, and demonstrates improved social responsibility.

Sustainability adds even more complexity to the definition of an operations plan, as developing a sustainability plan is a rather complicated task in itself (Melo et al., 2022), and there is less research examining the strategies to implement sustainable practices (Makoni et al., 2023). Furthermore, the literature shows that sustainability is a helpful path to follow regardless of the size, budget, and category of business in the tourism industry (Chiwariidzo, 2024). Although most hotels worldwide have adopted environmental sustainability practices, many hotels adopt basic practices, although the extent and scope of these practices vary with the location of the hotel (Geng et al., 2024).

In Zimbabwe, tourism contributes 10% of the country's gross domestic product, and hotels are key players in the tourism value chain (ZTA, 2024). It is perilous to understand sustainability practices in hotels explicitly from managers' perceptions for better adoption of sustainable practices and policy development. In Zimbabwe, few studies have investigated sustainable practices in the tourism sector

(Chiwariidzo, 2024). This study focused on identifying the extent to which hotels in Zimbabwe have implemented sustainable practices, the impacts of adopting these practices, the challenges faced when adopting these practices, and the strategies being implemented when adopting these practices from managers' perspectives.

2. Literature review

Sustainable tourism merges with the philosophy of sustainable development (Chiwariidzo, 2024). Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Geng et al., 2024). Sustainable tourism development involves building and upholding a functional tourism industry in a specific location while ensuring that the industry is as sustainable as possible (Prakash et al., 2023). Sustainable development is a developing movement in the hospitality and tourism industry and all industries (Makoni et al., 2023). Sustainable tourism is tourism that can be sustained because it results in a net benefit for the economic, social, cultural, and natural environments of the location in which it takes place (Makoni et al., 2023). Sustainable tourism development philosophy entails hospitality and tourism operations that are environmentally, socially, and economically friendly (Melo et al., 2022). A sustainable hospitality operation is one whose leaders ensure that its resources limit adverse effects on the economy, society, and environment while protecting and enhancing these factors for future generations (Ngoni C Shereni & Rogerson, 2023). The definitions agree on the aspect of the wise use of resources.

Green practices, as defined by Chiwaridzo (2024), embrace the promotion of hotelier efforts to lessen solid waste, save water and energy, minimize operational costs, and maintain the natural environment. With regard to hotels, green practices are eco-friendly programs that are endorsed to improve the hotel's image (Chan, Okumus, & Chan, 2020; Mabhandu, 2024). The UN's (n.d.) definition of sustainable practices is holistic and covers all three pillars of sustainable tourism development, as opposed to other green practice definitions, which are narrow in scope, covering other pillars, such as the environment, and ignoring others, such as society and the economy.

There is increasing evidence that the hotel sector in the Global North has comprised sustainability in all three of its manifestations: society, environment, and economy (Geng et al., 2024). Diverse factors influence motivation and the adoption of techniques for sustainable initiatives. Generally, an industry's sustainability strategy might be centered on the operating environment, reacting to external challenges, and regulatory governance frameworks (Apriani et al., 2023; Lichauco, 2022; Melo et al., 2022). Studies on climate change adaptation in the lodging industry, for instance, have underlined this reactive strategy (Grilli et al., 2021). Proactive adaptation plans for sustainable practices may be determined by learning, decision-making, and envisioning to increase knowledge and adaptive capability before an organization undertakes a transformation (Makoni et al., 2023).

