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SUSTAINABILITY IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: EMERGING GREEN INITIATVES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IN NIGERIA (REVIEW ARTICLE)

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Abstract

Globally, there is an increasing concern for environmental sustainability of business operations. This concern has positioned green initiatives and certification as a vital strategy in the hospitality industry. This research paper investigates extensively the emerging and progressively green initiatives shaping the future of tourism in Nigeria. The study in its reviews presents the current status of global hospitality industry, the critical role that hotels play in tourism development and the fast rising trend towards green hotels that give utmost priority to environmental responsibilities with focus in current green hotels status in Nigeria. Also, it thoroughly reviews the diversified impact of such new green policies not only on the integrated socio-cultural and economic dynamics of the Country that embraces green practices activities in their hotels. Moreso, the paper examined through reviews case studies of successful green practices within the Hospitality industry in Nigeria, highlight and lay emphasis on the vast array of potential benefits that can be derived from adopting sustainability measures. Based on the study reviews, it is revealed that sustainability consciousness in hotel operations is no longer a foreign concept, but an emerging operational reality. Nigerian green hotel initiatives still concentrated among international brand in few cities, that is evidence in the reviewed case studies. Not only that, the review confirms a significant gap between international brand and indigenous hotels green initiatives and certification in Nigeria, the

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Sustainability, Green Initiatives, Hospitality, Business, Tourism, Nigeria.

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indigenous hotels are slow in adapting green practices. The study discovered major challenges and barriers, like high initial capital, lack of adequate awareness among local hotel operators and absence of a national green certification framework tie to hotel licensing in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that Federal Government of Nigeria should introduce green tax rebates and access to single-digit loans through Bank of Industry for hotels investigating in green initiatives, ITBN should integrate Green Initiatives into its Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for tourism businesses.

Introduction

The hospitality industry is recognised as one of the largest and fastest-growing global service sectors, contributing significantly to employment creation, tourism growth, and overall economic development (UNWTO, 2024). According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023), tourism and hospitality together accounted to for over 10% of global GDP prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the sector continues to be a key driver of foreign exchange earnings and socio-economic transformation in many countries. However, the growth and operational activities of this industry come with considerable environmental challenges, including excessive energy use, high water consumption, solid waste generation, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Bohdanowicz & Martinac, 2023).

Hotels, in particular, are highly energy-intensive facilities. Their daily operations require substantial inputs for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, lighting, laundry services, food storage and preparation, water heating, and entertainment amenities (Mensah, 2022). It is estimated that hotels consume up to 50% more energy than other commercial buildings of similar size and occupancy levels (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2023). This high demand for resources not only increases operating costs but also amplifies the industry's carbon footprint, contributing to climate change and environmental degradation.

The hotel sector is a significant driver of economic growth worldwide, offering hospitality services to both business and vacation travelers. As part of the tourism industry, hotels are important creators of employment opportunities, revenue, and cultural exchange (Fagbolu et al., 2022). The growth of the sector has been driven by rising global travel, urbanization, and infrastructural development. Coupled with its economic benefits, however, the hotel sector is also known to contribute high rates of resource use and environmental degradation. From high water consumption and energy use to the generation of large amounts of waste, hotels are key contributors to environmental degradation. These issues have raised increasing debate on the adoption of sustainable hotel management practices to ensure that hotel operations are in line with global efforts to conserve the environment (Wei and Liu, 2023).

Research on sustainability in hotels has limitations, including uneven adoption across regions, with advanced economies leading and developing economies lagging. Additionally, small and mediumsized hotels are underrepresented in research, and there's a lack of data on returns from green investments, making it difficult to assess cost-benefit relationships (Merli et al., 2019).

Hotel development in Nigeria is concentrated in major commercial and administrative centers, led by Lagos and Abuja. Lagos, the nation's economic nerve center and largest city, attracts the bulk

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of upscale hotels and international brands. It is a global business hub and home to Nigeria's busiest international airport, seaport, and numerous corporations, driving consistent business travel. Leisure demand in Lagos is comparatively limited but growing, centered on its beaches, cultural festivals, and nightlife. The city's Victoria Island/Ikoyi district and Ikeja (near the airport) are hotspots for new hotels due to corporate demand and infrastructure development. Abuja, the capital, is the second key market. As the seat of government and foreign embassies, Abuja sees steady demand from government functions, conferences, and diplomats. It hosts several top-tier hotels (e.g. Transcorp Hilton) catering to official delegations and business travelers.

