



Sustainability in the hospitality sector

Common misconceptions
& recommended strategies
for the Vietnam market

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P. 03

Research Introduction

- Background
- Methodology

P. 06

Debunking the myth

- Only upscale hotels can afford sustainable solutions.
- All plastics are bad.
- Environmental harm only occurs at the disposal of a product.
- What is reusable or recyclable gets reused or recycled.
- Communicating sustainability efforts offers no benefits to hotels.

P. 22

Recommendations

- Put sustainability at the heart of the brand
- Build internal sustainability awareness
- Incorporate product life cycle thinking in the purchasing process
- Embrace the Reduce in the 3R hierarchy
- *Case Study: Glassia*
- Communicate
- and engage guests in hotels' sustainability efforts

A photograph of a tropical resort at dusk. In the foreground, a swimming pool reflects the warm lights of the resort building and the silhouettes of palm trees. A stone deck with a metal ladder is visible in the lower right. The resort building, with its warm interior lights glowing through the windows, is nestled among lush tropical vegetation and several tall palm trees. The sky is a deep twilight blue.

Research Introduction

Background

Despite continuous tourism growth prior to the COVID pandemic, Vietnam was ranked 96th out of 99 countries in a global sustainable tourism ranking conducted by Euromonitor International in 2021, which examined seven aspects of sustainable tourism, including environmental, social, and economic sustainability, country risk, sustainable tourism demand, transportation and lodging (Vietnam Express, 2021).

When attempting to implement sustainability initiatives, hotels in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, face various challenges, including:

- A lack of government support and regulations to enforce sustainable practices
- A high reliance on single-use plastics and non-renewable resources due to cost and availability
- Limited access to renewable energy sources and technologies
- Difficulty in finding sustainable suppliers and partners, among others (1)

In Vietnam's hospitality sector, a lack of awareness and education among both hosts and guests about sustainable practices adds to this list of challenges.

Through the course of this research, we encountered several recurring sustainability misconceptions across participating hotels. These fallacies could deter hotels from adopting more sustainable practices or divert their attention from existing important issues. Additionally, hotels are more likely to receive criticism for greenwashing if they implement solutions based on these misconceptions.

The first section of this report is dedicated to debunking the most common misconceptions or myths observed in the research. Built on this, the second section discusses best practices implemented by hotels in Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City, with the purpose of providing practical solutions for hotels seeking to become more sustainable.

Vietnam's global
sustainable
tourism ranking

96th
out of 99

(1) Chon 2013; Chung & Parker, 2010; Marquardt, 2016; Singjai et al., 2018)

Methodology

We conducted 18 in-depth interviews, ranging in length from 40 to 60 minutes. These interviews took place either in person at the hotels or online.

Our respondents include executives from 3, 4, and 5-star establishments, with 15 in Da Nang and 3 in Ho Chi Minh City. The hotel sizes range from 20 rooms to more than 400 rooms. There is a mix of hotels managed by international hospitality chains as well as those managed by Vietnamese groups/individuals.

The executives we interviewed are sustainability decision makers and influencers in their hotels, in positions such as General Managers, F&B Managers, Guest Experience Directors, Marketing Managers, and Resident Managers.

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all the data and information we gathered were made anonymous. The results presented are solely based on the valuable insights provided by the participating hotels.





Debunking the myths

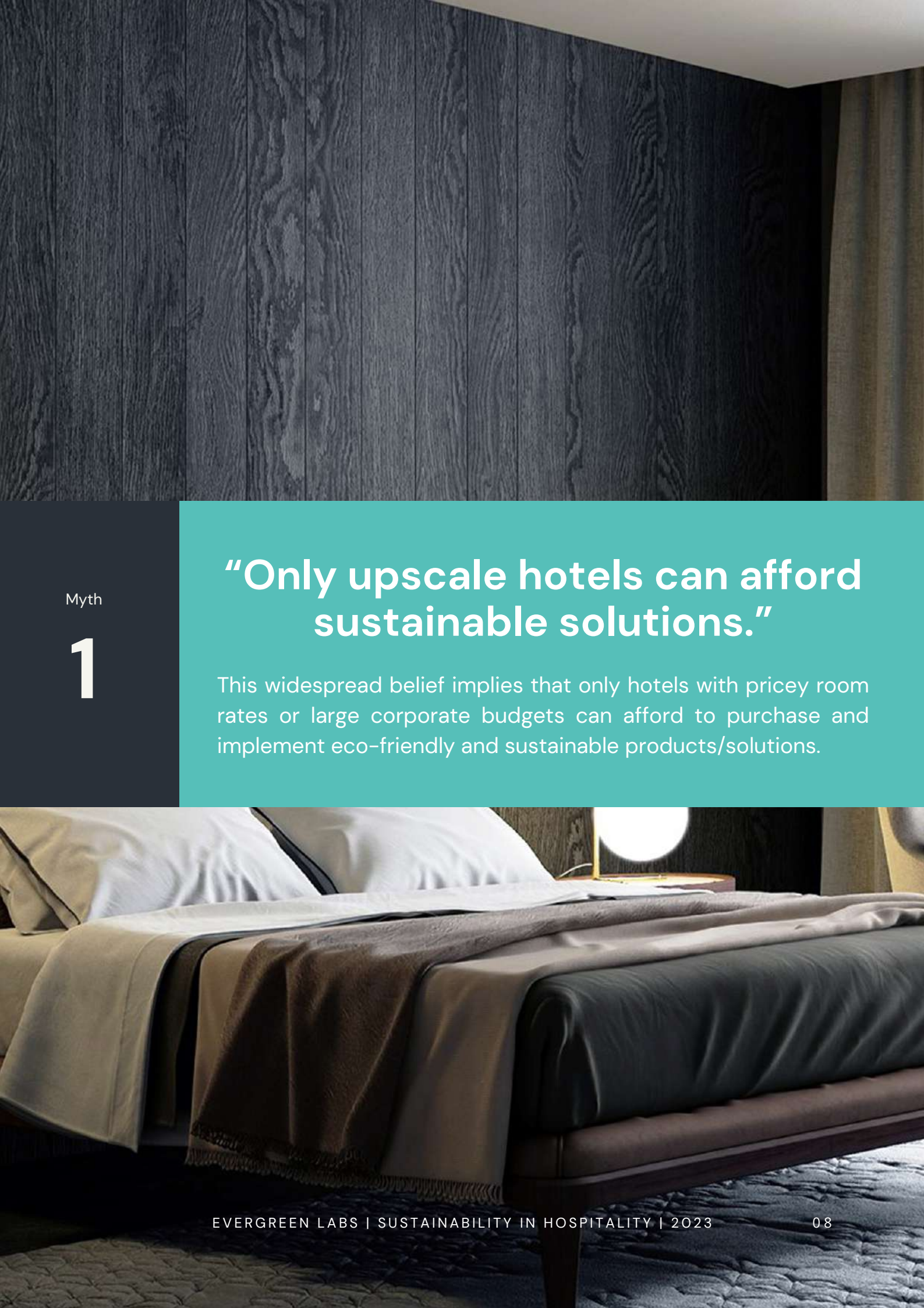
What are they?