The hotel sector's most widely used sustainable practices are greening projects, which are energy saving, waste decline, and water saving (Melo et al., 2022). Green certification, widely used in the hotel industry, aligns with green philosophies. Customers can use numerous resources to determine whether a business uses sustainable practices. Initiatives related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) are seen as classic sustainable practices implemented by the hospitality industry (Sgroi, 2020). According to Chiwaridzo (2024) and Bitok (2019), CSR activities are becoming more prevalent as the tourist business has disruptive effects on the economy, society, and the environment. Hotel CSR initiatives comprise the responsible consumption of cultural and natural resources, pollution minimization, landscape conservation, responsible and fair treatment of employees, and wise use of local resources, services, and goods (Shereni, Saarinen, & Rogerson, 2022). Hotel sustainable practices include buying local goods, employing local people, promoting local culture by offering local dishes, sponsoring community projects, and paying taxes on time (Font et al., 2021). Sgroi (2020) alludes to the fact that the social aspect of sustainability measures has not been adequately addressed despite the tourism industry's extensive embrace of sustainable practices in terms of the economic and environmental components. Utilizing energy-efficient lighting is one of the most extensively used greening initiatives by hospitality facilities worldwide (Geng et al., 2024). Recyclable waste is recycled, environmentally friendly

cleaning supplies are used, and visitors can choose whether or not to demand new linens (Chiwaridzo, 2024). Moreover, others include replacing ineffective heating, air conditioning, and ventilation systems and using grey water (Makoni et al., 2023). Additional examples of sustainable practices in hotels include the installation of low-flow water systems in rooms. These practices include energy and water conservation, eco-labelling, and environmental management systems. Sgroi (2020) notes additional strategies employed by hospitality businesses, such as using 100% recycled paper for serviettes, paper straws, toilet paper, and all-natural spa goods. Font et al. (2021) lists extra strategies used by hospitality businesses like employing serviettes and restroom paper that is 100 percent recycled, natural beauty products without additives, environmentally friendly insecticides, clean power sources, local product sourcing, usage of LED lights and the use of 100 percent natural soap and shampoos are just a few examples.

According to Chiwaridzo (2024) and Mabhandu (2024), the hotel sector often uses green supply chain management (GSCM), which comprises a variety of practices such as using eco-friendly raw materials, eco-friendly production, efficient waste disposal, eco-friendly packaging, and green marketing. Green marketing in the lodging industry involves the effective creation, communication and delivery of green value through product and service offerings (Tiago, Gil, Stemberger, & Borges-Tiago, 2021). Promoting an organization's sustainability goals through green marketing is vital. Green marketing communication supports sustainability initiatives to inspire clients to participate in an organization's sustainability initiatives.

3. Research methodology

This study applied a qualitative research approach to fully capture hotel managers' perceptions of sustainable tourism practices. Four large chain hotels in the Eastern Highlands Mutare region were considered in the study, with the assumption that chain group hotels are advanced in the adoption of sustainable practices following international trends to capture international travellers and meet certifications. Organized interviews were conducted with managers and supervisors in the respective departments of human resources, food and beverages, facilities and amenities, front office, accounting, and marketing. The hotel departments differed in terms of number of employees but were similar in terms of operations; therefore, all departments at each hotel were considered in the interviews. The interviews lasted between 20 and thirty minutes in order to be able to interview a number of respondents and since they were done during working hours to avoid disrupting work flows following recommendations by Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020).

A total population of 49 managers and supervisors was noted, and only 12 managers and supervisors were considered in the study based on their work experience and appreciation of the sustainability concept. Given the total population of approximately 49 respondents, the researcher sampled 12 respondents in this research, taking three respondents from each hotel following purposive sampling technique since the issue under study required responses from known specific respondents as previously done by Pereira et al. (2021) and produced convincing results. The sample size was more than 25% of the population, which is a good representation of the population (Basera & Mwenje, 2024). The researcher used the principle of seniority and responsibilities to select the respondents from each of the four organizations constituting the study units. Senior managers responded broadly to other issues pertaining to other departments and managers not sampled in the study to have a fairer perception by managers regarding sustainability adoption. The data are presented following thematic analysis, guided by the key concepts in the study objectives.

4. Results and discussions

4.1 The extent to which hotel managers comprehend sustainable practices

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they understood sustainable practices. Among the managers, there is a high comprehension of sustainable tourism practices in the tourism sector since all of them defined the concept and explained bringing to fore the key elements of sustainability, which are economic, environmental, and social.

