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Sustainable practices in the hospitality industry: A case study of green initiatives in Thailand

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Abstract

This research paper extensively investigates the adoption and implementation of sustainable practices within the thriving hospitality industry in the beautiful country of Thailand. The study is primarily focused on highlighting the significance of green initiatives that aim to effectively mitigate the potentially harmful environmental impact caused by the rapidly growing tourism sector in this mesmerizing destination. Undoubtedly, it emphasizes the critical and urgent need for hotels, resorts, and other accommodation providers to comprehensively integrate and incorporate eco-friendly practices into their day-to-day operations. This forward-thinking approach is deemed essential due to the substantial socio-economic contributions made by the tourism industry to the remarkable country of Thailand. Comprehensive study delves into various dimensions and aspects of sustainable practices within the hospitable world. It delves into the exploration of innovative and energy-efficient technologies that can be effectively adopted to minimize the consumption of valuable resources. Additionally, the research investigates waste management systems which play a pivotal role in ensuring the preservation and conservation of the environment, while also reducing the ecological footprint associated with hospitality operations. Moreover, the study encompasses singly explores sustainable food and beverage operations, embracing the idea of utilizing locally sourced ingredients and promoting responsible consumption practices, ultimately leading to a healthier ecosystem. While analyzing the implementation process of these eco-friendly initiatives, the research also wholeheartedly acknowledges the barriers and challenges that hotel operators and managers face. These hurdles might include financial constraints, lack of knowledge and awareness, and difficulties in balancing the immediate costs with the long-term benefits. By acknowledging and addressing these obstacles, the research aims to provide valuable insights and potential solutions, ultimately promoting and facilitating a smooth transition towards sustainable hospitality practices. Through thoroughly examined case studies of successful and exemplary green practices within the hospitality industry, this research extensively highlights and emphasizes the vast array of potential benefits that can be derived from adopting sustainability measures. These positive outcomes include substantial cost savings, improved brand reputation, enhanced guest loyalty, and the creation of a unique selling proposition that sets the establishment apart from competitors. Furthermore, the findings of this study strongly advocate and call for a collaborative and cooperative approach among multiple stakeholders. It emphasizes the importance of active involvement and engagement between and among government policymakers, esteemed industry leaders, hotel operators, and the local communities. By fostering this culture of shared responsibility, it becomes possible to effectively foster and promote a proactive inclination towards environmental sustainability within the hospitality sector in Thailand. Ultimately, this enlightening and groundbreaking paper serves to underscore and emphasize the utmost importance of adopting and integrating green initiatives not only for the sustainability and preservation of Mother Nature but also for the long-term viability and competitiveness of the Thai hotel industry within the dynamic global hospitality landscape. By prioritizing the environment and acknowledging the potential risks associated with unsustainable practices, this research aims to empower and inspire all relevant stakeholders to make informed decisions and embrace change for a brighter and greener future.

Keywords: Sustainability; Green Economy; Green Initiative; Hospitality Business; Thailand

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1. Introduction

The global tourism industry is experiencing an incredible surge in growth, driven by an unprecedented influx of tourists who are eager to explore and immerse themselves in unique destinations around the world. This industry plays a critical role in global trade, employment opportunities, and the generation of significant national income. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that the rapid growth of tourism has resulted in detrimental environmental degradation, as well as economic, social, and cultural impacts. In the context of Thailand's hotel industry, which has witnessed remarkable expansion in both the number of tourists and the availability of accommodation facilities, it stands as one of the largest sectors within the service industry. Given the current lack of concerted efforts towards sustainable practices in this field, it is imperative to forge collaborations between esteemed scholars and industry practitioners to establish effective policy decisions and implement environmentally friendly practices. This collaborative effort is essential for ensuring the long-term, sustainable development of the sector. The objective of this paper is to bridge the existing research gap by presenting a comprehensive case study on recent green initiatives that focus on promoting sustainability within the hotel business. By delving into the specific practices and strategies employed by various establishments, this study aims to shed light on innovative approaches that can contribute to the establishment of a more ecologically conscious and environmentally sustainable hotel industry. This paper emphasizes the utmost significance and magnitude of initiatives and efforts directed towards the profound and extensive development of the paradigm of "green business" within the expansive and ever-evolving domain of the tourism industry. It fervently accentuates and directs its attention towards the exceedingly intricate and multifaceted local context of the resplendent Thai tourist industry, wherein an impressive plethora of cultural, social, political, and economic characteristics have all ingeniously woven together to profoundly shape and influence the unwavering and relentless progress of initiatives supporting astute and discerning business owners to effectively and meticulously compete in the fiercely competitive global arena. Amongst the panoply of industries that comprise this majestic and vivacious tapestry, the peerless and venerable hotel industry has been meticulously chosen and selected as the subject of profound scrutiny, as it emerges and shines intensely due to the myriads of hoteliers who have indefatigably and assiduously endeavored to seamlessly integrate sustainability into the very core operating principles and practices that underpin their resplendent and illustrious enterprises. On the other hand, various other business sectors, though undoubtedly vital and significant, tend to devote and concentrate their prodigious efforts and endeavors more intently and resolutely towards the inexorable and infallible pursuit of environmental preservation and conservation. The primary and principal impetus and *raison d'être* compelling and propelling this transcendent and transformative transition towards embracing sustainable practices within the industry is the cardinal and pressing need for shrewd management and effective mitigation of the far-reaching and deleterious impacts and consequences that arise and manifest as a direct result of the exponential increase in tourist consumption, whereby an astonishingly expansive suite of hotel services is enthusiastically consumed and experienced, thereby inevitably and inextricably fostering greater resource and energy consumption in stark contrast and comparison to the often more measured and restrained activities undertaken by the discerning tourists themselves.