Nigeria's hospitality market is heavily driven by domestic travel. In 2019, about 75% of air passengers in Nigeria were domestic travelers, with only ~25% being international arrivals. This trend underlines that Nigerians traveling for business, family, or government purposes form the backbone of hotel demand. Even within the tourism sector, many "tourists" are actually Nigerian nationals or residents moving within the country for leisure (e.g. holidaymakers to hometowns or events). International tourist arrivals to Nigeria, while significant in absolute terms, are relatively low compared to the country's size. In 2019, Nigeria recorded roughly 2.0 million international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors from abroad). With the onset of COVID-19, this figure collapsed to just about 500,000 in 2020 (–78% year-on-year) and remained around 518,000 in 2021 due to ongoing travel restrictions. As borders reopened, 2022 saw a strong recovery, with an estimated 6.1 million international arrivals (approaching or even exceeding pre-2017 highs under broader counting methods). Notably, this rebound suggests pent-up demand and possibly improved counting of regional day-visitors. Despite growth in foreign arrivals, domestic tourists continued to outnumber foreigners in hotels throughout 2022–2023. Industry surveys indicate that business travelers from within Nigeria account for up to 77% of hotel demand in Lagos, underscoring the dominant role of local corporate/government travel in occupancy.

Hotel occupancy in Nigeria averaged around 50% in the late 2010s, reflecting steady but unspectacular demand relative to capacity. In 2018, the national occupancy rate was about 49.8%, and 2019 was in a similar range (~50-55% by estimates) given modest growth that year. Occupancy was highly differentiated by location and category, though. Lagos hotels enjoyed higher-than-average occupancies – in January to July 2019 Lagos averaged ~56.7% occupancy vs 53% in Abuja. Peak months in Lagos (e.g. late 2019) could see occupancies above 65%, especially in top business hotels. The pandemic crushed occupancy in 2020: during April–June 2020, occupancy fell into single digits in Abuja (below 10%) and averaged only ~28% in Lagos under lockdown. Many hotels closed temporarily, and those that remained open housed mainly quarantine guests or essential workers. As restrictions lifted, occupancy began recovering: by H1 2021, major city hotels were filling 30-50% of rooms on average.

A robust rebound came in 2022. In the first half of 2022, the hospitality sector recorded around 70% average occupancy according to industry stakeholders – a remarkable return to, and even surpassing, pre-pandemic levels. Most international-brand hotels in Nigeria achieved 70–80% occupancy in H1 2022, while many independent hotels saw 50–60%. This reflects a two-speed recovery: well-known upscale hotels benefited from the surge in corporate and foreign travelers once borders reopened, whereas smaller local hotels were slightly slower to recover patronage. By late 2022, Lagos's hotel market in particular hit multi-year highs – Lagos average occupancy

peaked at 68.4% in 2022, the highest in a decade. Abuja also improved with the return of conferences and government events, though its annual occupancy lagged Lagos (Abuja's dependence on government business means demand can be seasonal around the political calendar). Secondary city hotels (in provincial capitals) generally run lower occupancies (often 40 50%) due to weaker year-round demand and competition from informal accommodation.

The Nigerian hotel sector is a mix of international chains, regional brands, and indigenous operators. Major global hotel companies have established a significant presence, especially in Lagos and Abuja:

Literature Review The Concept of Green Initiatives in Hospitality

The concept of green practices in the hospitality sector is environmentally friendly policies and operating procedures intended to minimize ecological footprints without compromising efficiency and profitability (Prakash et al., 2022). Green practices include energy conservation, water management, waste reduction, and the use of environmentally friendly materials.

Sustainable hotel operations give precedence to using resources in manners that satisfy the present without undermining the future's capability to fulfill their own (Abdou et al., 2020). Over the last decades, many hotels have adopted practices such as the utilization of solar power, motion sensors for lighting, recycling programs, and biodegradable packaging as efforts towards reducing their environmental footprints. These practices align with the emerging trend of sustainable tourism, which promotes tourism experiences with priority on the sustainability of the environment as well as maintenance of local culture (Ndalnamu et al., 2024; Folorunso et al., 2026a).

Although sustainable green practices have been widely acknowledged for their environmental, economic, and reputational benefits, many hotels particularly those in developing economies have been slow in embracing and integrating these practices into their operations. This slow adoption can be attributed to multiple interlinked challenges, including high upfront capital investment, lack of technical expertise, insufficient government incentives, and limited awareness of the long-term operational savings associated with sustainability initiatives (Mensah, 2022).

Sustainability is a key focus in the hospitality sector, with research showing green hotel practices can preserve the environment through energy-saving, waste reduction, and water management. Many hotels have adopted green measures and certification schemes, but there's a disconnect in implementing, perceiving, and assessing the long-term impact of these measures (Wu and Tham, 2023).

Importance of Sustainability

The hotel sector is considered one of the most harmful to the environment, along with the industrial sector, therefore environmental issues have become much more important for current and future studies. The analysis of specialized literature reflects the fact that most studies concerned with the importance of sustainability in the hotel industry focus on the environmental performance of accommodation units. (Tang et al., 2014; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2015), and less on all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social, and environmental responsibility (Garay & Font, 2012; Moneva et al., 2020), known as triple bottom-line of company.