Hotel managers' comprehension of sustainable practices directly affects the level of adoption of sustainable practices. The managers shared the different sustainable practices adopted at their facility, including energy efficiency, manpower development, local purchase of materials, and environmental conservation. The managers shared how they educate their employees and participate in community programs for sustainable tourism development.

Top hotels in Mutare are embracing sustainable tourism practices because their managers understand sustainability concepts. Hotel managers should continue to educate their employees on the importance of sustainable tourism practices, as it can affect the hotel and employee performance. Ngoni Courage Shereni et al. (2022) emphasise that the practice of sustainable hospitality depends on how managers and staff have mastered the core tenets of sustainable tourism development in day to day work activities.

4.2 Level of hotel adoption of sustainable practices

The study revealed that all four hotels adopted sustainable tourism practices in their day-to-day operations. One of the hotels is a 3-star hotel practicing sustainable operations as per Intercontinental Hotel Groups (IHG) requirements, which is enabling them to attract more clients to the hotel as many people these days prefer green hotels. Various respondents provided an outline of some of the sustainable practices they are adopting, as presented below:

- **Use of motion sensors lights and energy saving bulbs**

The study revealed that hotels in Mutare have motion sensors that serve energy, enabling hotels to support sustainable operations. Three hotels have motion sensor lights. It has been realized that sustainable operations in these hotels result in cost reduction. The managers highlighted the following responses to air out their perceptions in relation to sustainable activities at the hotel:

R1: Here at X hotel, all our bathrooms and offices have motion sensor lights to save energy; the moment someone leaves the room, the lights instantly switch off and vice versa.

R5: At Y, all our bulbs are energy savers because we want to reduce energy costs. In addition to cutting costs from our budget, this will also help the whole country at large as energy saving will also benefit others to have access to enough energy.

- **Waste management**

The study revealed that waste management is controlled at the hotels through the provision of littering bins as well as creating compost where waste is put such that it decomposes and is utilized for gardening and horticultural produce. The respondents were required to provide the following responses:

R1: All our bins are labelled differently for different types of waste. We have different bins for glass, paper, plastic, and cans. This allows for waste recycling.

R7: We practice the compost method, where all degradable waste is placed and decomposed. When the waste has fully decomposed, we use it in our garden because we grow our own vegetables to minimize expenses.

- **Serving local dishes**

The managers reviewed that the hotels served local dishes. Only managers from one hotel indicated that they do not serve local dishes in the form of traditional meals at their hotel. The managers indicated that:

R4: Here at Z, we always ensure that we do not abandon our local dishes. We serve Western food, but traditional food is always included. Every Wednesday, we serve a traditional buffet lunch with only local dishes, and western food is provided upon request. At breakfast, we always make sure to include one traditional dish, such as sweet potatoes, mutakura, nyemba, or anything traditional, so that we cater to the needs of everyone. This sustainable initiative has been a success, and the guests are very happy about it, as everyone prefers to eat healthy these days.

R9: Our hotel owners are resistant to introducing traditional dishes. We only offer Western dishes.

- **Employing the locals**

All the managers at the different hotels indicated that they hire employees locally, thus supporting local communities. This implies that income residue is left in the communities. However, the findings also indicate that employees are hired following national advertisements of jobs, and for jobs that require skills, employees are from all over Zimbabwe. Less-skilled jobs are taken up by locals from the communities. The managers indicated that:

R5: All our employees are local people, except for a few top managers who are transferred from other branches at different locations. We try by all means to recruit locals to fight unemployment. This will also help boost local communities and their welfare so that everyone can earn a living. Employing locals has helped reduce crime rates because the youth are now employed and have something to occupy themselves with.