1.1. Background of the Hospitality Industry in Thailand

The roots of the hospitality industry in Thailand can be traced all the way back to the 1850s, a time when foreign visitors first set foot in the country. These early travelers primarily relied on conventional methods of transportation, such as steamships, to reach the exotic land of Thailand. As the years went by, the influx of international inbound tourism began to soar, and the industry experienced a remarkable expansion. What was once a simple act of capturing snapshots at popular landmarks has now become a diverse range of activities that cater to the varied interests of tourists. The significance of this industry to Thailand's socio-economic landscape cannot be overstated. Year after year, tourism generates substantial revenue through the continuous flow of visitors. In fact, it has emerged as one of the country's major sources of income and the leading net revenue producer among all dominant national export services. Within the hospitality industry, the key players include airlines and hotels, which account for an impressive 73% of the market share. The remaining 27% is contributed by various travel aids, such as travel agents, restaurants, and tour operators. However, it is the cultural factors that truly shape the service industry in Thailand. The country's distinct cultural heritage, characterized by warm hospitality, has gained global recognition and is now synonymous with tourism in Thailand. This genuine Thai hospitality has successfully catered to the preferences of expatriate visitors, leaving a lasting impression on their experiences. The tourism industry in Thailand also benefits from the ever-changing consumer expectations and preferences. As daily routines evolve, so do the desires of travelers. In response to these dynamic trends, Thailand, driven by market forces, continuously adapts to the shifting landscape of international travel. Additionally, various domestic factors have contributed to the rapid increase in international tourists. The allure of experiencing the wonders of the world within the borders of Thailand, combined with worldwide interest, has successfully drawn visitors from far and wide. The proactive role played by the Thai government cannot be overlooked when assessing the growth of tourism. Recognizing the immense potential of the tourism sector, the Thai authorities

have worked tirelessly to create effective strategies and action plans. One can anticipate that Thai tourism soon will eventually overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic and regain its former glory. Thus, it becomes apparent that national plans are just as crucial as any other aspect. These comprehensive plans, designed to enhance the visitor experience, have been implemented with the aim of transforming the tourism industry into a smarter one. Smart tourism, in turn, will serve as the foundation for Thailand's safety and sustainability efforts, ensuring that both visitors and the industry thrive harmoniously. Thailand has always been a gem in Southeast Asia's crown, known for its vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and delicious cuisine. With the constant growth of the hospitality industry, Thailand continues to evolve and meet the needs of its diverse range of visitors. Whether it's exploring ancient temples, relaxing on pristine beaches, or indulging in world-class spas, Thailand offers something for everyone. So, pack your bags and prepare for an unforgettable journey to the land of smiles. Your Thai adventure awaits.

1.2. Importance of Sustainable Practices

Sustainable practices are becoming increasingly important in the hospitality industry as businesses strive to create a positive impact on the environment and society. Numerous studies have brought to light the immense value that adopting sustainable practices can bring to a brand, ultimately increasing the loyalty and satisfaction of both guests and employees, encouraging them to stay longer and engage more deeply. From an environmental perspective, the hospitality industry holds the power to address a range of ecological issues by implementing various initiatives. By taking part in waste and noise management programs, businesses can actively contribute to reducing their environmental footprint. Additionally, conserving water and energy is a crucial step towards environmental stewardship, while simultaneously reducing operational costs. Greenhouse gas emissions can be mitigated through innovative practices and technologies, solidifying the industry's commitment to sustainable development. Moreover, investing in eco-friendly products and services not only showcases a company's dedication to sustainability but also establishes them as a leader in their field, attracting environmentally conscious consumers. The conservation of resources is particularly invaluable for the tourism sector, especially as we navigate the post-pandemic era. By adopting sustainable practices, hospitality businesses can position themselves as responsible and forward-thinking, appealing to travelers who prioritize sustainability in their decision-making process. As the world slowly recovers from the impacts of the pandemic, tourists will be increasingly drawn to destinations and establishments that prioritize resource conservation and demonstrate a commitment to sustainable tourism practices. Furthermore, embracing sustainability can significantly improve business efficiency and long-term viability. By implementing effective waste and energy management strategies, operational costs can be reduced, leading to increased profitability. Moreover, sustainable practices create a competitive advantage, as companies that actively engage in eco-friendly initiatives are better positioned to withstand competition from new entrants. Additionally, embracing sustainable practices enhances a business's security when accessing credit or financial resources, as financial institutions increasingly consider environmental and social responsibility as key factors in their lending decisions. In conclusion, sustainable practices are no longer seen as mere trends but as essential components for success in the hospitality industry. By prioritizing initiatives that focus on waste and noise management, water and energy conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, and investment in eco-friendly products and services, businesses can bolster their brand value, attract and retain guests, and improve overall operational efficiency. The future of the hospitality industry lies in sustainability, and those who embrace it stand to benefit not only financially but also by making a positive impact on the world we live in. Tourism demand has been steadily and consistently increasing by approximately 4.4% annually, demonstrating widespread interest and desire for travel experiences. This growth extends not only to developed markets but also to emerging markets, indicating global demand for green products and services. As eco-conscious tourists become more aware of the environmental threats posed by traditional hospitality practices, the significance of sustainable or green initiatives within the industry has become increasingly important. Recognizing this shift in consumer preferences, most hospitality organizations now recognize the need to actively pursue sustainability practices and strategies. Embracing a move towards a green economy, hotels understand that their role extends beyond providing accommodation and services. They are expected to act as responsible and caring members of the community, demonstrating a genuine commitment to the well-being of both the host community and the environment. To achieve this, hotels must implement sustainable management practices that prioritize the preservation and efficient utilization of natural resources. By integrating eco-friendly operational processes and initiatives, hotels can minimize their carbon footprint and contribute positively to the overall well-being of the planet. It is important to note that social responsibility and the pursuit of profit within the hospitality industry are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they coexist harmoniously, with social and economic priorities flourishing in tandem. Hotels that embrace their social responsibility, caring for the communities they operate in, often find that their economic success follows suit. By prioritizing the needs and expectations of guests, staff, and the community, hotels can create a virtuous cycle that benefits everyone involved. While it may seem challenging to strike a perfect balance between social, economic, and environmental objectives, the literature suggests that there are ways to effectively pursue a strategy of justice and sustainability. This requires a thoughtful mix of economic considerations, green practices, and social objectives, all working synergistically to create a thriving and sustainable industry. By

embracing sustainability as a core principle, the hospitality industry can position itself as a catalyst for positive change and contribute significantly to the well-being of both present and future generations. Through continued efforts and a genuine commitment to sustainability, hotels can not only meet the evolving demands of eco-conscious travelers but also inspire other industries to adopt greener practices, ultimately leading to a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