Ecological practices are increasingly appreciated by tourists aware of the direct and indirect repercussions of their actions on the environment. Concern for the sustainability of the hotel industry has grown steadily in recent years, with efforts to identify the most important drivers, potential benefits, and degree of implementation. The rapid development of the hotel industry has significantly impacted the deterioration of the global environment through high energy and water consumption. Therefore, ecological values, consciousness and ecological culture represent an imperative emerging in modern conditions. In this context, it becomes necessary and opportune to implement the most effective environmental strategies, ecological labels, green certifications, and performance indicators able to ensure the reduction of the carbon footprint but also of the operational costs of accommodation units, and finally to offer tourists a more sustainable experience (Kostić. et al., 2019).

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 (Aphisavadh Sirivadhanawaravachara, 2025).

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 (Aphisavadh Sirivadhanawaravachara, 2025).

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 (Aphisavadh Sirivadhanawaravachara, 2025).

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.

Current Green Hotel Initiatives in Nigeria

Hotels across the globe have seen the need to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their operations to minimize harmful environmental impacts. This sector, which is synonymous with high resource usage, has moved towards models that harmonize guest comfort with environmental responsibility. Hotels have incorporated measures intended to lower carbon footprints, save water, lessen wastes, and encourage responsible sourcing. Not only do these methods assist in safeguarding the environment, but they also make businesses more resilient by lowering the cost of operations and satisfying the needs of environmentally conscious consumers. Companies that emphasize sustainability position themselves as industry leaders, showcasing a desire for long-term ecological and financial sustainability (Sun and Nasrullah, 2024).

Energy efficiency is the new foundation of hotel management. The majority of properties have put in energy-efficient equipment such as LED bulbs, motion sensors, and energy-efficient thermostats to conserve electricity. Some have converted from utilizing conventional energy sources such as coal and natural gases to renewable energy sources such as solar power plants and windmills. Advanced heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems also count towards energy conservation since these units provide temperature control with less loss of energy. With the implementation of energy-efficient practices, the hotel conserves carbon emissions in addition to conserving money in the long term by means of lowering the utility bills (Pandiyan et al., 2023).

Water conservation is also a priority sector in the hospitality sector due to the excessive use of guest amenities, laundry, and landscaping. Low-flow faucets, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling have been installed at multiple locations as a measure to avoid unnecessary waste. Greywater reuse for irrigation as well as toilet flushing is also popular as a measure of maximizing efficiency. Encouragement of guest interaction through measures like the reuse of linens and

towels also helps the hotel's efforts toward responsible use of water. These measures enable the hotel to continue its operations without compromising the level of service (Sadi and Adebitan, 2014).

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Waste minimization initiatives have also been gaining traction as companies seek to limit environmental pollution. Recycling programs, composting programs, and biodegradable materials have been initiated across many properties. Portion control initiatives as well as donation programs have also proven effective at limiting excess production. Digitalization initiatives such as electronic check-ins as well as paperless invoicing have also been effective at reducing waste. Proper disposal programs as well as recycling programs guarantee hotel conformity to global initiatives aimed at limiting waste through sustainability initiatives (Abdou et al., 2020).

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Review studies in Nigeria shows Nigeria hotel’s are gradually becoming aware and adoption of green initiative through largely driven international brands in some few major cities. Green initiatives in Nigeria is currently rated high in the areas of energy efficiency water conservation, waste management and community engagement and real sourcing

Need for relevant agencies in the tourism and hospitality sector to create more awareness across the country for hotels to see the importance to embrace green initiation in Nigeria (Okorigba R.K, Ezema, I.C; & Ekhaese, E.N, 2024. Levels of Environmental Sustainability Practices in large- sized hotels in Lagos, Nigeria-International Journal of Sustainable Impact Planning.

