

Exploring the Needs for Green Practices in the Hotel Supply Chain: The Case of Colombo District

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Abstract

This study examines the need for adopting green practices in the hotel supply chain within the Colombo District. The research aims to explore the needs for green practices in hotel supply chain in the Colombo district. In this study employed qualitative approach. Through semi-structured interviews with 5 hotel managers and supply chain professionals, and convenience sampling technique use for this study. Data analysis done by using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the five main needs for green practices in hotel industry. Such as Sustainability as a Necessity, Environmental Challenges and Collective Responsibility, Financial Benefits and Market Relevance, Luxury and Environmental Responsibility, Eco-Conscious Guests and Competitive Edge. The study concludes that adopting green practices in the hotel supply chain is not just a strategic advantage but a necessity for sustainability, financial efficiency, and market relevance. By integrating eco-friendly initiatives, hotels can meet global sustainability goals, reduce costs, and appeal to a growing base of environmentally conscious consumers.

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Introduction

The term "green" refers to continually improving resource utilization in a way that minimizes harmful impacts on human health and the environment while still being able to satisfy the needs of our planet's present and future (Brinkmann, 2023). Green practices focus on improving resource efficiency, reducing waste, and minimizing the environmental impact of operations. In the hotel industry, the supply chain plays a crucial role in sustainability by managing the flow of goods, services, and information while incorporating eco-friendly initiatives such as energy conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable sourcing. Hotels are increasingly adopting green supply chain management (GSCM) to address rising operational costs, environmental regulations, and competitive pressures. By integrating these practices, hotels can not only reduce their environmental footprint but also gain a competitive edge, enhance guest satisfaction, and contribute to the global sustainability agenda.

The increasing demand of the tourism in Sri Lanka environmental challenges are affect to the hotel operations. Therefore, identify the urgent need for adopting green practices in the supply chain of hotels in Colombo District is beneficial. Despite awareness and partial adoption of these practices, compliance with sustainable standards remains low, with very few hotels registered under the Green Building Council of Sri Lanka. This research aims to examine the necessity of implementing green practices to enhance sustainability and competitiveness in the Colombo hotel industry. This study helps to guide for promoting eco – friendly initiatives that align with global sustainability goals while addressing the unique challenges in Sri Lankan hotel industry.

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The objective of the study

This study aims to identify the objective as below.

To examine the need for adopting green practices in the supply chain of hotel industry in Colombo district.

Literature Review

The concept of Green Practices

Green practices refer to improving resource efficiency while minimizing the adverse impact on human health and the environment. The shift toward green practices in the hotel industry is part of a broader global push for sustainable development, particularly in building and supply chain management. The Palgrave Handbook of Global Sustainability highlights that green practices aim to reduce the consumption of energy, water, and materials throughout a structure's lifecycle, from design to deconstruction (Lucuik et al., 2005). These practices are particularly important in the hospitality industry, where hotels consume vast amounts of energy and resources due to continuous operations. Green building practices have emerged as a critical element in sustainability efforts, particularly in the construction and hotel sectors.

Adoption of Green Practices in the Hotel Industry

The adoption of green practices in hotels has been driven by the growing awareness of the environmental impact of hospitality operations. Many hotel chains globally, such as Shangri-la Hotels & Resorts and Mandarin Oriental, have incorporated green practices as part of their operational strategies (Ernst & Young, 2008). These efforts range from implementing energy-efficient lighting and water conservation systems to adopting waste management practices and promoting eco-friendly guest services.

Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) is an integral aspect of sustainability in the hotel industry. GSCM encompasses the integration of environmental considerations into the entire supply chain, from sourcing raw materials to delivering services to end consumers (Malik et al., 2016). The adoption of GSCM practices allows hotels to reduce waste, enhance resource efficiency, and improve their overall environmental performance. This is particularly important in the context of Colombo's hotel industry, where the pressure to adopt sustainable practices is increasing due to regulatory requirements and consumer demand for eco-friendly services (Green Building Council of Sri Lanka, 2023).

In Colombo, city hotels have been slow to adopt green practices, despite the increasing demand for sustainability in tourism. The Green Building Council of Sri Lanka (GBCSL) reports that there are only five hotels registered with the council for green certification, and none are located in the Colombo District. This highlights a significant gap in the adoption of green practices in the region, with most hotels focusing on operational efficiency rather than comprehensive environmental sustainability (GBCSL, 2023). The lack of registration and adherence to green building standards indicates the need for a more structured approach to implementing green practices in Colombo's hotel supply chains.