Misconceptions about sustainability can discourage hotels from taking action or divert their attention away from what is important.

The following are **five** prevalent **misconceptions/myths** that we encountered during our research:



- 01 Only upscale hotels can afford sustainable solutions.
- 02 All plastics are bad.
- 03 Environmental harm only occurs at the disposal of a product.
- 04 What is reusable or recyclable gets reused or recycled.
- 05 Communicating sustainability efforts offers no benefits to hotels.



Myth

1

“Only upscale hotels can afford sustainable solutions.”

This widespread belief implies that only hotels with pricey room rates or large corporate budgets can afford to purchase and implement eco-friendly and sustainable products/solutions.

Debunking the myth

“Only upscale hotels can afford sustainable solutions.”

The Facts

Several economy hotels with room rates under **70 USD/night and even as low as 35 USD/night are among the most sustainable committed in our research sample.** Some of the sustainable initiatives at these properties include but are not limited to:

- Replace all plastics where possible (including back-of-house items such as reusable egg trays).
- Obtain sustainability certifications, including LEED for green buildings.
- Generate renewable energy.
- Optimize waste management to ensure source segregation, material reuse, and waste-to-landfill minimization.

According to the General Managers of several participating hotels, their operating expenses either remained unchanged or only experienced a negligible increase when single-use plastic alternative solutions were implemented.

This holds true if hotels adopt the "Reduce-Reuse" approach alongside the procurement of single-use plastic alternatives. For example, offering select items on demand, such as bathroom essentials and paper straws, or implementing refillable bathroom amenities.

Way Forward

Room rate does not determine a hotel's capacity for sustainability. Hotels can effectively manage green premiums (2) by utilizing the 'Reduce-Reuse' approach alongside the elimination of single-use plastics.

Sustainable practices can also prove to be **cost-effective**, as proper waste management can lead to reduced expenses while benefiting the environment.

The most sustainable hotels in this study were ones with the **lowest room rate.**

(2) Green Premium, a term coined by Bill Gates, describes the additional cost for a product or service that doesn't emit CO2.



Myth

2

“All plastics are bad.”

There is a commonly held belief that all plastics are harmful to the environment, regardless of their type or intended use. This can result in hotels focusing on replacing single-use plastic items with non-plastic alternatives, without fully examining other important factors that contribute to sustainability.

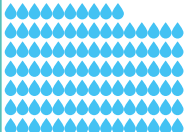


Debunking the myth

"All plastics are bad."

Understanding product life cycles can significantly impact hotels' purchasing decisions. Although paper and reusable bags are usually viewed as more sustainable than plastic bags, they have a more aggressive carbon footprint than plastic carrier bags.

Compared to single-use plastics, paper bags demand four times more energy and water, generate 70% more air pollutants, and 50 times more water pollutants. (Bell & Cave, 2011). Three billion trees are logged yearly to create paper packaging products (Gordon, n.d.). Reusable bags made from materials like cotton, hemp, or polyester also carry environmental costs, necessitating substantial energy for production and emitting greenhouse gases during transportation. However, when consistently reused, these bags can mitigate their initial impact and prove more eco-friendly than single-use alternatives. Opting for sustainable materials in reusable bags and maximizing their use can notably reduce environmental impact. The best alternative to single-use plastic bags is to reuse your plastic bags, paper bags, and cloth bags as many times as possible to minimize their environmental impacts. Below is one example of the environmental impacts of four different types of bags.

	 Plastic (mass= 6kg)	 Paper (52kg)	 Reusable nonwoven polypropylene (42kg)		 Reusable polyethylene with 40% recycled content (44kg)	
	1 use	1 use	1 use	8 uses	1 use	8 uses
Nonrenewable energy, GJ	763	2,620	3,736	467	2,945	368
Greenhouse gas emissions metric tons of CO2 equivalent ● = 0.010	 0.040	 0.080	 0.262	 0.033	 0.182	 0.023
Freshwater consumption in gallon ● = 10	 58	 1000	 426	 85	 250	 40

After eight uses, not including washing, a reusable plastic bag has a lower environmental impact than a single disposable plastic bag. The numbers given are per 1,000 bags. (a)
(a) Except for single-use polyethylene, which is per 1,500 bags to account for their smaller carrying capacity.
SOURCES: California State University, Chico, Research Foundation; Joseph Greene
Based on: California State University, Chico, Research Foundation; Joseph Greene.

Debunking the myth

“All plastics are bad.”

The Facts

Looking Beyond Plastic: A Broader View on Reducing Waste

Solely targeting plastic as the source of pollution is a misstep, as all single-use products utilize raw materials for production and result in waste. Before making any purchase decisions, it is crucial to assess the life cycle of a product, regardless of the material used.

While the production of plastics comes with its fair share of issues, including fossil-fuel derivatives and harmful emissions, the most significant environmental harm is from using these products. In other words, the problem lies in the limited use of single-use products and packaging rather than the materials themselves. We can drastically reduce the environmental impacts by reusing materials, including plastics.



Biodegradable plastics made from agricultural products such as corn or soy require significant inputs of land, energy, and water, as well as extensive use of fossil fuels related to pesticides, fertilizers, and farming equipment. Compostable packaging often doesn't end up in compost facilities because commercial composters don't accept it or because the infrastructure doesn't exist (Gordon, n.d.).



Bamboo straws, often seen as a sustainable replacement for plastic straws, may not be as eco-friendly as we thought. According to McCarthy (n.d), bamboo products can have a significant carbon footprint due to the limited regions where bamboo grows, requiring transportation to designated locations.

Debunking the myth

"All plastics are bad."

Cloth vs. plastic bags



Needs to be used **over 7,000 times** in order to have less impact than plastic bags.

All materials have negative environmental impact and hotels must consider the full lifecycle of products.

Way Forward

The growing prominence of single-use items and the linear economy approach are among the most pressing issues we face today. While plastics aren't entirely negative, a deeper comprehension of a product's life cycle highlights the value of reusability to reduce waste.

To achieve a more sustainable and less wasteful future, limiting the use of disposable items and packaging – whether of plastic or alternative materials – is an essential first step. Fortunately, there are some inspiring examples of businesses and organizations in Vietnam that are leading the way in reducing waste and promoting sustainability. By implementing circular economy principles and reducing the use of disposable items, these organizations are demonstrating that it is possible to operate profitably while also having a positive impact on the environment.