- **Installation of refillable soap dispensers**

The managers indicated that they are using the latest technologies in the health and hygiene aspects of hand washing by using soap dispensers with programmed motion sensors. The respondents indicated the following:

R6: Here at X, we installed refillable soap dispensers in all 96 rooms. This initiative took place in 2022 after a survey, and we discovered that it was very expensive to continue using single-use disposable bottles. The installation of these refillable soap dispensers has reduced our expenses by nearly 30% because guests no longer take the soaps with them during checkout. We ensured that the dispensers were installed in a way that guests could not remove them; only housekeeping could do that because they were lockable and would only need a key to be removed.

The above responses are in agreement with many different scholars including Legrand, Chen, and Laeis (2022) who highlighted different sustainable practices such as installation of refillable soap dispensers, promotion of local arts, employee benefits such as life insurance, medical aid, proper waste management practices, prioritisation of local companies in the hotel supply chain, adhering to fair pricing among other sustainable practices.

4.3 esponse on impact of adopting sustainable tourism practices to hotel operations

The findings show that sustainable practices in hotels have a highly positive impact on customer loyalty. A total of 92% of the respondents agreed to the reduction of energy costs, stating that energy consumption occupies a larger number of hotels' operating expenses; therefore, if energy is saved, it will help reduce hotels' operating expenses. Among the respondents, 87% agreed that saving energy as a sustainable practice reduces carbon emissions, 73% agreed that it increases profit margins, and 67% agreed that it leads to an environmentally sustainable environment.

The managers indicated that hotel occupancy increased following the adoption of sustainable practices. Most of the visitors who filled in guest feedback forms showed appreciation of our sustainable practices and tended to repeat visits for that reason. They indicated that:

R3: Here at V, we practice various sustainable practices, and we have ensured that all departments participate in this initiative. This initiative has had various positive impacts on hotel operations.

R2: We have managed to reach a greater audience and attract more clients through sustainable practices, which has increased our hotel occupancy in the past years.

The results augurs well with the findings from the extant literature as primary motivations for hotels to go green is to respond to rising consumer awareness of environmental issues (Acampora, Preziosi, Lucchetti, & Merli, 2022). The tourism sector has distinctive practices that affect the recycling and disposition of resources. It is possible to say that eco hotels have emerged within this scope. With their eco-label certificate, these hotels indicate that their facilities are environmentally friendly, and they address their services to guests with environmental awareness (Sana, 2022). According to Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, and Simanavicius (2021), tourism industry contributes approximately 8% of global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Therefore, the concept of sustainable tourism has received additional attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers since the 1990s (Chiwaridzo, 2024). With the extraordinary growth of the hotel industry over the years, hotels are also facing pressure

to be environmentally responsible, take due care, and adopt environmentally friendly activities that do not harm the environment (Nisar et al., 2021).

4.4 Challenges experienced by hotels when adopting sustainable tourism practices

From interviews with the managers, it was picked that there were also some challenges that were being faced by the hotel when trying to implement sustainable tourism practices. The challenges include a lack of knowledge of certain practices, resistance to change, and high costs.

- **Lack of knowledge**

Most managers reported that they were knowledgeable about sustainable practices. For better adoption of these practices, training and hiring of consultants is required, and to some extent, it demands hiring experts in certain practices. The managers indicated:

R2: During our process of trying to implement green practices, we noticed that there is a lack of awareness or knowledge of green practices and technologies among our employees; hence, we need to carry out more training sessions.

This challenge has been supported in the literature by Cao and Solangi (2023), who highlighted that despite the growing public interest in sustainability, misconceptions and knowledge gaps still exist. The author further pointed out that this has led to a recent increase in related educational resources on sustainable practices.

- **High cost of establishing sustainable practices**

The managers reviewed that the adoption of sustainable tourism practices comes with heavy capital in the systems, which is costly. The benefits take time to realize, and hotel proprietors are reluctant to adopt them. The managers indicated that:

R10: Here at Y, the release of funds for acquiring new systems in business takes time. The proprietors will be citing high costs in acquiring equipment with a very slow rate of realizing returns. Especially when we changed all our water geysers to solar-powered geysers, there was a high outcry of financial burden.