Significance of Green Practices in the Hotel Supply Chain

Green practices in the hotel supply chain offer several benefits, including cost savings, improved environmental performance, and enhanced market competitiveness. The hotel supply chain involves various stakeholders, including suppliers, service providers, and customers. By adopting green supply chain management practices, hotels can reduce their environmental footprint, optimize resource use, and improve their reputation among eco-conscious consumers (Zhu et al., 2008).

Research shows that hotels that implement green practices in their supply chains experience reduced operational costs, particularly in energy and waste management (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2013). Additionally, green practices in supply chain management help hotels comply with environmental

regulations and enhance their brand image as eco-friendly businesses, which is increasingly important for attracting environmentally conscious guests (Bohdanowicz, 2006).

Despite these benefits, there are challenges to adopting green practices in hotel supply chains, particularly in developing countries like Sri Lanka. A study by Pandithawatta et al. (2018) found that the primary barriers to implementing green practices in Sri Lankan hotels include a lack of awareness, limited technical expertise, and insufficient regulatory incentives. Moreover, the high initial cost of adopting green technologies, such as renewable energy systems and water conservation measures, poses a significant challenge for hotel operators. These factors have contributed to the slow adoption of green practices in Colombo's hotel industry, despite the evident need for sustainability in the tourism sector.

Methods

This study employed qualitative approach to examine the need for adopting green practices in hotel supply chain in Colombo District. Data were collected through semi- structured interview with the hotel managers and supply chain professionals from five prominent hotels in the district. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and patterns from the interview responses. As the sample technique this study used convenience sampling technique and 5 hotel managers and supply chain professionals taken to the study.

Results and Discussion

Below discussed the themes identified through the thematic analysis addressing the objective of the research, which is focused on highlighting the factors signifying the necessity for eco-friendly practices in the hotel supply chain. Interviewers mostly mentioned these points of Sustainability is a necessary part of hotels, to reduce environmental challenges and fulfil environmental responsibility, provide financial benefits and aligns with market, redefine luxury by incorporating environmental responsibility and finally it gives competitive advantages. These factors describe one by one in following.

1. Sustainability as a Necessity

In today's environment, the adoption of sustainability in the hotel industry is not merely a preference but a pressing necessity. This sentiment is consistently reflected by the respondents, who emphasize the alignment of green practices with global sustainability goals. Respondent 1 noted that "Green practices in the hotel supply chain... align with the global push for sustainable development." Similarly, Respondent 2 highlighted that "The preservation of our planet's... five-star hotels can lead the way in sustainability," while Respondent 3 stressed that "Sustainability is an overarching global goal... hotels can contribute to this greater cause." Respondent 4 pointed out that "Green practices align with global sustainability goals... it's also a strategic move to meet guest expectations," and Respondent 5 reinforced the idea, stating, "Green practices within the hotel supply chain... Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; it's a defining factor for our industry."

This industry-wide recognition reflects the growing urgency to address environmental degradation through sustainable practices. Green initiatives are no longer seen solely as a competitive advantage, but as a moral and ethical responsibility. This view is supported by the interview respondents, all of whom stress the need for sustainability within the hotel supply chain. As emphasized by research (Malik et al., 2016), sustainable initiatives in the hotel sector are integral to a larger societal shift towards ecological responsibility, aligning with the global effort to protect the environment for future generations. The findings of this study confirm that hotels are increasingly being viewed as key contributors to this effort, highlighting their role in fostering a sustainable future.

2. Environmental Challenges and Collective Responsibility

The hotel sector faces a multitude of environmental concerns that necessitate a collaborative approach as expressed by the respondents. The viewpoint of Respondent 3 and Respondent 5 highlights how

green practices have changed from being optional to being necessary, indicating an important shift in the industry, who states respectively, “By embracing green practices, these establishments can redefine luxury by incorporating environmental responsibility into their core values.” & “Green practices within the hotel supply chain have evolved from being an option to a necessity in our time.” These issues affect the basic foundation of the global environment and go beyond simple economic concerns as per the respondents. Respondent 2 highlights the same meaning of this. Further, hotels are becoming more aware of their shared duty as major contributors to environmental impact. The transition of green practices from optional extras to essential elements of the industry culture says a lot about the common dedication to sustainable development. This collective duty represents a determined effort to develop an environmentally responsible hospitality sector and takes many different forms, such as waste reduction programs and energy-efficient lighting as per the collected interview data.