Green Certifications and Standards

Green certification standards vary widely, illustrating a non-conformity consensus on ecocertifications (J. Zhang et al., 2014). Despite the difference, test methodology and certification use are comparable. Certified hotel research largely shows variation in eco-practice between certifications. Different eco-effective use certificates vary, while requirements to stay certified offer evaluation consistency while handling different GTBs. Differences in GTBs are expected to bring inequivalence in the realization of eco-efficiency goals and varying pre-specified routes towards greater levels of eco-efficiency. As the majority of GTBs address similar issues for reducing resource intensity and thus emissions, operations decisions could be influenced by which GTBs a hotel adopts only indirectly. This eliminates intuitively expected variations in performance based on GTB characteristics. Still, these requirements are different in ways of achieving the ecoefficiency goals, hence the net implications of simultaneous attainment of several certifications are unpredictable. This is a contradiction of "rules-in-use" abstract policy outcomes and "rules-inform," strict legislation open to little interpretation. Motley levels of organizations with different mandates add complexity to the certification procedures. Eco-certifications have spread to sly crevices and recesses, rendering increasingly unclear what green certified means. Character alignment under Eco-certifications would enable improved understanding of letting this is done and possible unexpected effects. Generally, a shift in market power would be desirable towards more outcome (eco-effectiveness) rather than process orientation (eco-eco-efficiency). Long-term dependency on eco-certifications or on lower-tier ones is worrisome due to pent-up rehabilitations of hotels. The re-establishment of eco-certifications would alter the structure of production and profit, putting hotels back onto an accepted eco-eco-efficiency trajectory as re-investment once again became available. Substantial and CPI concurrence long-haul relationships are often actively pursued by GTBs and travel agencies, uncommon for the hotel sector. Substantial effort to create a complete tool of comparison can arise with governments, GTBs, and travel agencies successfully mobilized with existing indicators. A bar to repeated entries would constrain reduction in ecoeffectiveness as a means of doing so without potential deadly loss of eco-benefits would likely be sought extensively. Management of well-being of eco-certifications would also warrant attention.

Local Certification Initiatives

Today's developments of eco-certification schemes need to consider local challenges and preferences. Hospitality consultancy firms should be the most dynamic drivers for change in Nigeria. Sustainability in the hotels should emerge from an understanding of their own context. With the huge magnitude of Nigeria's hospitality industry, how one delineates a sustainable hotel during industry stakeholders' gathering organized by the research team is most welcomed as the starting point towards an uninterrupted understanding of what sustainability means. The perspectives of the experts towards how to journey towards sustainability and what the government needs to do are just as much of primal importance. Certifying body reliability, conformity to tourism authorities' agendas, and compliance with local market tastes must be tackled in order to ensure the success of the future roll-out of any upgraded eco-certification schemes in Thailand. With the persistent and pressing call to action, all attempts should be exerted

to coarse up local eco-certification efforts, founded on past best practices, as soon as possible. The adoption and enforcement of international eco-certification schemes by export-focused businesses may not be the best in the first instance. Tighter compliance with local specifications and constraints and more limiting factors would offer a more realistic way forward and avoid further involvement with sustainability in Thai tourism. An attempt at a national effort to standardize and duplicate best practices could lead to future requirements that are compatible and less complicated. The first incountry eco-certification initiatives by hospitality consultancy firms and tourist boards are a welcome and fitting start towards it. Guidelines for sustainability call for efforts on the part of midsize hotels in the industry. Behavioral adjustment required to achieve compliance under an ecocertification system and opportunities lost through failure to do so existed were seen as relevant. Future eco-certification programs would have to look at the expansion of the hospitality sector in Thailand. Mid-size hotels' eco-certification requirements must be accommodated to enable successful take-up of the initiatives (J. Zhang et al., 2014).
Green Certification in Nigeria Witnessed in Major Milestone in 2025; where hotels lies Mövenpick Hotel Ikoyi Lagos, Radissm Blu Lagos Ikeja and Port Solis Lagos earned the prestigious Green key Certification. As a the way forward, this study call on all Stakeholders in the Tourism and Hospitality sector in Nigeria as a matter of urgency to key into the Global sustainability practices so as to benefit from the importance of sustainability in Nigerian environment.

Case Studies of Successful Green Hotels in Nigeria

Some of the world's hotels are already on the road to sustainability. Many others are exploring the topic in corporate affairs. Some of the specific environmental issues being tackled are those relating to waste disposal, air quality, energy conservation and water conservation. A few also consider carbon footprint of operations and effects on uses health. They both conserve energy and water and produce less waste. These savings and reductions have translated into big dollar amounts in utility savings and are often rooted in marketing materials to meet consumer demand (Huff, 2019).

Hotel A: MÖVENPICK HOTEL IKOYI LAGOS – The Pioneer (2025)

The Hotel is one of the successful case study in Nigeria tourism. Mövenpick Hotel Ikoyi Lagos's antecedent shows that on **26th March 2025**, it became the **First hotel in Nigeria to earn the prestigious Green Key Certification 2025**. Green Key is coordinated by Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) – a globally recognized eco-label. Also won **International Sustainability Award 2025** by Luxury Hotel Awards.

The Hotel's Specific Green Initiatives are:

1. Eliminated 60% of single-use plastics across all outlets and recycling them
2. Deploying food waste monitoring systems
3. Optimizing energy-efficient lighting and intelligent room controls
4. Championing water conservation throughout operations
5. Collaborating with local and global partners for eco-friendly solutions

One if the Leading Hotels in Nigeria.

