Transforming Sri Lankan Hotels: A Pilot Study on the Journey Towards Environmental Sustainability and Change Management

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Abstract

This article examines the implementation of Environmental Sustainability (ES) strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry, with a focus on the role of change champions. The study adapts a social constructionist approach and utilizes in-depth interviews and observations as research tools. Drawing on organizational change management theories, stakeholder theory, and the resource-based view, the research explores the purpose, constraints, change management, and contribution aspects of implementing environmental sustainability strategies in the hotel industry. The findings reveal the significance of change champions in facilitating the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies. Developing a culture for environmental sustainability, establishing effective communication channels, promoting ethical values, and implementing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks were identified as key roles of change champions. The study also identifies financial limitations, waste management challenges, leadership commitment, human capital development, and organizational behaviour as constraints for the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies. This study provides valuable insights for the hotel industry in formulating change management capabilities and leveraging change champions to achieve environmental sustainability goals. It contributes to the existing literature by discussing various types of environmental sustainability initiatives adapted by star-class hotels and addressing the challenges faced during their implementation. Additionally, the study offers guidance on implementing and managing an environmental sustainability governance framework (ESG) in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. The findings of this study can be utilized by hoteliers and other stakeholders in the industry to successfully implement environmental sustainability strategies and achieve strategic environmental sustainability objectives. By understanding the roles of change champions and addressing the identified constraints, hotels can enhance their environmental sustainability performance and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Introduction

The hotel industry plays a vital role in the Sri Lankan economy, consuming significant resources and generating substantial waste, which has raised concerns about its environmental sustainability (Grosbois, 2012; IFC, 2013). The potential to minimize energy consumption, wastewater discharge, solid waste, and greenhouse gas emissions has been demonstrated through various studies, indicating the feasibility of improving the industry's environmental performance (Miththapala et al., 2013). However, in practice, many hotels face challenges in integrating sustainability as a core business requirement and tend to adapt environmental practices in an ad-hoc manner (Lozano, 2013; Sajjad et al., 2018).

Despite the potential for improvement, Sri Lankan hotels show varying degrees of commitment to environmental sustainability, with some organizations prioritizing commercial objectives over sustainability goals (Fatoki, 2019). While basic environmental regulations exist, there is a lack of legal requirements for sustainability compliance in the country, leading to a discrepancy between written sustainability policies and their actual implementation (Dissanayake et al., 2016). Additionally, a lack of knowledge and awareness related to environmental sustainability practices contributes to the ad-hoc approach in the industry (Lozano, 2013). This study aims to delve into the reasons behind Sri Lankan hotels adopting environmental sustainability strategies in their businesses and explore the various strategies they undertake. Moreover, the study seeks to examine the role of change champions in driving sustainability strategies and the constraints faced by the hotel industry when implementing environmental sustainability strategies.

This study holds significant value as it sheds light on the opportunities for enhancing environmental sustainability strategies in the hotel industry, which, in turn, can contribute to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the country. Understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by the hotel industry will enable the development of effective strategies to promote sustainable practices in the sector. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for hotel organizations seeking to implement environmental sustainability strategies, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable future for the Sri Lankan hospitality sector.

Research problem

The Sri Lankan hotel industry faces a growing need to address the environmental challenges created by its operations, particularly in terms of resource consumption, waste generation, and pollution (Jankovic & Krivacic, 2014; Shanklin, 1993). Despite the availability of sustainable practices, many hotels struggle to implement environmental sustainability strategies effectively due to various organizational constraints and resistance to change. The role of a change champion has emerged as crucial in overcoming these obstacles and driving successful environmental sustainability initiatives.

The necessity of this research problem arises from the significant ecological and economic impact of the hotel industry in Sri Lanka. While the industry contributes significantly to the country's economy as the third-largest foreign exchange earner, it is equally responsible for environmental challenges such as solid waste, energy inefficiency, water quality degradation, and environmental pollution (Shanklin, 1993). To address these environmental challenges, it is imperative to integrate sustainable practices into the business operations of Sri Lankan hotels. However, many

organizations in this sector encounter organizational constraints that hinder the effective implementation of environmental sustainability strategies. The pilot study indicates that employee initiatives in sustainability are lacking, and environmental goals are not adequately linked to performance appraisals. Additionally, there is a notable gap in top management support, training, and engagement, as well as a lack of specific structures for managing sustainability initiatives and effective controls (Fatoki, 2021).