In the final sections, we will explore some of these case studies in more detail, highlighting the strategies and best practices that have been successful, and providing guidance for others who are looking to do the same.



Myth

3

“Environmental harm only occurs at the disposal of a product.”

It's a common misconception that a product only causes harm to the environment when it's disposed of. However, overlooking the hidden impacts that occur in other stages of a product's lifetime can lead to poor sustainable decisions.



Debunking the myth

“Environmental harm only occurs at the disposal of a product.”

The Facts

Contradicting the common belief that a product can only cause harm when it enters the environment, from cradle to grave, all products, regardless of materials, will include various key stages that all have environmental effects at different levels. From the extraction of raw materials, manufacturing, distribution, use, and disposal/end of life, it's essential to assess the environmental consequences of each stage comprehensively.



Way Forward

When considering a product's environmental impact, it is critical to consider the **whole lifecycle**, starting with due diligence on the product's manufacturing and distribution.

Considering only one part of the lifecycle **does not provide enough information to determine a product's sustainability**. Hoteliers should consider during procurement procedures how to question suppliers to gain insights into the product lifecycle to make **better sustainable decisions**.

How can you determine the impact of products?

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is a useful tool, typically used to systematically evaluate the environmental impacts that occur throughout the entire supply chain of a given product. We provide some simple tips at the end of this report to start applying LCA thinking in your business at a basic-level.

So are plastic bags better?

While the upfront environmental cost may seem better, the **downstream impacts are still far worse** including damaging environments, oceans, animals, and creating microplastic.





Myth

4

“What is reusable or recyclable gets reused or recycled.”

There is a common belief that as long as the packaging is collected by either the supplier or the waste collector, it will always be either reused or recycled.



Debunking the myth

“What is reusable or recyclable gets reused or recycled.”

The Facts

Relying entirely on recycling is not the answer to the plastic pollution problem. The recycling process is an energy-intensive process that typically comes from burning fossil fuels to collect, melt, and reform materials, which ultimately contributes to the climate crisis.

More concerning is that most plastic is not recycled at all. Less than 10% of the plastic we've produced has ever been recycled, and 80% has been sent to landfills or our environment, including oceans (refill.org.uk, 2023).



Recycling system in Vietnam

- Recycling in Vietnam relies on the informal sector for collecting. Therefore, the risk of environmental leakage is high.
- Only 6.1% of the 83 tonnes of plastic waste generated in Da Nang in 2021 was recycled. More than 85% of the waste was disposed of in landfills (Pham et al., 2021).
- Glass recycling is more costly and energy-intensive compared to plastic recycling. In addition to its weight, broken glass fragments harm waste collectors and can jam recycling facility's machinery. Only 14% of glass waste in Vietnam is recycled (Thanh Nien, 2022). In Da Nang, glass is typically not accepted by waste aggregators.
- During our study, we came across suppliers who claimed that their packaging is reusable/recyclable, implying that the packaging will be reused/recycled. These suppliers, however, do not collect their disposed packaging or state the percentage of recycled material in their packaging.

(3) Data taken from the World Bank 2021 report

2.6

million tonnes of plastic is discarded annually (3).

33%

of discarded plastic is estimated to be recycled annually (3).

14%

of glass is estimated to be recycled annually.

Debunking the myth

“What is reusable or recyclable gets reused or recycled.”

Way Forward

The fact that packaging is made of reusable or recyclable material such as plastics or glass **does not guarantee** that it would get reused/recycled. It is crucial for hotels to inquire with suppliers about the product's end-of-life and monitor how the product/packaging is disposed of to ensure that reuse/recycling actually happens.

Hotels have a significant role in ensuring that their waste is managed in an environmentally friendly manner. This includes **taking responsibility** for the packaging waste generated by their operations. By working with suppliers to source packaging made of reusable or recyclable materials, hotels can contribute to reducing waste and promoting sustainability.

However, it is not enough to simply choose eco-friendly packaging. **Hotels must also take steps to ensure that the packaging is actually reused or recycled.** This might involve providing recycling bins in guest rooms and public areas, implementing staff training on waste management, or partnering with local recycling facilities to ensure that the waste stream is properly managed. By taking these steps, hotels can help to create a more sustainable future for our planet.

We urgently need to shift from our disposable, single-use culture to a more sustainable, circular future, with **reuse & refill** at the center.