It was previously recognized as the first in Nigeria to be awarded the Green Key certification before Mövenpick's 2025 recertification. This shows consistent green leadership.

Part of Radisson Hotel Group which has committed to Net Zero by 2050 with 35% reduction in carbon footprint already achieved.

The Hotel is Known for it Specific Green Initiatives:

1. **Soap recycling program** – used soaps are recycled and donated
2. Water conservation – low-flow fixtures and water recycling for pools
3. Linen reuse program encouraging guests to reuse linens
4. 100% carbon neutral meetings – group has offset 37,800 tons of carbon
5. Over 56 properties run 100% on renewable electricity

HOTEL C: RADISSON BLU ANCHORAGE & LAGOS MARRIOTT – The Tech-Driven

Model, Located at Victoria Island and Ikeja, Lagos, the hotel represent the new standard of smart green hotels in Nigeria: Radisson Blu Anchorage and Lagos Marriote are recognized of their initiatives in the following areas.

- Energy-efficient LED lighting and motion sensors
- Advanced Building Management System to optimize energy usage
- Green-water recycling system
- Low-flow fixtures to reduce water consumption
- Part of Marriott's global target for reducing carbon emissions
- Guest Room Management System to decrease energy consumption
- Guest room recycling program

For those in the business of hospitality, today sustainability is not just a goal; it is a responsibility hoteliers should embrace wholeheartedly and being committed to embedding it into every guest touch point. The above case studies show that while green certification in Nigeria is still adopted mostly by international brands, it represents a huge opportunity for indigenous hotels in Nigeria to adopt tour-cost initiatives like LED, linen reuse and waste sorting to achieve Hotel Sustainability Basics.

Challenges of Implementing Green Practices

Sustainable practices have numerous benefits for hospitality businesses. These include increased patronage, customer satisfaction, reduced costs of operation, improved reputation, and environmental sustainability, among others, as noted by various researchers (Serio et al., 2025; Emad & Omar, 2023; Kade, 2019). For example, González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) reported that eco friendly practices are essential for increasing customer loyalty, hence increasing a business's market share. In contrast, some stakeholders believe that sustainable practices do not significantly benefit the business, as noted by Okeke and Nwosu (2021).

Despite the numerous benefits of sustainable practices, some hospitality business owners face various challenges, including the high costs of implementing sustainable practices, poor infrastructure, customer awareness, and lack of expertise among employees, as noted by various researchers (Mensah, 2020; Babagbale et al., 2019; Budeanu et al., 2021). The poor enforcement of regulations by the government also makes it difficult to implement sustainable practices, as noted by Becken and Hughey (2020).

Hermawan et al. (2020) and Al-Juboori et al. (2020) assert that implementation of green practices significantly enhances environmental sustainability by mitigating the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This implementation varies widely across contexts and regions. Mensah (2014) found that the adoption of green practices in African hotels was generally lower compared to their counterparts in more developed countries. However, in recent years, there has been a growing trend towards sustainability in the African hospitality sector.

In the Nigerian context, Musa and Adebayo (2019) observed that, while there is increasing awareness of the importance of sustainability in the hotel industry, the implementation of comprehensive green practices remains limited, particularly among smaller hotels. Their study highlighted that upscale hotels in urban areas are more likely to adopt green practices because of greater resources and international brand affiliations.

Despite the potential benefits of green practices, hotels often face significant barriers to implementation, which can be systematically categorized into several key challenges. One of the most prominent barriers is financial constraints, the high upfront costs associated with implementing green technologies and infrastructures are frequently cited in the literature as a major barrier (Chan, 2013; Leonidou et al., 2015; Casado-Díaz et al., 2020). Many hotels struggle to justify the initial investment, particularly when the return on investment period is perceived as long or uncertain. Organizational inertia presents another obstacle, as elucidated by Bohdanowicz (2005) and Mensah (2014b). The challenge of overcoming established operational procedures and employee habits. Resistance to change within the organization can significantly hinder the adoption of new, more sustainable practices. Additionally, lack of expertise in environmental management within hotel staff can limit the effective implementation and maintenance of green practices (Rahman et al., 2012). Guest skepticism presents another challenge, with some hotels expressing fear that such initiatives might be viewed as cost-cutting measures rather than genuine environmental efforts (Berezan et al., 2013). Finally, in certain contexts, such as Nigeria, the lack of strong regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms for environmental standards in the hospitality industry can reduce the incentive for hotels to invest in green practices (Musa & Adebayo, 2019).

Government Roles

The government refers to those actors who have exclusive authority over legitimate force in a specific territory (Kourula et al., 2019). The term role was originally used to describe actors as characters in a drama. When extended to the field of management, it refers to the relationship between the action of actors and society. Indeed, there is a crucial role for governments in facilitating the transition to an economy that is much more efficient, much fairer, and much less

damaging. Governments that lead will be in a stronger position to set the agenda and establish advanced positions for their industries and their citizens (Yang et al., 2019).