The role of change champions within hotel organizations is pivotal in managing and mitigating these constraints. Change champions are individuals who are passionate about sustainability and possess the knowledge, skills, and influence to mobilize others towards sustainable actions (Wiesner et al., 2018). They play a crucial role in overcoming resistance to change, driving sustainability initiatives within organizations, and shaping a culture of sustainable practices (Carrington et al., 2019). Recognizing the importance of change champions and their strategic role in environmental sustainability implementation within the Sri Lankan hotel industry is crucial. However, a comprehensive understanding of their role, their influence on senior leadership, and their capacity to address organizational constraints is still lacking. This research seeks to explore the significance of change champions and how they can effectively lead successful environmental sustainability initiatives by overcoming existing organizational constraints and resistance to change. It aims to provide actionable insights that can help hotels in Sri Lanka advance their sustainability efforts while aligning with global environmental goals. Therefore, the central research question is: How can the role of change champions effectively address existing organizational constraints for the successful implementation of environmental sustainability strategies within the Sri Lankan hotel industry?

Literature Review

Environmental Sustainability in the Hotel Industry

The hotel industry's environmental sustainability performance involves minimizing environmental impacts, reducing emissions, and curbing the use of hazardous substances (Zhu et al., 2008). Numerous studies highlight that adapting environmental sustainability programs in the hospitality sector can lead to various benefits, including cost savings, improved organizational image, adherence to guidelines, and competitive advantages (Mensah, 2006; Quazi, 1999). Higher productivity and operational efficiency have been linked to enhance environmental-sustainable performance in hotels (Montabon et al., 2007). Consequently, sustainable tourism is closely associated with the hospitality industry's environmental sustainability approach, contributing to society's development and minimizing environmental impacts (Gössling et al., 2020; Krozer, 2008).

Empirical research emphasizes that focusing on environmental conservation in the hotel industry results in economic benefits, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantages (Álvarez et al., 2019; Goodman, 2000; Kassinis & Soteriou, 2003). To encourage sustainable practices in the hotel industry, several independent tools, such as eco-labels, accreditations, and environmental management systems, have been implemented (Ayuso, 2007). However, despite the opportunities for environmental sustainability, some hotels continue to face challenges in integrating and effectively implementing sustainable practices (Bohdanowicz, 2009; Lozano, 2013).

Role of Change Champion in the Implementation of Environmental Sustainability Strategies

Change champions play a crucial role in driving environmental sustainability initiatives within organizations, acting as catalysts for change and motivating others to embrace sustainable practices (Thakhathi et al., 2019). They are individuals who are passionate about sustainability and possess the knowledge, skills, and influence to mobilize others toward sustainable actions (Wiesner et al., 2018). The involvement of change champions in implementing environmental sustainability strategies can lead to increased employee engagement, improved sustainability performance, and the integration of sustainable practices into the organizational culture (Carrington et al., 2019). However, resistance from employees and a lack of awareness among business leaders can hinder the change process, making it essential for hotel managers to identify and overcome internal constraints to achieve sustainable outcomes (Carter et al., 2012).

Theoretical Foundation

This study draws on three theories to provide a holistic view of the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. The Resource-Based View (RBS) Wernerfelt (1984) suggests that businesses with distinctive capabilities and resources are more likely to adopt sustainability initiatives to gain a competitive advantage. Stakeholder theory Freeman, (1984) highlights the role of stakeholder pressures in influencing businesses to engage in sustainability activities (Garcés-Ayerbe et al., 2012). Lastly, Lewin's three-step model Lewin (1947) serves as the main theory in this study, explaining the role of change champions in implementing environmental sustainability strategies aligned with organizational strategic objectives. By analyzing these theories, this study aims to provide insights into the effective implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry.

Methodology

This section presents the research methodology employed in this study, which adapts a social constructionist approach to explore the implementation of Environmental Sustainability (ES) strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry from a change management perspective. The qualitative research approach was chosen to delve into the complexities of employee attitudes, behaviours, leadership styles, and cultural norms that impact the organization's ES objectives (Martin, 2001). This approach provides a focused and in-depth examination, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in the context of the hotel industry (Coyne, 1997).