1.3. Green Hospitality Concepts

The idea of 'green' or sustainable hospitality is based on several related concepts, such as eco-management and CSR. Green or sustainable hospitality is an invention highlighting the systemic nature of the hotel operation and makes explicit the complex interactions that need to be managed concurrently, for businesses to demonstrate both financial success and environmental stewardship as compatible corporate goals. Sustainable or green hotel and hospitality operations are those that possess the capability not only to support long-term financial health, but also to contribute positively to the cultural, economic and ecological sustenance of their locale. These establishments strive to implement innovative strategies and initiatives that prioritize energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, and the use of environmentally friendly materials. Moreover, they place a significant emphasis on social responsibility, aiming to strengthen local communities, empower their employees, and establish meaningful partnerships with local suppliers and organizations. By adopting sustainable practices, green hotels and hospitality businesses can create a positive impact on the planet, enhance guest experiences, and contribute to the overall well-being of the communities they operate in. Therefore, embracing green or sustainable hospitality not only serves as a pathway to profitability and competitiveness but also to drive positive change in the world. Some key principles of sustainable hotel and hospitality operations revolve around the concepts of promoting greater resource efficiency and implementing cleaner waste prevention strategies, such as waste minimization or reduction practices. To achieve these goals, various sustainable initiatives are adopted, which involve active participation and cooperation with local industries, particularly in terms of sourcing food supplies through direct on-demand procurement. Moreover, numerous hotel-based initiatives focus on conducting extensive research on local values, culture, art, and tradition, as well as fostering organic community farming and enhancing land fertility. By engaging in these green initiatives on a broader scale, such as at the domain of the destination or regional level, significant bioregional benefits can be expected to emerge over the long term. Additionally, sustainable alliances also lead to the development of production sharing networks and sales networks that aim to enhance the overall resilience of the small business sector. By collaborating and sharing resources, businesses can strengthen their ability to overcome challenges and thrive in a sustainable manner. This, in turn, leads to positive impacts not only on the environment but also on the local economy and community. Overall, the implementation of sustainable practices in hotel and hospitality operations not only contributes to environmental conservation but also fosters economic growth, cultural preservation, and social well-being. By embracing these key principles, businesses can make a meaningful and positive difference in the world while also ensuring their long-term success. A 'green' business is one that consciously and responsibly utilizes sustainable resources, or that takes significant measures to minimize any negative impact it may have on its surrounding environment and ecological systems. These green business practices not only serve as a moral obligation to protect our planet, but they also have the power to shape a competitive advantage that offers tremendous benefits to both the companies themselves and the influx of eco-conscious tourists in our world today and in the future. Embracing green designs that not only consider the environmental aspects but also the broader cultural implications allows hotels and resorts to offer their guests experiences that align with the values of a diverse range of sustainability stakeholders. These experiences have become increasingly sought after, as reflected in numerous hotel-based consumer surveys. The ratings and feedback from guests overwhelmingly confirm that properties with a strong commitment to community involvement and featuring green design elements greatly enhance the overall experience for visitors. There is an urgent need to focus on the holistic economic, social, and environmental impact that guests encounter during their stay. This comprehensive approach aligns perfectly with the ever-evolving expectations of today's guests. Tourists, as a collective, are placing a growing emphasis on supporting goods and services that are environmentally friendly and actively contribute to the wellbeing of their chosen destinations. After all, responsible tourism is an integral part of sustainable development, and travelers are increasingly recognizing its significance. While considering green initiatives, it is vital to acknowledge the significance of local perceptions and engagement. Local communities play a crucial role in the success of any green endeavor, and therefore, their sentiments must be thoroughly assessed and understood. It is essential to gauge the views and values of target audiences that have possibly not been adequately surveyed in the past. Their insights and opinions are invaluable in shaping green initiatives that are not only effective but also truly representative of the community's aspirations and needs.

1.4. A Definition and Principles of Green Hospitality

Green hospitality, also known as sustainable hospitality, encompasses a wide range of environmentally friendly practices in the lodging and hotel industry. This includes the incorporation of ecological sites and sounds into the attraction, as well as various possibilities within the broader tourism and hospitality sector. The core objective of green