Government roles are characterized to include the establishment of policies and laws to ensure businesses operate fairly, safely, and responsibly (Kulin & Johansson, 2019). Enforcement of laws and regulations through agencies, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission, to protect consumers, investors, and businesses (Hitt et al., 2019). Protection of businesses from external threats, such as piracy, cyber-attacks and terrorism (Lee, 2021). Provisions of funding, such as loans or grants, to support business growth and development, and promoting economic development by attracting and retaining businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, and investing in infrastructure (Crawford et al., 2023).

Johnson and Lee (2020) noted that the government is responsible for protecting public health and safety by enforcing laws, regulations, and standards. Williams et al. (2022) argue that government officials promote economic growth and development by providing incentives, funding, and support for businesses and industries. However, Ongaro and Massey (2019) reported that one of the main challenges of government roles is the complexity of modern governance.

The Future of Sustainable Tourism

The following trends are already making a bit of noise and have the potential to go mainstream.

i. **Keeping it Local:** As the cost (both financial and environmental) of travel increases, the local approach will take centre stage. This trend has been in evolution over the past decade under the guises of authentic and experiential tourism – unlike these trends however, the local approach will be driven more by need rather than consumer demand. Industry commentators expect a shift in the balance of power with local communities and suppliers taking greater control of how destinations are managed. This trend is visible, for example, in hotels that source their produce, employees, materials and services from their immediate vicinity.

ii. **Labelling Your Credentials:** The food industry has been marketing products with fair trade, organic and locally produced labels for decades. Destinations and tourism providers are increasingly doing the same to promote their hard earned credentials and certifications. The travel site, Travelocity for example, provides consumers with the largest Green Hotel Directory through which it only works with certification programmes and does not accept self-certified hotels. Sustainability is not yet a 'must' for today's consumer, but when it is, certifications will likely become a key focus of product marketing.

iii. **But Beware of Green-washing**: Green-washing is a trend whereby goods or services are marketed as more sustainable than they actually are. There is a concern that this superficiality will cause consumers to become increasingly disillusioned and sceptical, thereby derailing the evolution of sustainable tourism. Businesses must therefore be careful not to be seen as jumping on the bandwagon when going out to market.

iv. **Opportunities Ahead**: Changing trends, preferences and policies in sustainability will open up new market opportunities for those businesses ready to take them. One of these opportunities could be a growing demographic known as "LOHAS", an acronym for "Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability". LOHAS is driven by eco-conscious, well educated

consumers and, according to industry experts, could be the tourism industry's next new premium sector. The early birds in this scenario will be those businesses that have successfully established sustainable policies, environmental awareness and demonstrate respect for local cultures.

v. **Zero Impact Tourism (The Holy Grail):** In 2008, United Arab Emirates began work on the Masdar City Project – the world's first zero-carbon city. Due for completion in 2020, the new city is expected to house 50,000 people and will rely entirely on solar, wind and other renewable energy sources. Subterranean electric driverless cars and light rail lines will be the transport of choice.

This may be a utopian vision of the future but it is doubtful that zero-carbon cities will emerge as a trend anytime soon - after all, not many destinations have the resources to fund a $22 billion project. The interim solution seems to be offsetting carbon emissions via 'Polluter Pay' principles. Measures such as aviation fuel tax, air passenger duty, 'pay-asyou throw' waste schemes and reforestation programmes are all examples of the polluter paying. The unique challenge for Northern Ireland will be trying to balance any potential Polluter Pay measures with the sensitive subject of visitor access. (nitb.com)

The Economic Impact of Green Initiatives

Sustainable practices in the tourism industry foster collaboration among tour operators and governments. Suggestions such as reduction of energy and water consumption by hotels and conservation of marine life by SME hotels are put forward with a view to achieving a shared agenda of sustainability. A synergistic effort among the stakeholders has the likelihood of paying economic and social returns to the community and environmental returns to the tourist destination. The possible threats of tourism must be mitigated for sustainable tourism. Most of the tourism companies will be unaware of the threats of climate change and environmental degradation. They need proper guidelines on how to reveal the threats to decision-making in the travel and tourism sector. A holistic approach to sustainability enables hotels to embrace energy conservation, achieve investments, and improve the bottom line (George, 2019). Hotels and external stakeholders may hold differing perceptions of sustainability, and as such, these perceptions can therefore influence the assessment of environmental investments. Hotel firms are thus recommended to promote awareness of sustainability among external stakeholders during assessment. One green initiative yields three outcomes identical to sustainability performance. Sustainability performance enhancement initiatives are to be linked with competitive advantage development. More investments in sustainability are advised because hotels cannot procure cutting-edge technology solutions from their competitors without incurring exorbitant costs. Greening among hotels are ceilings that increase the profitability of hotels and therefore are nonrival because there is a spillover effect on other nearby hotels.