A pilot study was conducted to validate the research problem and ensure the effectiveness of the data collection instruments. The findings from the pilot study informed the refinement of the interview questions and ensured the clarity and appropriateness of the data-gathering tools for the research objectives. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with respondents from the selected hotels. The use of structured questions and formal interviews allowed for the collection of participants' opinions, perceptions, attitudes, and ideas regarding the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies and change dynamics (Chan & Hawkins, 2010). The data-gathering tools and interview questions were adapted based on the insights gained from the pilot study.

The sample was selected carefully considering the purposive sampling method to ensure that it covers a significant portion of the country's hotel industry. First, the largest group hotel in Sri Lanka, registered under the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and holding ISO 14001:2015 certification, was chosen. This decision ensures that the research includes an establishment with a substantial commitment to environmental sustainability (Daily & Huang, 2001). Additionally, three different hotels from the same group were selected, considering variations in business models, target markets, and geographical locations, to capture the diversity of sustainability practices in the industry. Interviews were conducted with participants at different organizational levels, including top management, middle management, and associate-level staff, to gain insights into how sustainability strategies are perceived and executed throughout the organizational hierarchy (Hoffman, 1999). Data triangulation was ensured through interviews with various hotel staff levels (Creswell, 2017). Ethical considerations were met by obtaining informed consent and maintaining participants' anonymity (Bryman, 2016). The research adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring privacy and confidentiality during data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2017).

This methodological approach aims to provide a holistic perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by the Sri Lankan hotel industry in implementing environmental sustainability strategies. The sample selection strategy allows for a comprehensive exploration of sustainability practices within the industry, enabling the study to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of change champions in overcoming organizational constraints and resistance to change for the successful implementation of environmental strategies.

Results and Discussion

Constraints for Implementing Environmental Sustainability Strategies

The implementation of Environmental Sustainability (ES) strategies in the hotel industry is crucial for long-term viability and responsible business practices. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and other constraints present significant challenges to such initiatives. Through the pilot study discussions with Geetha, it was evident that sustainability plans had been impacted by cash flow issues, postponing many sustainability initiatives until 2023/2024.

Geetha	*"Sustainability plans had been impacted by cash flow issues, postponed many sustainability initiatives until the financial year 2023/2024."*

Additionally, the pandemic has led to an increase in single-use plastic waste, highlighting the lack of proper waste disposal infrastructure in developing countries like Sri Lanka.

Malan, the training and development manager at a premier five-star city hotel, emphasized these challenges in implementing environmental sustainability strategies and stressed the importance of adopting a circular economy model to overcome them.

Malan	*"The main question is after evolving plastics and polythene there is no proper disposal mechanism now in Sri Lanka. This is one of the key challenges that emerged because of irresponsible economic development."*

Challenge in Waste Disposal and Irresponsible Economic Development

Malan's insights shed light on the pressing issue of improper disposal of plastics and polythene in Sri Lanka, a consequence of irresponsible economic development. The absence of a proper waste disposal mechanism poses a significant challenge for hotels aiming to adopt sustainable practices. Integrating the 3R circular economy model, which promotes reuse and regeneration to create a closed resource loop, could help hotels reduce waste and enhance recycling functions (Pieroni, McAloone & Pigosso, 2019). By adopting this model, hotels can work towards achieving zero landfill objectives and optimize recycling practices.

Management Commitment

Geetha stated that "Organization's management has not properly realized what is the core purpose behind why the organization practice environmental sustainability strategies."

Geetha	*"Organization's management has not properly realized what is the core purpose behind as to why the organization practice environmental sustainability strategies."*

This indicates a constraint faced by Sri Lankan hotels in the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies - a lack of strong commitment from senior management. Without a clear and wholehearted commitment from top management, the integration of sustainability practices into the hotel's operations can face significant challenges. Senior management plays a crucial role in setting the tone for sustainability efforts and providing the necessary resources and support (Taylor et al., 2010). Therefore, hotel management needs to gain a deeper understanding of the purpose and long-term benefits of environmental sustainability strategies to foster a more sustainable future for the organization.

Staff Motivation, Awareness, and Commitment

Nalin emphasized that "developing employee motivation and commitment is a spectacular role of the organization to successfully implement environmental sustainability strategies".

Nalin	*"Developing employee's motivation and commitment is a spectacular role of the organization to successfully implement environmental sustainability strategies"*

This highlights the importance of staff motivation and commitment to the implementation of sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels. A lack of employee motivation and awareness can pose a significant constraint for organizations seeking to adopt sustainable practices (Baumann-Pauly et al.,2013). Employees need to understand the purpose and benefits of sustainability strategies to actively participate and contribute to their success. By fostering a culture of sustainability and providing opportunities for employee engagement and training, hotels can enhance staff motivation and commitment to sustainability goals (Ababneh, 2021). Engaged and committed employees are more likely to embrace sustainability practices, leading to improved environmental performance for the organization.