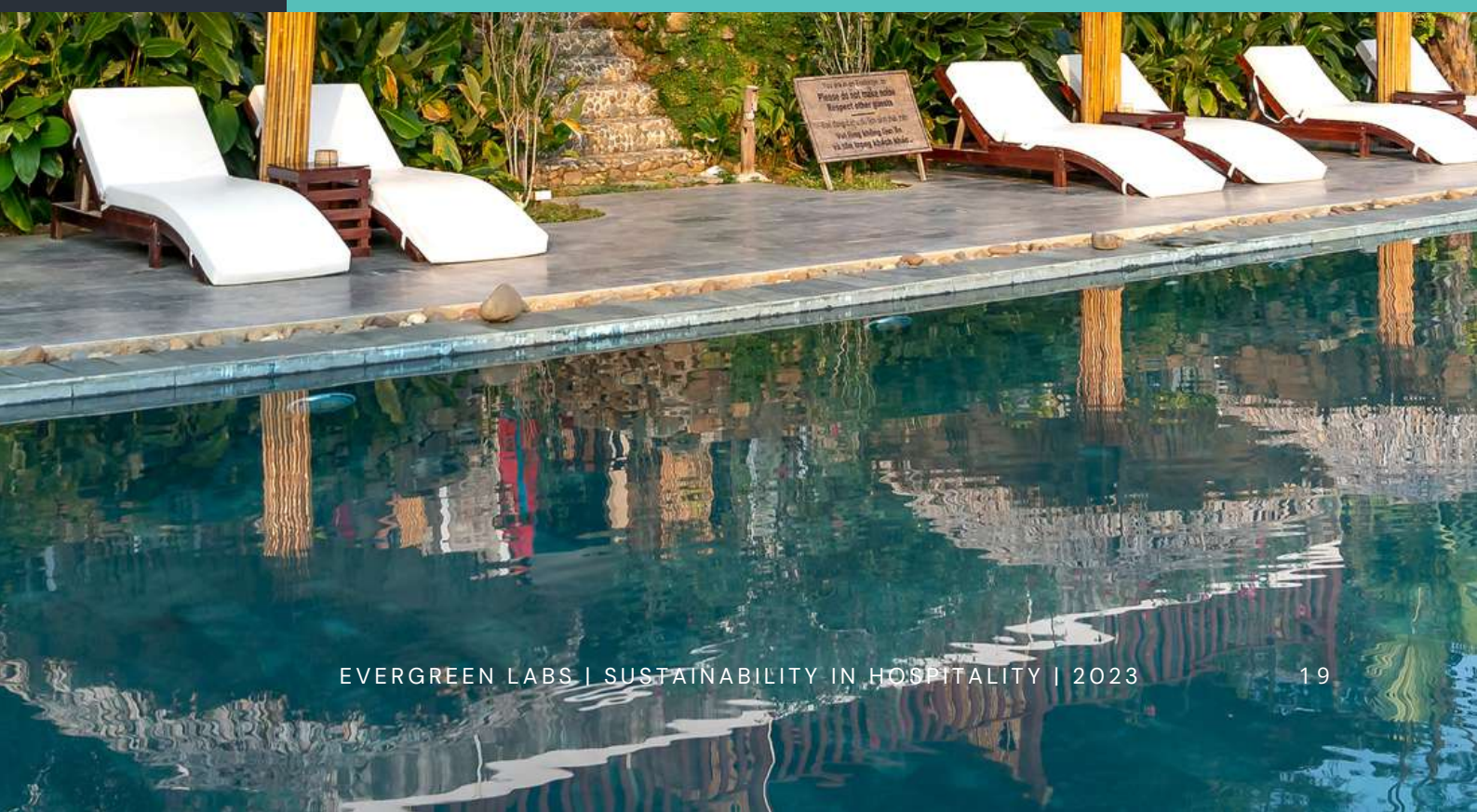


Myth

5

“There are no benefits in communicating about sustainability efforts.”

The reluctance or even avoidance to discuss eco-friendly initiatives of hotels is often attributed to the perception that guests do not consider environmental sustainability to be a crucial factor when choosing a place to stay.



Debunking the myth

"There are no benefits in communicating about sustainability efforts."

The Facts

While many hotels downplay environmental sustainability in guests' decision-making, it's important to note that hesitance, even avoidance, in communicating the hotel's green efforts can lead to misinformation and missed opportunities about a hotel's sustainable efforts. Hotels have a unique opportunity to influence their guests' behavior and promote sustainable practices. By communicating their environmental initiatives, hotels can not only

improve their reputation but also inspire their to adopt greener habits. In fact, it has been shown that informed guests are more likely to engage in sustainability practices. Therefore, it's vital for hotels to transparently share their green efforts with guests, benefiting the environment and positively impacting the hotel's profitability. By promoting sustainability, hotels attract environmentally conscious guests, fostering increased loyalty and revenue.



Knowledge builds brand trust with guests.

When guests are informed about the reasons behind the hotel's implementation of a sustainability program, they are more inclined to lend their support. By providing accurate information about current sustainability efforts, hotels **build trust with guests and strengthen their brand image** with an increasing number of environmentally conscious tourists.

Improve staff's engagement and pride

Sustainability communication demonstrates a hotel's transparency and is a powerful way to engage staff – by instilling a collective **sense of purpose and pride** in all team members' achievements.



Inspire others and be an industry leader.

When a hotel shares its environmental impact story, it can **inspire other hotels** to adopt similar sustainable initiatives and benefit from this experience. Also, early adopters are viewed as industry leaders driving positive change, which will also get imprinted onto the brand identity.

Debunking the myth

“There are no benefits in communicating about sustainability efforts.”

Way Forward

Hotels can enjoy more than just branding benefits by discussing their sustainability efforts. This practice can also help drive impact goals, inspire internal commitment, and enhance industry practices. To communicate these green efforts to guests, hotels should **be transparent and trustworthy** by presenting data, specific procedures, or eco-friendly items used in their operations. It's also important to update guests on progress and acknowledge challenges along the way.

To ensure that they can confidently communicate their efforts to guests, hotels should request information from suppliers regarding the sustainability of their products. This may include certifications, site visits, and end-of-life verifications.

Hotels can create a sustainable supply chain that reduces their overall environmental impact by working with suppliers who share their values and goals. Additionally, hotels can engage with guests to encourage sustainable behavior during their stay. This may involve providing information on local recycling programs, offering incentives for guests who opt out of daily housekeeping, and reducing single-use plastics throughout the property.



By taking these steps, hotels can reduce their environmental footprint and create a more meaningful and memorable guest experience. Ultimately, sustainability should be a top priority for hotels seeking to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive industry.

Sharing your
“green”
efforts gives
your brand
an edge.

A round wooden coffee table with a light-colored wood top and a base made of vertical wooden slats. On the table sits a clear glass vase filled with a bouquet of white and blue roses, and a small brass dish containing two small white candles. The background is a white wall with a decorative panel and a wooden floor.

Recommendations

This section outlines **key strategies** that are being implemented by the most environmentally conscious hotels in our sample. We do not intend to provide a comprehensive list but rather **best practices** for hotels as they progress along their journey toward enhanced sustainability.



Put sustainability at the heart of the brand

1

Why is it important?

Making Sustainability a Core Element of Your Brand.

Take your brand beyond the basics of "green" and position sustainability at the forefront of your hotel's design and operation. This approach ensures that sustainable practices are integrated into all decision-making processes rather than being isolated goals or targets. By tying your brand identity to sustainability, you can create a culture that prioritizes sustainable behaviors and encourages eco-conscious guests.



The What

Two hotels in our sample embody this strategy:

- Sustainability is explicitly emphasized in their **brand name/brand identity**.
- The hotel's **design** aims to be environmentally friendly, e.g., LEED gold or EDGE certificate, water-efficient fixtures, and co-working space providing individual workspace equipped with their own lamps and fans to reduce central power usage.
- The **guest experience** in these hotels is forward-thinking, future-focused e.g., streamlined, paperless processes and three-item bathroom amenities with additional items provided on request, and that attracts more modern, conscious guests.
- Their **organization culture** places a strong emphasis on sustainability, for example, an eco-conscious mindset as a recruiting element, frequent staff training, e.g., minimizing energy/water/cleaning liquid used, and sorting waste.
- **Operation teams** follow the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle adage carefully and are trained on these standards.



Focus on
putting
sustainability
at the heart
of your hotel
and people.

What are the best practices?

Two hotels in our sample embody this strategy and some best practices of their initiatives are outlined below:



Focus Area	Activity & Examples	Outcome
Brand name & identity	Sustainability is explicitly emphasized in their brand name/brand identity.	Clear focus on sustainability at the core or backbone of the business.
Architecture & building design	Property design that aims to be environmentally friendly e.g. LEED gold or EDGE certificate, water-efficient fixtures, and co-working space providing individual workspace equipped with their own lamps and fans to reduce central power usage.	The property embodies environmentally conscious from its foundation and that is clear to staff & guests alike.
Guest experience	The guest experience in these hotels is forward-thinking, future-focused e.g. streamlined, paperless processes and three-item bathroom amenities with additional items provided on request, and that attracts more modern, conscious guests.	Putting sustainable initiatives in the forefront of guest experience drives brand trust and strengthens guest loyalty.
Organizational culture	Their organization culture places a strong emphasis on sustainability, for example, an eco-conscious mindset as a recruiting element, frequent staff training e.g. minimizing energy/water/cleaning liquid used, and sorting waste.	People drive organizations so instilling sustainability across your team is key to success & is apparent to your guests.
Operations team	Operation teams follow the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle adage carefully and are trained on these standards.	Well-trained teams reduce operational issues & drive brand identity.