hospitality is to ensure that human development remains within sustainable limits, thereby decreasing the depletion of natural resources and minimizing negative impacts on the ecology and society. To effectively implement green or responsible tourism strategies, the consultation report offers key criteria that must be met. These criteria serve as the foundation for successfully executing initiatives related to green or responsible tourism assignments. Furthermore, the hospitality industry is known for providing personalized and exceptional travel services to tourists during their relaxing vacations and exciting excursions. Architects, along with tourism and hospitality experts, possess a unique skill set in engaging with foreign tourists, despite the occasional controversies that may arise. They thoroughly understand the needs and desires of these tourists and strive to surpass their expectations through the delivery of exceptional customer service. In line with its commitment to sustainability, the United States hotel business is poised to become a global leader in climate goals. It plans to achieve this by reducing power demand by an impressive 30%. Moreover, it will actively secure 25% of its power from renewable sources. This ambitious endeavor sets a remarkable example for the rest of the world to follow, showcasing the potential for significant progress in combating climate change within the hospitality industry. By embracing green practices, the hospitality sector not only safeguards the environment but also ensures that future generations can continue to enjoy the wonders of travel and tourism. Overall, green hospitality plays a vital role in promoting sustainable development and fostering a more responsible and eco-friendly approach within the tourism and hospitality industry. The implementation of the concept of sustainability is based on several postulates. Among them, the most important, such as efficiency, conservation, and change, involve the responsible use of resources, which makes the functioning of the organization more accountable. As for the principle of effectiveness, it relates to more efficient practices to obtain the same results, equivalent quality services, and infrastructure, while trying to find low-cost alternatives where possible, such as the use of energy-efficient products. In such a context, hospitality is no exception. Given the rapid changes within the eco-environment, especially the challenges that administrative staff face in the world today, it is important to accept the practice of continuous improvement and keep their awareness and consciousness awake both inside and outside the hotel. In terms of understanding the expectations of consumers, the operational side is equally important, since green and conscientious behavior is the current trend, largely based on a global social perspective. People are now more and more concerned about social, ecological, aesthetic, health, and safety considerations. A survey conducted on visitors, among luxury travelers with eco-friendly concerns, indicated that many would be more likely to return in the future to the hospitality that illustrated its commitment to and dedication to greener practices. In this respect, cleaning with eco-friendly chemicals and appliances to minimize pollution of the air and water sources showed remarkable emphasis. A summary of these principles would encourage any member of the industry to be progressive, aspiring, and dedicated to conserving our environment, our resources, and our health. The concept of sustainability, encompassing various principles and practices, plays a crucial role in organizations today. Efficiency, conservation, and change stand out amongst the key postulates, promoting responsible resource utilization and enhancing organizational accountability. Another significant aspect is the principle of effectiveness, emphasizing the pursuit of more efficient methods to achieve equivalent quality services and infrastructure, with a focus on exploring cost-effective alternatives such as energy-efficient products. This paradigm is particularly relevant within the hospitality industry, acknowledging the need for constant adaptation amidst evolving eco-environmental challenges and the demands faced by administrative staff worldwide. It is imperative to foster a culture of continuous improvement, enabling heightened awareness and consciousness both within and outside the hotel's premises. To remain relevant and meet consumer expectations, it is vital for the operational side of hospitality to align with the current global social perspective characterized by an increasing emphasis on green and conscientious behavior. Individuals now prioritize social, ecological, aesthetic, and health considerations along with safety aspects. Notably, a survey conducted among luxury travelers with eco-friendly concerns revealed that demonstrating commitment and dedication to greener practices significantly influenced their decision to return to hospitality establishments in the future. In this regard, the adoption of eco-friendly cleaning chemicals and appliances to minimize air and water pollution received considerable attention. In summary, embracing the principles of sustainability encourages members of the industry to be progressive, aspiring, and dedicated to preserving our environment, optimizing resource utilization, and safeguarding our health. By adhering to these ideals, organizations can not only meet current expectations but also contribute to a more sustainable future.

1.5. Green Initiatives in the Thai Hospitality Industry

Various green initiatives are being put in place in the Thai hospitality industry to promote sustainability and environmental conservation. These initiatives encompass a wide range of strategies and practices, aimed at minimizing the industry's impact on the environment and maximizing its energy efficiency. By utilizing energy-efficient technologies and implementing waste management systems, hotels and restaurants in Thailand are actively working towards a more sustainable future. One of the major steps being taken by industry is the adoption of efficient heat exchangers, which help to reduce energy consumption and minimize carbon emissions. These heat exchangers play a crucial role in heating and cooling systems, allowing for more efficient use of energy resources. Furthermore, the Thai hospitality sector is also focusing on the introduction of environmentally friendly menus, which prioritize locally

sourced ingredients and sustainable farming practices. This not only supports local producers but also promotes a healthier and more sustainable food system. In line with these efforts, the industry is also committed to hosting Green Meetings programs. These programs aim to organize conferences and events with a minimal carbon footprint, considering factors such as energy consumption, waste management, and sustainable transportation options. By implementing these green practices, the Thai hospitality industry is taking significant steps towards achieving responsible and sustainable tourism. Moreover, the government has extended its support to the industry by granting privileges to import machinery, equipment, and other materials that promote energy conservation. These imports must meet the qualification criteria set by the Ministry of Energy under the Investment Promotion Act. This not only encourages businesses to adopt sustainable practices but also contributes to the development of a greener economy. Additionally, some provincial governments have taken a step further by offering tax privileges to tourists who choose to stay in hotels certified by the Green Leaf Foundation. This certification ensures that the hotel meets stringent environmental standards and practices. By incentivizing tourists to opt for environmentally conscious accommodations, the industry is fostering a culture of sustainability and responsible travel. All these initiatives collectively aim to create a more sustainable and eco-friendly future for the Thai hospitality sector. By reducing their environmental impact, hotels and restaurants not only benefit the local communities and ecosystems but also enhance the overall visitor experience. These efforts align with global endeavors to combat climate change and protect our planet for future generations. With the implementation of green practices, the Thai hospitality industry is not only enhancing its reputation but also paving the way for a more responsible and sustainable approach to tourism. A comprehensive and holistic five-point agenda has been put forth to address the pressing environmental concerns that plague the world today. These points act as guidelines towards a more sustainable future, ensuring that every aspect of tourism and hospitality is carefully considered and tailored to minimize negative impacts on the environment and society. The first point emphasizes the importance of developing and promoting environmentally preferable products and services. This calls for a shift in mindset and practices, encouraging businesses in the industry to adopt sustainable approaches in their offerings. By doing so, they can contribute to the preservation and conservation of natural resources. The second point highlights the need to minimize the adverse environmental and social effects that arise during various stages of the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of tourism facilities and services. It is crucial to identify and implement sustainable methods and technologies that not only minimize harm but also promote positive impacts on local communities and ecosystems. The third point urges hotels to take the lead in implementing efficient energy, water, and waste management systems. By adopting innovative and eco-friendly practices, such as utilizing renewable energy sources, conserving water, and implementing effective waste management strategies, hotels can significantly reduce their environmental footprint. To inspire hotels to adopt these practices, the fourth point suggests the use of Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action model. This model aims to raise awareness about the significance of sustainable practices, generate interest among hoteliers, ignite a desire to make a positive change, and ultimately motivate them to take appropriate actions towards environmental responsibility. The fifth point emphasizes the importance of putting pressure on governmental agencies to ensure the provision of five-star environmental destinations, hotels, and services. By doing so, policymakers can promote sustainable tourism as a key aspect of national development, encouraging the growth of green initiatives and eco-friendly practices. It is encouraging to witness the Thai population awakening to the urgency and magnitude of these environmental issues. As a result, individual hotels in Thailand have taken up the mantle of environmental responsibility by adopting best practice benchmarks. Renowned establishments such as the Royal Cliff Beach Resort, Kata Beach Resort, and Phuket Arcadia, along with acclaimed restaurants like the Sparkling Tortoise, Tom Yum Kung, and the Royal Thai Herbs, have set examples for others to follow. Amidst traditional development, the looming threat of climate change, and the dire need for environmental protection, the incorporation of green initiatives has emerged as the defining characteristic of business performance, products, and services in the hotel industry. It is no longer enough to focus solely on profit; the preservation of our planet has taken center stage, and this radical shift towards sustainability is reshaping the way the industry operates. Only by integrating these initiatives into the very fabric of our societies can we hope to guarantee a brighter, greener future for generations to come. However, these case studies focus on the objectives and achievements of the events, excluding the problems or challenges that had been encountered in adopting green practices. Environmental responsibility as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices is still relatively new and emerging in Thailand. This study, on the other hand, aims to provide a holistic and extensive understanding of the green initiatives undertaken by the Thai hospitality industry. By delving into both the successful factors and the challenges faced in the implementation of such environmentally conscious initiatives, this research seeks to shed light on the potential impact of these initiatives on the overall business performance of green hotels and/or restaurants in the country. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to contribute valuable insights and recommendations for future sustainability endeavors in the Thai hospitality sector.