- **Resistance**

Among the managers, resistance to new ways of doing things was picked from interviews, with the managers' further citing challenges in implementing sustainable practices as worsened by resistance from staff. The managers noted the following:

R3: Another challenge that the hotel has been facing during the process of trying to implement green practices is resistance from staff, guests, and suppliers.

The results above are in agreement with earlier studies by Chiwaridzo (2024) and Lichauco (2022), who highlighted some of the barriers or challenges when adopting sustainable tourism practices or green practices. The author summarized that insufficient knowledge skills, uncertain outcomes, and implementation and maintenance costs deteriorate hotel managers' incentives to adopt green practices. In addition, Prakash et al. (2023) argued that training and employee involvement are barriers to the successful implementation of green practices in hotels. From the perspective of hotel managers, Pereira et al. (2021) identified barriers affecting the implementation of green practices in hotels, including resource availability such as financial, human, and time.

Legrand et al. (2022) reported that barriers to green practices in hotels can be classified into internal and external barriers. Internal barriers include lack of knowledge, human resources, finance, attitude of owners or administrators, and operations. External barriers include consumer attitudes, legislation, and accreditation. Chan et al. (2020) examined some new barriers to the implementation of green practices in Hong Kong Hotels, such as environmental feasibility and customer experience.

4.5 Strategies being implemented by hotels when adopting sustainable practices

The study showed that hotels implement certain strategies when adopting sustainable practices. The strategies of interest include training, certification, and guest involvement in the adoption of sustainable practices.

- **Training programs and certification**

Hotel managers are receiving training on sustainable practices and training their employees and management and implementation of the practices. They noted that:

R9: *"If we continue the practice of training programs for our employees, I am sure we will go a long way in our efforts to adopt sustainable practices, and making use of the internet, we will never go wrong. These training programs would also help to fight resistance from employees and would make things easier"*

One option is to obtain sustainability certificates from credible, independent agencies such as the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), and Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ). Hotels regard this measure as the most effective environmental strategy because it simultaneously reduces negative environmental impacts and provides a green image (Chan et al., 2020). Despite growing research on the benefits of sustainability certificates (Prakash et al., 2023), there is insufficient research to determine whether they offer a significant competitive advantage. Sustainability certificates have proven successful for some hotels promoting themselves as green destinations and have been positively received by salient stakeholders such as investors (Geng et al., 2024; Sulistiowati, Adisa, & Caturiani, 2021).

- **Guest Involvement**

Managers reviewed that they involve guests in their adoption of sustainable practices. Some of them were implemented as a result of guest visitors. The managers noted:

R7: *We have also engaged guests by educating them and offering incentives to those who comply with hotel energy regulations to encourage them to continue saving energy and comply with other sustainability measures, such as linen and towel reuse. Guests need to be more involved and shown how much they positively contribute to the adoption of sustainable tourism practices by cooperating with the hotel. Guests use in-house appliances and sometimes forget to turn them off. Turning off unused appliances will help reduce energy consumption.*

R10: *We need more workshops and training programs that focus on sustainability. Educating business owners about green practices can make a significant difference.*

R8: *Involving guests in local sourcing initiatives could be promoted to make it easier for hotels to access sustainable materials. This could help build a more competitive supply chain in the future.*

R9: *Involving guests in sustainable initiatives can raise awareness and support for sustainability efforts, which in turn encourages hotels to adopt eco-friendly practices.*

R10: *Simplifying regulations around sustainability in the hotel sector would encourage more hotels to comply without feeling overwhelmed by bureaucracy that will not burden hotel guests."*

R11: *Creating a supportive hotel environment that will create ability of hotels to serve guests in a sustainable competitive way*

This has been supported in literature review by Ngoni C Shereni and Rogerson (2023), who highlighted that the first step to take is to understand who your guests are. Although we know that many guests care about sustainability, people of different ages or from different parts of the world place a higher emphasis on the various elements of sustainability.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