Build internal sustainability awareness

2

Why is it important?

Encouraging Sustainability in Hotels: The Importance of Staff Engagement

When it comes to sustainability practices, hotel executives often focus on technical operations. However, a mindset shift among staff is crucial in instilling new processes and habits. Our research has shown that some hotels face challenges in implementing sustainability solutions due to staff resistance, particularly in small-to-medium-sized hotels where staff shortages can disrupt operations. Thus, having the support of team members for sustainability initiatives becomes even more crucial.

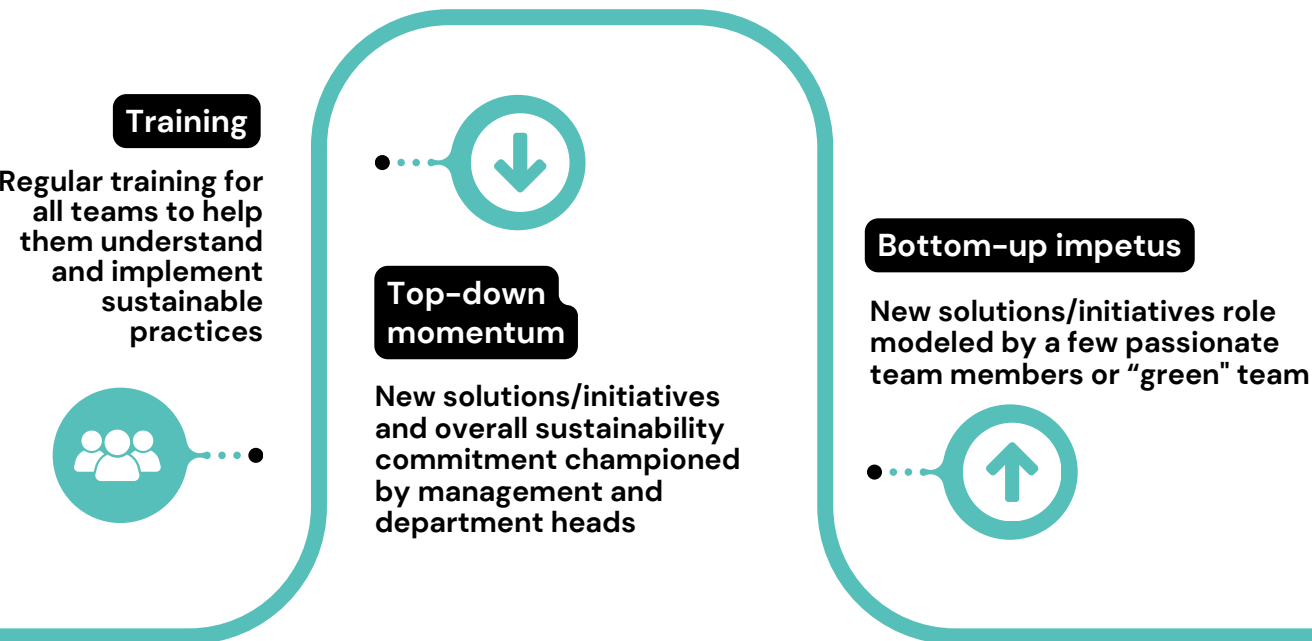
Creating a culture of sustainability awareness can lead to successful bottom-up sustainability efforts. Additionally, a significant benefit is the ripple effect, where hotel staff continue to adopt sustainable practices in their personal lives and communities.



Sustainability is also about **changing mindsets** to instill new processes and habits for staff.

What are the best practices?

Hotels in our research sample are raising organizational sustainability awareness by doing the following actions:



Bringing in external experts

For example, Evergreen Lab's waste audits and business collection programs, together with ReForm Plastic, are great ways to bring in expertise without having to have it in-house.



Incorporate product life cycle thinking in the purchasing process

3

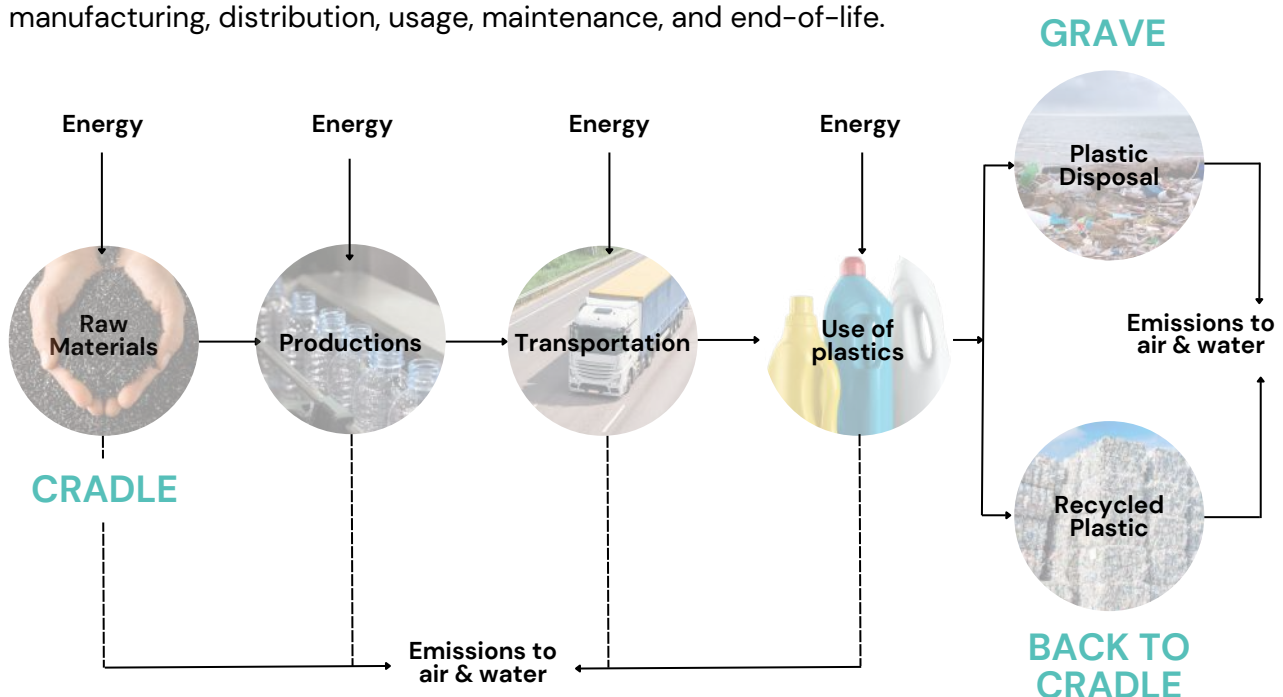
Why is it important?