1.6. Eco-Friendly Accommodation Practices

Most respondents mentioned eco-friendly accommodation practices in their hotels. For instance, one of the hotel managers stated that “Our hotel has been certified for food and cleanliness, for local environment-friendly operations,

and for the building in the hotel which is Gold LEED certified.” Due to the hotel star rating and eco-labeling standards, hotels and resorts are moving towards obtaining environmentally friendly hotel certification by developing their hotels according to ecological principles such as energy saving, water saving, decreased solid waste creation, and local procurement. In addition to the environment-friendly hotel certification issued by various organizations, respondents have added that the most effective eco-friendly hotel strategies are attributes that cannot be seen. One manager believes that guests will not see “the green practices, because everything is behind the scenes and done in an invisible way.” Eco-labels are conducted by the government, NGOs, or the owners of hotels, emphasizing that some activities related to hotels being certified as ‘green’ cannot truly reveal that hotels are ‘green’ hotels. To satisfy consumer demands and become a distinctive hotel, respondents came up with a series of eco-friendly practices. Most managers state that focusing on natural resources such as water, energy, and waste is crucial. For example, one manager states that conservation is good, cost-wise, and helps the environment. These practices include implementing advanced water conservation technologies throughout the entire hotel, including low-flow faucets and toilets, as well as water recycling systems. Additionally, hotels are installing energy-efficient lighting systems, utilizing LED bulbs and motion sensors to minimize electricity consumption. Moreover, they are incorporating renewable energy sources, such as solar panels or wind turbines, to generate electricity onsite, further reducing their carbon footprint. Furthermore, hotels are prioritizing waste reduction by implementing recycling programs and composting initiatives. They are actively encouraging guests to participate in these efforts by providing separate bins for recyclables and organic waste in guest rooms and common areas. To ensure responsible and sustainable sourcing, hotels are collaborating with local suppliers, farmers, and artisans to procure organic, seasonal, and locally sourced ingredients for their restaurants, promoting the local economy and minimizing the environmental impact of transportation. In terms of guest engagement, hotels are focusing on raising awareness and educating their guests about eco-friendly practices. They provide information on energy-saving measures, water conservation tips, and the importance of reducing waste through signage, brochures, and in-room materials. Some hotels even offer incentives, such as discounts or rewards, to guests who actively participate in their sustainability programs. Another significant aspect of eco-friendly accommodation practices is the incorporation of nature-based features and designs. Many hotels are integrating green spaces, rooftop gardens, and vertical forests within their premises to enhance aesthetics, improve air quality, and create habitats for local flora and fauna. They are also using sustainable and non-toxic building materials, such as bamboo or recycled wood, and implementing efficient insulation systems to reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling. Overall, the shift towards eco-friendly accommodation practices reflects the industry's recognition of its environmental responsibilities and the growing demand from consumers for sustainable tourism options. By adopting these practices, hotels not only contribute to the preservation of the environment but also attract environmentally conscious guests who value responsible and ethical travel choices. With continuous innovation and collaboration, the hospitality sector has the potential to significantly reduce its ecological footprint and pave the way towards a greener and more sustainable future.