Managerial Constraints

As explained by Geetha, Manager -Health, Hygiene, and Sustainability clarified that managerial constraints in the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels are influenced by various factors, such as the complex centralized organization structure and the lack of recognition of sustainability as a strategic business objective. These constraints can be better understood and analyzed by considering relevant academic theories.

Geetha "Currently our business head wanted to go for zero plastic initiative and due to the existing complex centralized organization structure delayed in decision making and couldn't achieve the expected outcome yet."

The complex centralized organization structure poses challenges to timely decision-making and implementation of sustainability initiatives. According to Mintzberg's organizational configuration theory, a centralized structure concentrates decision-making authority at the top, leading to delays in approvals and limited responsiveness to specific issues (Mintzberg, 1980). This is evident in the case of the current business head's struggle to pursue the zero-plastic initiative. To overcome this constraint, the organization could explore alternative structures, such as decentralization, which empowers individual hotels to implement sustainability strategies more efficiently.

Moreover, the lack of recognition of sustainability as a key business priority by top management can be explained through the concept of strategic fit. In strategic management, sustainability should be integrated into the organization's overall strategy to achieve a competitive advantage (Porter, 2011). However, the organization's focus on financial objectives and limited efforts toward long-term sustainability strategies indicate a misalignment between sustainability goals and the overall business strategy, as clarified by Geetha.

Geetha "Our brand standards and image is given more priority than sustainability, that is because it is a business strategic priority and conducting regular audits by the branding team."

To address this constraint, the organization needs to recognize the strategic importance of sustainability and align sustainability objectives with the broader business strategy.

Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior can shed light on the lack of staff motivation and commitment toward sustainability strategies. According to this theory, an individual's behavioural intention is influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this study, as clarified by Geetha, staff awareness and motivation for sustainability initiatives are low, and there is no proper management control system to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Geetha "Proper sustainability management control system should be in place to assess present system performance with data and adhere to continuous improvement."

To enhance staff motivation, the organization can implement training programs and create a supportive work environment that encourages employees to participate in sustainability efforts actively. Overall, understanding the organizational constraints through relevant academic theories help identify potential solutions for the effective implementation of environmental

sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels. By adopting decentralized structures, aligning sustainability with strategic objectives, and fostering a culture of ownership and commitment among staff, hotels can overcome these constraints and achieve improved environmental performance and strategic benefits.

Financial constraints

Nalin's explanation of financial constraints as a main obstacle to the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels can be better understood by considering relevant theories and concepts.

Nalin   "Financial support is one of the main obstacles for the implementation of environmental strategies."

One theory that can help explain the financial constraints is the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm. According to the RBV, a firm's competitive advantage is derived from its unique and valuable resources (Barney, 1991). In the context of sustainability strategies, financial resources play a crucial role in the implementation of environmentally friendly practices and technologies. However, limited financial resources can hinder the hotel's ability to invest in sustainable technologies and practices, as explained by Malan.

Malan   "Limited financial resources hinder the hotel's ability to invest in sustainable technologies and practices."

As a result, the hotel may struggle to adopt costly sustainable practices, leading to delays or limitations in the implementation of environmental sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, the Theory of Diffusion of Innovations can shed light on the challenges faced in obtaining financial support for sustainability initiatives. According to this theory, the adaption of innovations is influenced by factors such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, and trialability (Rogers, 2014). In the case of sustainability initiatives, securing financial support from top management or stakeholders may be challenging if the perceived benefits (relative advantage) of such initiatives are not communicated or if there is a perception that sustainability practices are complex and difficult to implement. To overcome this constraint, the organization can focus on effectively communicating the benefits of sustainability initiatives and demonstrating their compatibility with the organization's strategic goals.

Moreover, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be relevant in understanding the financial constraints faced by hotels. CSR emphasizes an organization's commitment to ethical and sustainable practices, often extending beyond legal obligations (Carroll, 1999). While implementing sustainability initiatives is considered a responsible practice, the financial costs associated with these initiatives may act as a deterrent for hotels, as clarified by Malan.

Malan "There is no specific CSR or, sustainability budget for the hotel to execute such sustainability strategies.