Hotels in Mutare, Zimbabwe, practice various sustainable practices in their day-to-day operations, and hotel managers perceive the adoption of sustainable practices in hotels to be highly beneficial. The study brings to the fore sustainable practices, which include the use of low-flow shower heads in bathrooms, waste recycling, employing locals, serving local dishes, and the use of solar energy and many others. The level of application of sustainable practices corresponds with the size of each hotel and determines

the extent to which the managers practice sustainable practices as driven by the hotel brand. Managers perceive the application of varied strategies for the adoption of various sustainable hotel practices. Notable among the strategies are guest involvement, proper training of staff, and the use of punitive action in the event that the staff do not cooperate. Regarding the impact of sustainable tourism practices as perceived by managers, the findings revealed that sustainable practices lower energy use, lower water usage, reduce costs, help to attract more customers, and help to end poverty in all its forms and provide a sustainable competitive advantage. The managers indicated that during the process of implementing these practices, various challenges were encountered, such as resistance from staff members, high initial costs, and lack of knowledge.

This study contributes to contextual sustainable tourism practices that help understand how unique hotels utilize sustainable practices to enhance their business operations from a managerial perspective. This study provides a base upon which policymakers can utilize the identified sustainability practices that hoteliers can implement to achieve sustainable operations. The findings from the research on the adoption of sustainable tourism practices among hotels in Mutare, Zimbabwe, present several important implications for the sustainable performance of hotels in developing countries. The transition to sustainable tourism practices is linked to hotels' long-term viability. As environmental concerns grow globally, businesses adopting sustainable tourism practices are better positioned to navigate changes in business demand, regulations, and public expectations. Evidence suggests that hotels adopting sustainable tourism practices experience not only environmental benefits but also economic advantages. This dual outcome indicates that sustainability can be a viable business strategy that drives cost savings through energy efficiency and waste reduction, thus improving financial performance. The integration of sustainability into hotel operations can be a weapon for differentiation in the hotel industry. Government incentives and simplified regulatory frameworks are crucial for facilitating the adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the Maldives.

Therefore, policymakers in the hotel industry must recognize the challenges hotels face and implement supportive measures to encourage sustainable tourism practices. Hence, encouraging partnerships between hotels, environmental agencies, and the government can foster enhanced sustainable tourism practices. Collaborations can lead to shared resources, knowledge, and technologies, allowing hotels to implement sustainable tourism strategies effectively. The findings highlight the need for educational initiatives to empower hotel management with knowledge of sustainable tourism practices. Training programs can reduce the barriers to adoption, equipping business owners and employees with the skills and information necessary to implement sustainable tourism operations. Stakeholders, including the government, communities, and business leaders, must collaborate to create a supportive environment that promotes the adoption of sustainable tourism practices (Sulistiowati et al., 2021). This is essential not only for businesses but also for broader sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Zimbabwe.

The study focused on a small sample of hotels in Mutare; it is recommended that in future, the study be replicated at the national level using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gain deeper insight into managers' perceptions of the adoption of sustainable practices in hotels. The study sought to bring forth managers' perception of sustainable practices in hotels; there is also a need to investigate the perceptions of guests, employees, and government agencies on this trending concept.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings, hotel managers should continue to strengthen training and awareness programs for both employees and guests to reduce resistance and knowledge gaps in adopting sustainable practices. Future initiatives should also focus on forging stronger collaborations with government agencies, environmental organizations, and local communities to address high implementation costs through the use of shared resources and incentives. Moreover, hotels should gradually integrate sustainability certification schemes, as these can enhance their competitiveness and credibility in the market. Policymakers should provide supportive frameworks, including financial incentives and simplified regulations, to facilitate adoption. Finally, further research should expand the study to a national level, incorporating the perspectives of guests, employees, and regulators to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices in Zimbabwe's hotel sector.

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