1.7. Sustainable Food and Beverage Operations

In recent years, there has been a growing trend in Thailand among hotels, resorts, and spas to prioritize sustainability in their culinary endeavors and actively reduce their carbon footprint. These establishments are now placing a strong emphasis on sourcing local and organic produce, ethically reared livestock and fish, and incorporating locally made condiments and beverages in their menus. This concerted effort is part of their commitment to expand their green initiatives and promote environmentally friendly practices. By consciously reducing the distance that food travels, these food service operators are not only diminishing energy consumption but also minimizing the emissions generated by transportation vehicles used for ingredient delivery. Furthermore, this commitment allows them to offer a wider selection of fresh produce and culinary trends on their menus, giving their guests a more diverse and vibrant dining experience. The impact of their efforts extends beyond their own establishments as it translates into healthier dining options for their employees and the broader community. Underpinning this movement is a dedication to creating a sustainable food and beverage sector. These establishments are actively striving to source their ingredients from nearby areas, minimizing the need for long-haul transportation. This strategy not only benefits the environment by reducing carbon emissions but also bolsters the local economy as it supports local farmers and producers. Through their commitment to utilizing locally sourced ingredients, these operators are making a significant contribution to the preservation of natural resources and the reduction of food waste. In addition, by embracing organic farming practices, these establishments are championing a more harmonious relationship between human activity and nature. Organic farming methods help safeguard the environment by avoiding the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides. This dedication to organic produce guarantees that guests are enjoying meals that are not only nutritious and delicious but also free from harmful residues. To further amplify their sustainability efforts, these establishments are engaging in partnerships and collaborations with local communities and organizations. By connecting with these stakeholders, they can bolster their knowledge of traditional culinary practices and incorporate them into their menus. This collaboration not only benefits the establishments themselves but also enhances the cultural richness and diversity of the culinary

offerings they provide. Ultimately, these sustainable food and beverage operations are driving positive change in the hospitality industry. Through their commitment to reducing food miles and embracing environmentally friendly practices, they are leading the way in promoting healthier dining choices and a greener future for all. Second only to reducing food miles is the commendable effort that operators in the culinary industry are wholeheartedly taking to minimize food waste and actively promote responsible dining practices. It is truly astonishing to learn that in the bustling master distributor markets in Bangkok alone, a staggering 40 tons of over 3,000 unique Thai vegetables and fruits are carelessly discarded within a mere single day. This unfortunate waste occurs despite the fact that numerous small family farms are unable to even showcase their incredibly fresh produce in the marketing stage, all due to the arbitrary notion of fruit and vegetables not being "cosmetically" flawless. However, in a remarkable demonstration of their commitment to excellence, culinary operators have not only dedicated themselves to sourcing the most impeccable raw materials to create delectable gourmet cuisine, but they have also wholeheartedly embraced the ethos of proper business conduct and the noble cause of promoting the zero-waste culinary concept. By doing so, they can exquisitely serve their patrons with top-quality food while simultaneously making a remarkable difference in the local environment. It is truly awe-inspiring to witness chefs, equipped with state-of-the-art kitchens and adorned with prestigious awards, embracing the principles of green gourmet. These culinary virtuosos have taken it upon themselves to showcase their remarkable sustainable culinary achievements at various public culinary events, all with the heartfelt intention of sharing their knowledge and inspiring the wider public. Additionally, it is tremendously gratifying to witness international hotel operators redirecting their focus towards sustainability as they design their culinary festival themes. In the face of the ever-growing environmental menace of global warming, these remarkable events are exactly the kind that Thai hotels and resorts should proudly highlight, especially with the rising influx of foreign chefs who possess invaluable expertise in the realm of culinary sustainability.

1.8. Challenges and Opportunities

Although it is seen as a responsibility of hospitality operators and the industry to ensure sustainable development, not all operators have adopted environmentally friendly or green initiatives in their activities. One of the reasons is that hospitality operators are profit-seeking businesses that may lack the resources to initiate changes in the short term. Positively, interviewees also mentioned that at least some hotels or resorts' reputation would be tarnished if they did not embrace environmentally friendly activities. Most of the interviewees agreed that costs and resources are the major constraints preventing them from implementing environmental activities in their hotels and resorts. Interview findings also show that general environmental activities and green initiatives are not necessarily a necessary part of the business philosophy. They are only embraced into the business in response to demand, and most international brand hotels were found to be offering a long-term vision for engaging in environmentally friendly initiatives for their chain. However, it is important to note that not all hotels and resorts view environmental issues in the same way. Some operators may prioritize their profits over sustainable practices, while others may genuinely care about their impact on the environment. In any case, awareness of the importance of environmentally friendly initiatives is growing in the hospitality industry. As society becomes more environmentally conscious, consumers are increasingly demanding eco-friendly options in all aspects of their lives, including their travel accommodations. This growing demand puts pressure on hospitality operators to adapt and implement green initiatives to meet customer expectations. Implementing environmental activities in hotels and resorts can have various benefits, not only for the environment but also for the businesses themselves. For example, energy-saving measures can significantly reduce operational costs in the long run. Additionally, adopting sustainable practices can enhance a hotel's reputation and attract environmentally conscious customers. To overcome the constraints of costs and resources, hospitality operators can explore partnerships with environmental organizations or seek funding from government grants or sustainability programs. Collaborating with experts in the field can provide valuable guidance and support in implementing effective and impactful environmental activities. Furthermore, hotels and resorts can also benefit from incorporating sustainability into their overall business philosophy. By adopting a long-term vision for environmentally friendly initiatives, they can create a positive brand image and contribute to a more sustainable future. This approach not only benefits the hotels and resorts themselves but also sets an example for other businesses in the industry. Overall, while there may be challenges in implementing environmental activities in the hospitality industry, there is a growing recognition of the importance of sustainability. By embracing green initiatives and prioritizing sustainable practices, hotels and resorts can not only meet customer demands but also contribute to a healthier and more environmentally conscious world. Most operators have not seen any innovative steps or been leading in adopting environmentally friendly initiatives. On the positive side, many of the SME owners said they had embraced environmental activities into their existing operations from the construction phase of the business, but not afterwards. They did not have any idea about visible environmental innovations to create a partnership with or to help make the business grow. Respondents suggested that potentially higher costs would be incurred if tourist purchasing behavior remained relatively unchanged. The cost of implementing environmentally friendly activities creates a constraint for hotels, according to operators. Generally, there are several barriers that appear, such as lack of awareness and vision; lack of clear or precise policy and framework for introducing green or