The Holistic Benefits of Product Life Cycle Assessment for Hotels

When considering the environmental impact of a product, it's important to take a comprehensive approach. By utilizing the product life cycle assessment framework, you can avoid fixating on one stage while overlooking other stages of the cycle. However, this approach requires an actively engaged purchasing team with a basic understanding of sustainability.

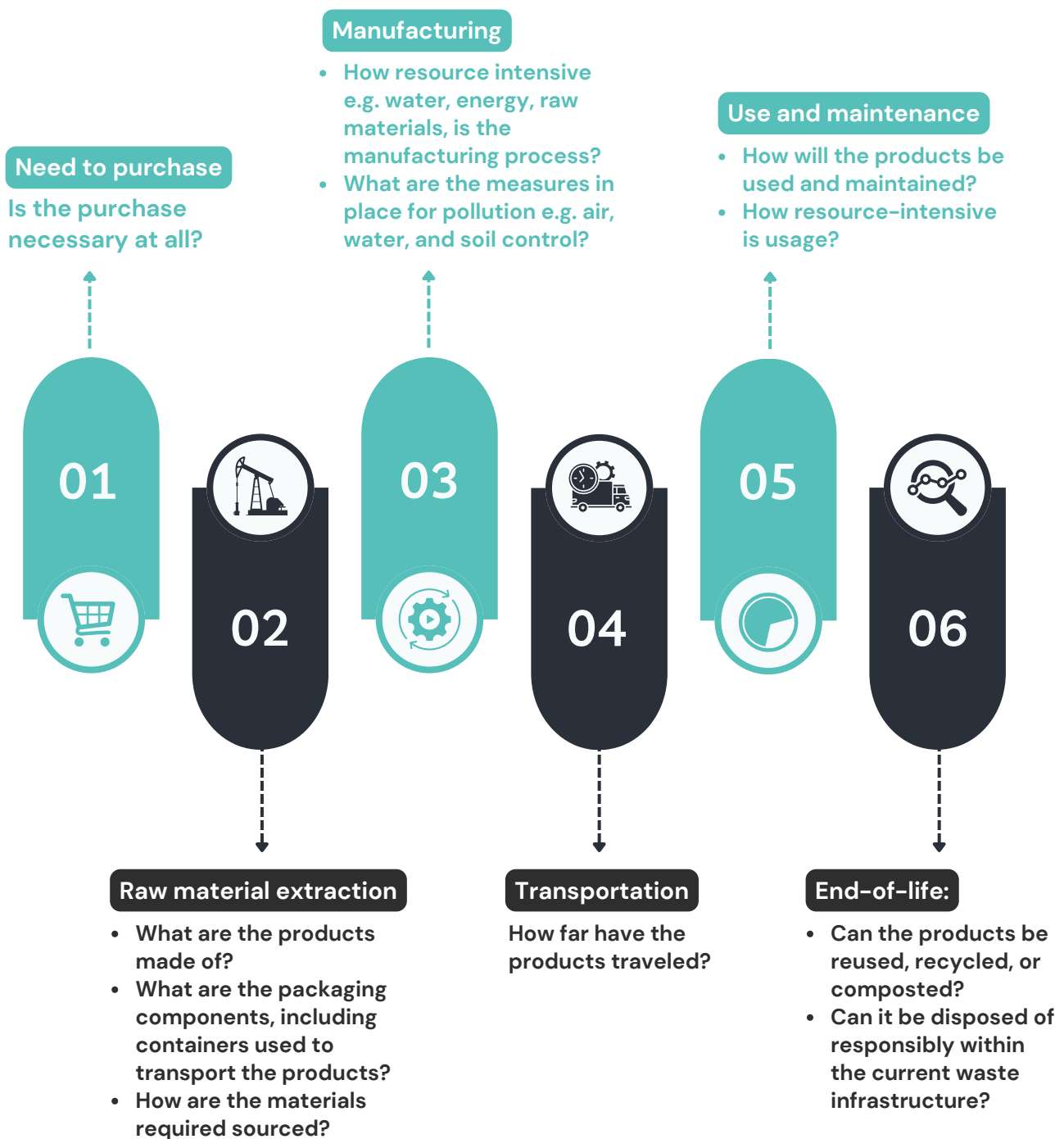
What are the best practices?

The purchasing team should analyze the complete lifecycle of a product or service before making any purchases. This includes evaluating the processes of raw material extraction, manufacturing, distribution, usage, maintenance, and end-of-life.



Instead of **only focusing on the best price**, purchasing teams need to be trained to look at several aspects, including sustainability, ethics, and transparency. We recommend that purchasing teams **ask the following simple questions** as a standard when procuring new products. Note that it is the responsibility of the supplier to provide transparent life cycle information to your team (see **Glassia Case Study page 35**).

Questions for Purchasing team



Embrace the Reduce in the 3R hierarchy

4

Why is it important?

Adopting the 3R Principle for Sustainable Hotel Operations in Vietnam

To improve their decision-making and procedures, hotels can apply the 3R principle. In Vietnam, where an estimated 71% of waste is dumped in landfills, it is crucial to prioritize the 3R hierarchy. This entails emphasizing the Reduce and Reuse strategies, ultimately decreasing the demand for virgin resources and minimizing waste disposal.

Recycling alone is not a comprehensive solution, as it could have adverse environmental effects and limited availability/capacity. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize the 3R principle balanced and strategically, primarily focusing on Reduce and Reuse.

The Reduce strategy involves minimizing the use of resources by eliminating unnecessary waste generation in the first place. Hotels can implement this by promoting electronic communication, encouraging guests to bring their reusable water bottles and bags, and minimizing disposable items such as straws, cups, and cutlery.

The Reuse strategy encourages the use of products and materials more than once before disposal. Hotels can implement this by providing refillable shampoo and conditioner dispensers in guest rooms, donating unused toiletries to local charities, and using washable and reusable linens and towels.

By adopting the 3R principle, hotels in Vietnam can make significant progress in reducing their environmental footprint and contributing to a more sustainable future. It not only benefits the environment but also enhances the reputation and profitability of the hotel industry.



What are the best practices?

Waste Reduction: A Key Priority for Hotels

The first step towards reducing waste is to prevent its generation in the first place. In that regard, many hotels are exploring new ways to enhance guest experience while minimizing waste. Through revamped operational processes, hotels can ensure that they are meeting guests' needs while reducing the amount of waste generated during their stay.