Job Creation in Sustainable Tourism

Australia's tourist interests are dependent on a good environment. To promote the environment within and around destinations, there needs to be selling of sustainability. The green tourism

market exists, as does the perceived one. Green destinations have sustainability built into their product, e.g., in their modes of transport or sustainable accommodation. These sustainable tourism operations could be utilized for market destinations that are nonconventional or not common in terms of their sustainability campaigns, promoting them so they become visible and appealing. There is a level of regional and industry organization collaborative marketing to spotlight sustainability using destination marketing in collaboration with its stakeholders just like consumers find value in sustainability operations to gain competitive edge by having the capacity to differentiate from prospective clients. Tourism and travel and destinations contribute towards sustainable development in terms of revamping themselves within their marketing practice. Authenticity is transparency-driven authenticity, and that includes extending towards consumer perception as well as business operations. Green destination marketing is a combined effort of various stakeholders such as local government, tourism boards, non-profits, and individual stakeholder businesses. They are all targeting a common market and promoting their sustainability initiatives. There are different parameters that can be utilized to measure the sustainability of a destination, and stakeholder collaboration can be promoted by selling more profitable features. It must be protected by branding a destination as green or sustainable, and that involves regulation and guidelines to educate companies in viable notions of sustainability. In the hotel industry, there has already been considerable proof that economic activity related to hotels generates jobs in cities, and the hotel industry is one of the biggest employers. As one of the three pillars of participatory governance, the critics of guest houses being constructed have ridiculed these projects as converting the city's cultural heritage into jobs instead of saving the city's distinctive attractions. Instead of employing locals for familiar jobs, the traditional occupation of palm leaf plaiters and shoe making and smoking has yielded to the new employment at restaurants and guest houses (George, 2019).

Sociocultural Sustainability

Tourism development has led to various negative impacts on both the cultural and the social aspects of a tourism destination. For instance, there are some social and cultural detrimental effects of tourism on the local communities through the lens of over-tourism, acculturation, and carrying capacity, which have put more pressure on residents' daily life (Qin, Shen, Ye, & Zhou, 2021). To address these issues, the concept of sociocultural sustainability has emerged, which emphasizes the need for a sustainable sociocultural element to maintain a balance among all tourism stakeholders. This notion is defined as "a common system of culture and lifestyle choices" (Acharya & Halpenny, 2017, p. 8).

Despite the growing body of research on sociocultural sustainability in tourism and hospitality, the literature remains geographically uneven, with a strong concentration on Western and Global North contexts (Ferrari, Hernandez-Maskivker, & Nicotera, 2022; Ooi, Laing, & Mair, 2015). In contrast, studies emerging from Asia, Africa and Latin America tend to conceptualize sociocultural sustainability through lenses of collective identity, cultural continuity and community empowerment, rather than individual attitudes or managerial performance indicators (AduAmpong & Kimbu, 2019; Martınez & Poveda, 2024; Yousaf, Liu, & Xiang, 2025; Zhang, Pearce, & Chen, 2019). Asian research often reveals disputes between the aspects of culture preservation

and the ones of tourism creation of their own with the local culture then shaped to attract the tourists in particular areas like in heritage sites and community tourism initiatives (Chong & Balasingam, 2019; Zhang, Xiong, Lee, Ye, & Nunkoo, 2021). Likewise, the discourse surrounding the development of tourism in Africa touches upon the issue of the local community's quality of life drawing lines of inequality in benefit distribution and the constant power of post-colonial influences (Atadouanla Segning, Fouopi Djiogap, Piabuo, & Ngasseu Noupie, 2024; Mbaiwa, 2005; Okech, 2010). In the case of Latin America, the sociocultural aspect of sustainability is portrayed as a power struggle between local people and the government with the indigenous rights, social justice, and grassroots participation in the tourism planning process being the main concerns of the people (Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Selfa et al., 2015). The fact that these viewpoints are relatively absent from the prevailing discussions on sustainability reveals an epistemological imbalance that restricts the validity of the current theories and points out the necessity for more context-dependent and inclusive strategies in regard to sociocultural sustainability in tourism and hospitality research.

Indicators for Measuring the Sustainability of Hotels Environmental Sustainability Indicators:

Environmental sustainability indicators are valuable tools for the measurement and utilisation of primary resources such as water, energy, and integration of renewable energy sources.