3. *Financial Benefits and Market Relevance*

As highlighted in the literature review, implementing green practices in the hotel sector not only promotes environmental conservation but also offers significant financial advantages. Numerous studies have demonstrated that adopting sustainable practices enhances profitability while reducing operational costs. This perspective is strongly supported by Respondent 1, who remarked, “Adopting green practices enhances our reputation and competitiveness. Travelers are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious.” Additionally, Respondent 1 emphasized that “Green practices often lead to cost savings in the long run... By optimizing our supply chain to be more resource-efficient, we can reduce waste and lower procurement costs.” This sentiment is echoed by other respondents, who further stressed the financial benefits of going green. Respondent 2 noted, “While these investments might be substantial, they ultimately translate into long-term cost savings... and responsible procurement practices can considerably reduce operational expenses over time.” Similarly, Respondent 3 observed, “Hotels can realize cost savings through..., resulting in reduced operational expenses,” while Respondent 4 added, “I’d emphasize the financial aspect. It may seem like a waste of money in the short term, but... Green practices can, over time, lead to cost savings.” Respondent 5 further reinforced this point, stating, “I can’t ignore the financial benefits of going green... have substantially lowered operational costs.”

The consensus among respondents is that green practices not only reduce long-term operational costs but also increase profitability. By adopting eco-friendly measures, hotels gain a competitive edge in the modern travel market, as environmentally conscious travelers seek out businesses that align with their values. Respondents 1 and 4 particularly emphasized that these initiatives help hotels position themselves as socially responsible businesses while appealing to a growing market segment. As Respondent 2 aptly summarized, “The reputation and competitiveness of a five-star hotel are intricately linked to its commitment to sustainability.” This shows how adopting green practices not only contributes to environmental sustainability but also enhances market relevance and profitability.

4. *Luxury and Environmental Responsibility*

The hospitality sector has redefined its concept of luxury by incorporating environmental responsibility into its core principles, a shift supported by both interview data and literature (Anton et al., 2004). This transition is well captured by Respondent 3, who stated, “By embracing green practices, hotels can redefine luxury by incorporating environmental responsibility into their core values.” Similarly, Respondent 4 emphasized that green practices not only address environmental concerns but also fulfill guest expectations, noting, “Adopting green practices isn’t just about being environmentally responsible; it’s also a strategic move to meet guest expectations.” While other respondents did not delve deeply into this topic, these insights highlight how luxury is evolving from extravagance to sustainability. Modern affluent travellers are increasingly drawn to hotels that offer meaningful, environmentally responsible options, which enhances the guest experience and sets these hotels apart in a competitive market.

5. Eco-Conscious Guests and Competitive Edge

Modern hotel guests make decisions that are consistent with their environmental beliefs, and they are becoming more environmentally sensitive as elaborated in the studies of Ball & Abou Taleb, (2010) and Gnanapala & Rudmi, (2016). The perspective of Respondent 1 highlights how crucial it is for hotels to reflect the values of these environmentally conscious visitors, which falls in line with literature findings.

“Adopting green practices enhances our reputation and competitiveness. Travelers are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious.”

- Respondent 1

Incorporating green techniques into their operations not only makes hotels more competitive in the market but also draws in environmentally conscious tourists according to Respondents 3. This competitive advantage comes from both exceeding the expectations of the customer and making a positive impact on the environment. Environmentally conscious travelers are more likely to book rooms at hotels that align with their values, which increases demand for eco-friendly lodging as expressed by Respondent 4 through the statement “Many travelers are now seeking eco-conscious options, so adopting green practices isn't just about being environmentally responsible; it's also a strategic move to meet guest expectations”. Hotels may maintain their long-term survival and success by securing a prominent position in the competitive landscape by understanding and meeting this demand.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the investigation into the necessity of implementing green practices in the supply chain of the hotel business reveals a fundamental change in the sector. Green practices have changed from being seen as optional to becoming a crucial part of the hotel industry. Numerous elements included in the literature review drive this transition, which is supported by the respondent insights' thematic analysis. Adopting green practices is vital since they are in line with global sustainability goals, provide financial advantages, and meet consumer desires, particularly those of environmentally concerned tourists. The idea of luxury and competitiveness has changed as a result of the hotel industry's collaborative duty in tackling environmental issues. Incorporating environmental responsibility into their fundamental values allows hotels to meet the needs of contemporary travelers while also making a substantial contribution to reducing the environmental effect of the sector. This study emphasizes how important it is for hotels in the Colombo district and elsewhere to promote environmentally friendly operations since doing so is not just a matter of choice but also a necessary step toward a sustainable and profitable future.

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