On-demand convenience:

Here are a couple of ideas for a more streamlined hotel experience:

- Simplified bathroom setup: we will provide you with the basics (toothbrush, toothpaste, and hand wash), and you can request additional items like razors, combs, or caps at the front desk or purchase them at our tap-and-pay vending machines, located on every floor.
- À-la-carte breakfast: instead of a buffet, our guests can choose from a selection of delicious breakfast options.



Personalization

To ensure a more personalized experience, hotels may inquire about guests' preferences during the reservation process and check-in. This allows the hotel to offer amenities and services that cater to the guest's specific needs.

Increase shared amenities

Rather than having in-room minibars, consider installing vending machines with easy-to-reach snacks and beverages. Additionally, providing coffee machines in common areas allows guests to make fresh coffee, instead of relying on instant coffee in each room.



In order to minimize waste, hotels should examine their operational procedures and identify areas that can be improved upon.

OPTIMIZE PACKAGING



Avoid unnecessary plastic packaging like fruit plastic wrap and pre-portioned packaging for jam, butter, sugar, as well as the use of disposable decorating items like flowers, and use table plants instead.

DIGITIZE HOTELS' SYSTEM



Mobile check-in, e-keys, e-billing, and transitioning to digital documents in the back-of-house to reduce paper usage and enhance efficiency.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING



Utilize waste data for decision-making, such as chefs adjusting menu choices by analyzing data from a food waste tracker. This helps reduce food waste and operational costs.

TAKEAWAYS:

- **Cost Savings:** Implementing sustainability initiatives can lead to significant cost savings in the long run. For example, waste reduction and energy-efficient practices can lower operational expenses.
- **Enhanced Guest Experience:** Sustainability efforts are increasingly appealing to guests who are environmentally conscious. Green initiatives can attract eco-minded travelers and enhance overall guest satisfaction.
- **Positive Brand Image:** Adopting sustainable practices can boost a hotel's reputation and brand image.
- **Community Engagement:** Collaborating with local organizations and communities, such as the integration of local informal waste workers, can create positive relationships and improve a hotel's reputation in the community.
- **Resource Efficiency:** Using resources efficiently, such as choosing refillable products, upcycling plastic waste, or purchasing recycled materials, reduces resource depletion and minimizes environmental impact.

Integrating Reuse and Refill Practices in the Hospitality Industry

Adopting a reuse/refill approach in the hospitality sector requires a significant shift in mindset. Rather than considering the packaging as a complimentary item, the focus is on the product itself. This approach has gained popularity and is becoming an industry standard. Here are some of the Reuse/Refill solutions that are currently popular:



Refillable Toiletries and Amenities:

Refill bathroom amenities e.g. shampoo, body gel, and hand wash, are among the most common solutions, implemented from the start by many new hotels.

Refillable water bottling:

Instead of providing single-use plastic bottled water, refillable water, whether provided by the hotel or a supplier, is becoming more common.



Reusable transportation containers:

Reusable crates for product transportation for BOH can cut down a large amount of waste.



Sustainable amenities:

Reusable products of higher quality and aesthetic appeal, such as cloth/recycled coasters demonstrate care and improve the guest experience.



Laundry Services:

Use reusable laundry bags for collecting dirty linens. In the back-of-house, cleaning staff can reuse these bags after washing them, reducing the need for disposable laundry bags.



Conference Services:

Implementing a system for conferences where reusable name tags, table centerpieces, and signage to reduce waste



Embrace Reuse and Refill as sustainable practices by actively and consistently utilizing the product or its packaging for its intended purpose, fostering a cycle of longevity and reducing environmental impact.

Case study: GLASSIA

Exploring Refill/Reuse Solutions in the Hospitality Industry: A Case Study

In this case study, we delve into the experiences of hotels that have adopted Refill/Reuse solutions for Glassia, a Vietnamese social enterprise providing refilled bottled water. After working with various hospitality brands, Glassia has learned some key differences between clients who initiated from refill from the beginning versus those introduced later and how this can inform decision-making in the hospitality industry regarding sustainability initiatives. As sustainability increasingly becomes a concern for consumers and businesses alike, many hotels are moving away from single-use products to Refill/Reuse solutions for various amenities. This approach aims to reduce waste, conserve resources, and create a more eco-friendly operation. However, the ease of implementing such changes can vary significantly depending on when the Refill/Reuse approach is adopted.

The Adoption of Refill/Reuse in Hotels: Two Scenarios

Here are two scenarios of how hotels have incorporated Refill/Reuse solutions into their operations:

1. Early Adoption: Some hotels have eagerly embraced Refill/Reuse solutions from the outset. For these establishments, the implementation of these processes is relatively straightforward. Hotels that have always used Refill bathroom amenities report that the approach is easy to manage. Everyone is accustomed to the procedures, from executives to back-of-the-house staff, making the transition to Refill/Reuse seamless.

2. Late Adoption: In contrast, hotels that have recently introduced Refill/Reuse processes face more challenges. This is particularly noticeable when transitioning from single-use products to Refill alternatives. For example, replacing single-use bottled water with Glassia's refill system is perceived as time-consuming and labor-intensive. The staff may require assistance in adapting to the new system.



Discoveries on the Implementation of Refill Systems in Hotels

Anticipate Internal Resistance When Implementing Refill/Reuse Solutions in Hotels

This case study emphasizes that hotels should expect internal resistance when introducing Refill/Reuse solutions, particularly if these adjustments are made later. Employees who are used to traditional methods may be reluctant to adopt new processes, leading to potential friction during the transition.

The Importance of Early Adoption

Here's why early adoption is crucial: hotels that have incorporated Refill/Reuse solutions into their daily operations and found them manageable and straightforward to implement have reaped the benefits. It highlights the significance of implementing sustainable practices from the beginning. When these processes are part of a hotel's organizational culture from day one, staff and executives are more likely to embrace them.

Conclusions:

The experiences of hotels in this case study highlight the importance of proactive sustainability initiatives within the hospitality industry. To minimize internal resistance and ensure smoother transitions, hotels should consider adopting Refill/Reuse solutions from the outset. In doing so, they contribute to environmental conservation, streamline operations, and enhance long-term sustainability efforts.



Recycle & Compost:

Waste materials are converted into new materials and objects.