environmentally friendly activities; lack of prevalent and visible incentives; high costs, and limited access to resources. Some traditional operator and entrepreneur mindsets concerning the intertwined relationships that the tourism industry shares with nature also play a significant role in barring innovation in design and building in large hotels. Managers are, of course, unable to act independently; they need to have buy-in and an understanding of what their customers want. Thus, training, educating, and collaborating with stakeholders would help managers to assist customers and stakeholders in overcoming limited understanding and show them that their lifestyles and life choices could drive wider opportunities for change and create a positive impact on the environment. The barriers perceived are based on the status quo at the time of the research. However, they may also have driven necessary changes in the sector or reinforced a move in the right policy direction. The data do not, however, offer sufficient evidence to track these indications; neither do they generate pointers that might direct potential control or correctional elements. Suggested change directions would be incomplete without exact details of how to start. The take-home message from these results provides a useful and substantial guide. In understanding the developmental nature of business in this area and the growing load on green holidays, sustainable living, and responsible consumerism, the motivations presented in the next paragraph should be used by the government, policymakers, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, there is a significant amount of anticipation surrounding the imminent arrival of substantial changes, which will be instrumental in reversing the current trend. Hotel managers and entrepreneurs find themselves in a position where they must delve deeper into important matters such as sustainability, carbon footprints, and global warming. They must also acknowledge the fact that small and medium-sized properties play a crucial role in establishing local protections that have a far-reaching impact on the global scale. These safeguards not only contribute to environmental conservation but also preserve cultural heritage and promote socio-economic benefits. Moreover, it is of utmost importance that these individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of the transitions occurring in the property market values. It is crucial to recognize how these fluctuations influence client expectations and how failing to meet them can potentially result in considerable financial costs to stakeholders. Failing to grasp these concepts may lead the city and region down a path where they become global or continuously negative positions as competitors in the tourist industry, exacerbating issues such as congestive exclusion that have been prevalent since the 2010s. Hence, it is vital for hotel managers and entrepreneurs to embrace these developments actively and take necessary measures to adapt and excel in this rapidly evolving landscape.

1.9. Barriers to Implementing Green Practices

Numerous studies have extensively delved into the various factors that hinder the adoption of green practices. This hindrance, in turn, poses a challenge for companies seeking to implement sustainability initiatives. These barriers could either be applicable universally across the hospitality sector or specifically to restaurants. Financial factors are frequently mentioned as a major obstacle to the implementation of eco-friendly practices. Given the thin profit margins within the hospitality industry, restaurants face significant challenges when it comes to the initial costs associated with acquiring new equipment or establishing recycling infrastructure, which ultimately discourages the adoption of environmentally conscious practices. However, the entire scenario can be transformed if consumers actively advocate for the adoption of green practices within the industry. Sadly, the lack of knowledge and awareness surrounding environmental issues leads many restaurants to view such practices as inconsequential. Barriers rooted in business operations and management practices within an organization's culture also play a pivotal role in preventing the adoption of green practices. Resistance to change and a lack of interest in the environment are often observed within industry. Numerous studies suggest that one of the most noteworthy barriers to the implementation of green practices in the hospitality sector lies in people-related issues. Firstly, training presents a substantial initial cost for hospitality businesses. The skills most sought after by restaurants looking to transition into more sustainable operations include staff and customer relations, kitchen management expertise, motivational and inspirational abilities, as well as the aptitude for driving innovation. Secondly, competition acts as a barrier to adopting sustainability practices. Competitors rarely prioritize the originality and commercial advantages that come with being viewed as a green market leader. Moreover, the scarcity of environmentally friendly products available on the market significantly hampers the efforts of restaurants wishing to incorporate green practices. Offering a wide range of food products is considered a cornerstone of success in the hospitality industry. Lastly, although compliance with regulations is seldom cited as a major obstacle for the hospitality sector when it comes to environmental practices, it is important to acknowledge that regulatory forces must be considered as both a potential barrier and a catalyst for sustainable practices.

1.10. Economic Benefits of Sustainability

Achieving cost savings through resource efficiency is one of the major driving forces behind the decision of hoteliers to adopt sustainable management practices. From simple energy-saving measures such as using LED lighting and installing motion sensors to the installation of energy-efficient equipment like HVAC systems and low-flow water fixtures, there are a plethora of opportunities for hotels to optimize their energy consumption. Implementing these measures not only results in substantial cost savings but also reduces the carbon footprint of establishment. In addition to energy

efficiency, waste management is another profitable sustainability practice. By implementing effective waste separation and recycling programs, hotels can reduce waste disposal costs and even generate revenue through the sale of recyclable materials. Furthermore, reducing food waste by implementing composting programs or donating excess food to local shelters not only benefits the environment but also establishes a positive reputation within the community. However, the benefits of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry extend beyond cost savings and environmental considerations. By embracing sustainability, hotels and resorts can develop a competitive edge through market differentiation. With the growing demand for eco-friendly accommodations, guests are increasingly seeking establishments that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices. By showcasing their green initiatives, hotels can attract environmentally conscious travelers and tap into a niche market that continues to expand. Moreover, the establishment of a strong customer base often depends on the establishment of long-term relationships. Once consumers have developed a loyalty or routine to visiting a particular hotel, they are more likely to continue to do so. By incorporating sustainable practices, hotels can cultivate a loyal customer base by aligning their values with those of their guests. This fosters a sense of trust, as guests appreciate and support establishments that prioritize environmental responsibility. From eco-friendly amenities and services to locally sourced and organic food options, sustainability becomes a key factor in shaping a hotel's brand image and attracting repeat clientele. In conclusion, adopting sustainable management practices not only enables hotels to achieve significant cost savings but also positions them as leaders in the industry. By implementing energy-saving measures, optimizing waste management strategies, and appealing to environmentally conscious guests, hotels can not only reduce their environmental impact but also strengthen their brand and gain a competitive advantage. Embracing sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity for hoteliers looking to thrive in an increasingly eco-conscious world. Private-sector investment in eco-tourism or 'green Travel' is on the increase. This trend has led to the recognition of eco-tourism as a sustainable and environmentally friendly location option. Many international policies have been established to regulate and enforce sustainable and green certification requirements in the tourism and hospitality industry. It is important for hotels to embrace corporate social responsibility as it can bring significant advantages. Eco-tourism, being a rapidly growing market, has the potential to contribute to sustainable development through low-impact travel practices. By implementing agreed-upon policies, geographical areas can be identified, and sustainable travel measures can be implemented, thereby promoting eco-tourism for a more sustainable future. Furthermore, there is a mounting body of evidence that supports the notion that companies that prioritize sustainability enjoy significant benefits over their competitors who disregard such considerations. Hotels that embrace sustainability practices not only save on operational costs but also enhance their reputation, which in turn leads to increased profits. This positive image also attracts potential investors who share similar ideals, thereby providing opportunities for further expansion and growth. Consequently, the increasing recognition and adoption of sustainability practices in the hotel industry not only offer a path towards environmental preservation but also presents a lucrative business opportunity.

2. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this incredibly comprehensive and remarkably insightful article, we have extensively delved deep into the utmost significance of fully embracing and integrating green initiatives within the thriving Thai hotel industry. This pursuit of sustainability is crucial as it ensures long-term viability and unwavering competitiveness for these establishments. Undoubtedly, hotels in the enchanting realm of Thailand are conspicuously eager to associate themselves with sustainability-driven endeavors, if these initiatives genuinely cater to the burgeoning desires and demands of their esteemed guests. Consequently, we have meticulously examined and thoroughly evaluated an extensive array of green initiatives through a scrupulous and meticulous cost-benefit analysis. This meticulous assessment has considered not only the financial commitment required for these initiatives but also the extensive and substantial financial gains and abundant environmental benefits that can be accrued in the long run. All these estimations and calculations have been presided over the underlying assumption of achieving an optimal and gratifying payback period, either within 3, 5, or 7 years. Some of the groundbreaking and highly advantageous green initiatives that have been meticulously scrutinized and assessed include the remarkable benefits arising from the replacement of conventional, energy-consuming light bulbs with energy-efficient alternatives. Additionally, we have explored the strategic implementation of timers on spa panels to effectively minimize energy consumption. The judicious reduction of laundry load is another area where significant savings can be achieved, both in terms of water and energy usage. Furthermore, we have studied and examined effective and innovative water heating initiatives, which can lead to substantial conservation of energy resources. Moreover, this enlightening article has also devoted considerable attention to the pivotal aspects of staff recruitment, staffing, and, most notably, policy and planning initiatives. Recognizing the indispensable role played by a well-coordinated and fully committed workforce, we have proactively emphasized the significance of attracting and retaining talent that aligns harmoniously with the overarching principles of sustainability. Staff members who are passionate about environmental conservation and sustainable practices can be instrumental in making positive changes within the hotel industry. In addition, this article sheds light on the paramount importance of embracing robust and well-defined policies and strategies, as well as meticulously formulated planning initiatives that holistically encompass

and integrate sustainable practices within every facet of the hotel industry. Hence, it is fervently hoped that, armed with the knowledge and lucidity imparted by this groundbreaking article, hotels across the magnificent Thai landscape will enter a new era of profound and unwavering commitment towards the adoption of pro-sustainability initiatives. With a renewed sense of dedication towards creating an environmentally harmonious and socially responsible hospitality landscape, these establishments will undoubtedly navigate towards a brighter and more prosperous future, while simultaneously championing the noble cause of environmental preservation and exemplifying sustainable practices at every turn. By embracing and integrating green initiatives wholeheartedly, Thai hotels can not only secure their own long-term success but also contribute significantly to the preservation of our planet for generations to come. At the hotel manager level, there is a pressing need for a significantly higher degree of acceptance and widespread dissemination of valuing and implementing green initiatives. It is crucial to establish robust and comprehensive in-house systems that encompass various essential aspects such as motivation, coordination, accountability, product and service innovation, education, and training initiatives. These measures are indispensable to ensure that pro-environmental attitudes are genuinely embraced and effectively transferred to all levels and departments within the hotel industry. However, the current situation at the managerial level appears to be highly disorganized and lacking in coherence. It is disheartening to observe a distinct absence of leadership and involvement from top or senior management when it comes to the implementation of green business practices in hotels. Furthermore, there is a glaring dearth of knowledge-sharing and collaboration among hotel managers in terms of green management initiatives. Despite the presence of an environmental officer designated to promote and coordinate environmental activities, all hotel managers demonstrate a noteworthy lack of interest and engagement in these crucial matters. Hence, it is imperative to provide hotel managers with additional recommendations to address these critical issues. First and foremost, there is a need to actively promote and regularly disseminate an extensive education campaign that effectively highlights the numerous benefits of sustainability. It is crucial to motivate and inspire the staff members to actively participate in green initiatives by offering a range of enticing incentives. In addition, governments must collaborate closely with the hotel industry by fostering an environment that either encourages or mandates the adoption of pro-green initiatives. One effective way to achieve this is by integrating comprehensive environmental management software as an integral part of hotel opening policies. This will ensure that environmental considerations are given the utmost priority right from the outset. Furthermore, it is highly advisable to recommend and endorse a set of universally recognized green initiatives that hotel managers can rely on as guiding principles. This should be accompanied by the establishment of vocational and management decision-making bodies that can provide expert guidance and support. Simultaneously, there is a need to organize refresher programs and awareness campaigns for existing staff members, as well as implement comprehensive training programs for new recruits. Finally, it is crucial to run a parallel re-registration program specifically tailored to foster the growth and development of promising small businesses in the hotel industry. This will enable aspiring entrepreneurs to embrace sustainable practices right from the outset and contribute significantly to the overall goals of environmental preservation and conservation.

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