Furthermore, they serve as great utility in quantifying the quantity of trash produced and emissions. Therefore, environmental indices are advantageous in the identification and quantification of the environmental effects caused by hotels (Duric and Potočnik Topler, 2021). In order to facilitate the monitoring of environmental sustainability activities by hotels, it is advisable for hotels to establish predetermined environmental indicators. These indicators should include consumption of cleaning products, electricity and water consumption, the amount of staff actively participating in environmental protection programmes, number of hotel initiatives aimed at preventing pollution, and the approach to waste management. When evaluating the performance of hotels, it is important to consider the cost savings resulting from efficient energy and water resource consumption, recycling, and waste management. This will help determine if the objectives and anticipated outcomes have been achieved according to the predetermined environmental sustainability indicators (Reem, Rasoolimanesh and Nelum Rajika, 2022). The environmental indicators in hotels can also aid managers by offering pertinent information on the attainment of their objectives and strategies. Furthermore, it enables hotels to apply comparative metrics to assess their performance in relation to other hotels (Duric and Potočnik Topler, 2021).

Indicators for Economic Sustainability:

Economic sustainability measures and indicators offer significant and pertinent insights into the performance of hotels and overall economic well-being. There are three main categories of economic sustainability indicators: investment indicators, cost indicators, and profit indicators. These metrics aid hotel management in effectively allocating resources and maximising profits (Fatoki, 2019).

Indicators for Socio-cultural Sustainability:

Socio-cultural sustainability indicators are metrics employed to demonstrate the effects of hotel operations on the surrounding community, employees, and guests. Thus, social sustainability indicators encompass variables related to employee satisfaction, workplace health and safety, training and professional growth, diversity and equal opportunities, and pay equality (Reem, Rasoolimanesh and Nelum Rajika, 2022). Some additional indicators include consumer satisfaction with products and services, health and safety measures, and local community indicators like local employment, local products and community support.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

The hotel industry in Nigeria is increasingly becoming competitive due to the relative advantage it holds over other tourist destinations with exotic nature based. Globally, organizations are increasingly acknowledging the growing desire and demand of tourists to only visit, but also to understand exotic nature. It is needful therefore to have insight on how the hotel sector in Nigeria is preparing and positioning itself to cope with this increased competition and change tourist demand. This study have extensively delved deep into the utmost importance of fully embracing and integrating green initiatives within the thriving hotel industry in Nigeria as way forward in shaping future tourism. Tourism development, especially in emerging tourist destinations such as Nigeria is held responsible for impacting the socio-cultural, environmental and economic factors.

Based on paper extensive review, it reveal that sustainability consciousness is no longer a foreign concept but an emerging operational reality, though still concentrated among international hotel brands in cities in Nigeria. It is evidence from the studies reviews and case studies that few hotels in Nigerian major cities had key into green initiatives and earned green initiatives certification.

Moreso, the study also confirms a significant gap between international and indigenous hotels in green initiatives and certification in Nigeria While large hotels in Lagos have adopted energyefficient lighting and waste sorting as high-level practices (Okorigba et al., 2024), low-cost but high-impact practices such as green-water recycling, covering of swimming pools, and composting remain among the least adopted. The major challenges and barriers remain high initial capital, lack of awareness among local operators, and absence of a national green certification framework tied to hotel licensing.

Nigeria's green hotels initiatives' and certification is at early stages emerging. Therefore, to transition from the nascent hotels initiatives to institutionalized green tourism management, there is urgent needs for all stakeholders in the tourism industry to collaborate. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made and way forward shaping the future of tourism in Nigeria.

i. Hotel Operators especially the indigenous hotels should start with low-hanging fruits that require low capital: installation of LED bulbs, motion sensors, linen/towel reuse programs, and waste sorting. Hotels should gradually invest in solar hybrid systems to reduce dependence on generators, which is both a cost and environmental imperative in Nigeria. Regulating bodies, agencies and associations in the tourism initiatives for Tourism Practitioners of Nigeria (ITPN).

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

ii. The National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR) and NTDC should introduce a Nigerian Green Hotel Rating System as part of hotel classification and licensing, similar to Green Key. Also, Federal Government should provide tax incentives, grants, and single-digit loans for hotels importing solar panels, energyefficient equipment, and water recycling systems. Include Green Practices in the curriculum of ND/HND Tourism Management Technology and Hotel Management programs in Polytechnics to build capacity from the school.

iii. Statistical institutionalization: there should be an annual Green Hotel Statistical Bulletin Capturing number of certified hotels, renewable energy adoption rate, water savings, waste diversion rates and cost savings.

iv. Capacity Building: Institute for Tourism Professional of Nigeria (ITPN), should integrate Green Key imperative criteria into its continuous professional Development (CYD) for tourism business practitioners.

v. Economic Incentive: Federal Government of Nigeria should introduced Green tax rebates and access to single – digit loans through bank of industry for hotels investing in green practices.

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