- **Source Segregation for Sustainable Waste Management:** Implement waste sorting at the source, involving hotel staff and collaborating with external organizations. For instance, programs initiated by Evergreen Labs can integrate informal waste workers into the hotel's waste segregation system, enhancing their livelihoods while simultaneously reducing the hotel's disposal costs.
- **Recycling and Upcycling Initiatives:** Explore recycling and upcycling options by partnering with downstream solution providers. For example, collaborate with organizations like Reform Plastic or PlasticPeople to transform the hotel's plastic waste into innovative products such as coasters, trays, and bins.
- **Procure Recycled Products:** Make environmentally responsible product choices by purchasing items manufactured from recycled materials. Consider furniture crafted from recycled plastics or glassware made from recycled glass.
- **Food Waste Management:** Implement food waste reduction strategies like composting or donating excess food to farms for animal feed to minimize food waste



Sort waste at the source

Recycling and upcycling



Produced recycled products

Food waste management



A focus on appropriate waste management strategies **can further enhance** the hotel's commitment to environmental responsibility.

Communicate and engage guests in hotels' sustainability efforts

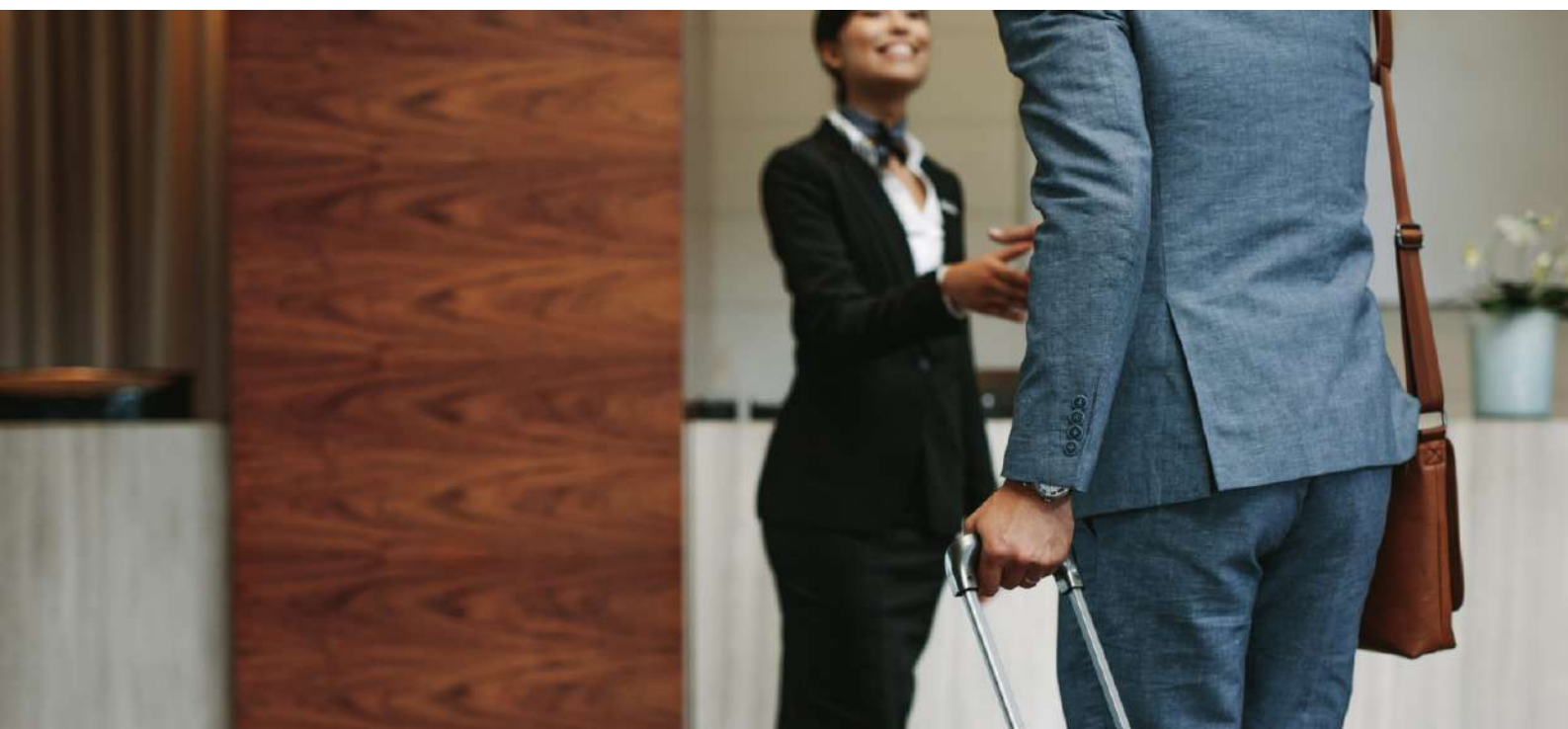
5

Why is it important?

Encouraging Informed Guests and Sustainable Communication in the Hospitality Sector

Informed guests are more likely to accept new initiatives and perceive them as an upgrade instead of a downgrade in service. They are also more likely to question greenwashing, so it is important for hotels to be transparent with their guests.

Sustainable communication has the potential to raise transparency and standards in the hospitality sector, and goes beyond just branding. Confidence in communicating sustainability actions begins with proper procurement and sourcing from the very start.



What are the best practices?

Here are some of the most common communication tips and practices among hotels in our research sample:

Transparency & accuracy



Be open & honest about your activities.

Publishing sustainability initiatives on the hotel's website, for example, eco certificates, sustainable design/process, sustainable suppliers hotels are working with, and scorecards of each property showcases green efforts clearly to guests and future partners.

Storytelling



Focus on connection through stories, not only by facts.

Sharing stories about hotels' sustainability efforts on social media/QR codes in rooms, organizing events featuring sustainable products and their stories, and designing sustainability-focused tours for hotel guests encourage a feeling of "doing good" while staying at your property.

Engaging guests



Guests should be part of your sustainability journey.

- Conducting surveys and talking to guests to understand their needs and their response to the hotel's sustainability initiatives.
- Guest-facing staff are well-informed and skilled in communicating with guests about their sustainability needs as well as the hotel's sustainability efforts.
- Facilities encouraging/making it easy for guests to be environmentally friendly, such as sorting bins with visible, easy-to-understand signage in all common areas, free water refill station at common areas, and bicycle racks.

Engage your audience authentically & ethically.



Conclusions

Through the research's findings, we're advocating for a **shift towards sustainable practices** for the hospitality industry. This transition presents an opportunity for hotels and other establishments to align with evolving consumer preferences for eco-friendly options and to demonstrate their commitment to environmental stewardship.

Embracing sustainable alternatives and practices not only benefits the environment but also enhances the industry's reputation and long-term viability. As we move forward, it is essential for stakeholders to collaborate, innovate, and invest in sustainable solutions to address the single-use plastic challenge, ensuring a more sustainable and responsible future for the hospitality industry.



The sustainability transition **helps hotels align** with evolving consumer preferences.

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+84 236 3912 686



info@evergreenlabs.org



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