To address this constraint, hotels can adopt a long-term perspective and consider sustainability investments as a part of their CSR initiatives, aligning them with the organization's commitment to ethical practices.

Overall, Nalin's and Malan's insight into financial constraints highlights the importance of considering theories such as the RBV, the Theory of Diffusion of Innovations, and concepts like CSR to better understand the challenges faced by Sri Lankan hotels in implementing environmental sustainability strategies. By strategically managing financial resources, effectively communicating the benefits of sustainability initiatives, and aligning sustainability with ethical practices, hotels can overcome these constraints and progress toward a more sustainable future.

Emerging Trends: Hotels Embracing Environment Sustainability Strategies

The implementation of Environmental Sustainability (ES) strategies is a crucial endeavour for hotels aiming to align their operations with responsible and eco-friendly practices. In this context, insights from Malan, Geetha, and Nalin offer valuable perspectives on the reasons driving hotels to embrace sustainability strategies. By analyzing their experiences, supported by relevant theories, this discussion sheds light on the motivations behind the adoption of environmental sustainability strategies in the hotel industry.

Environmental Impact Awareness

Malan and Geetha's examples emphasize the growing awareness of the environmental impact of the hospitality sector. Hotels, as significant contributors to resource consumption and waste generation, have recognized their role in environmental degradation. Such awareness compels hoteliers to take proactive steps toward sustainability and minimize their ecological footprint.

Stakeholder Expectations

The pilot study discussions with Sangeetha revealed that hotels face mounting pressure from stakeholders to prioritize sustainability.

Geetha "We face mounting pressure from stakeholders to prioritize sustainability."

External parties, including customers, travel agents, government authorities, and environmental organizations, increasingly demand eco-friendly practices from hotels. Meeting these expectations not only enhances a hotel's reputation but also secures customer loyalty and attracts environmentally conscious guests.

Regulatory Compliance

As the global focus on environmental preservation intensifies, regulatory bodies are implementing stricter environmental standards. Hotels, therefore, feel compelled to align with these regulations, ensuring compliance with laws and demonstrating their commitment to environmental responsibility. Obtaining certifications such as ISO 14001:2015 reflects a hotel's willingness to adhere to stringent environmental management practices.

Nalin   "EPL is a mandatory requirement that hotel should acquire anally to comply with CEA regulatory obligations"

Nalin's explanation highlights the requirement for hotels to comply with the Environmental Protection License (EPL) issued by the Central Environment Authority. The EPL is a crucial regulatory instrument that governs a hotel's environmental practices, ensuring that it meets specific environmental standards and requirements to operate legally as a hotel.

Further, Nalin's explanation highlights the significance of obtaining and complying with the Environmental Protection License (EPL) as a prerequisite for hotels to function in an environmentally responsible manner and maintain regulatory compliance. By adhering to the EPL, hotels can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and contribute to the preservation of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Long-Term Cost Savings

The adoption of environmental sustainability strategies in the hotel industry has gained significant traction in recent years due to the increasing awareness of environmental issues and consumer demand for responsible practices. This shift towards sustainability is driven not only by ethical considerations but also by the potential for long-term cost savings. Hotels are realizing that implementing eco-friendly initiatives can lead to reduced operational expenses through energy efficiency, waste reduction, and water conservation measures (Turner et al., 2017). By aligning with sustainable practices, hotels can optimize resource utilization and minimize utility costs, ultimately contributing to improve financial performance (Novacka et al.,2019). This paper aims to explore how hotels can achieve cost savings through environmental sustainability strategies, offering real-world examples and practical recommendations to facilitate their successful implementation. Similarly, Geetha explained that the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies often leads to significant short-term/long-term cost savings.

Geetha "ES strategies often lead to significant short-term/long-term cost savings"

While implementing environmental sustainability strategies may require initial investments, they often lead to significant long-term cost savings. Energy-efficient practices, waste reduction, and water conservation efforts can lower operational expenses and enhance overall financial performance. Sustainable practices create a win-win situation for both the environment and the hotel's bottom line.

Enhanced Reputation and Competitive Advantage

In the highly competitive hospitality industry, hotels are increasingly recognizing the significance of environmental sustainability strategies to enhance their reputation and gain a competitive advantage (Oliveira, Pedro & Marques, 2013). Implementing sustainable practices not only aligns hotels with global environmental goals but also resonates with environmentally conscious consumers (Gao, Mattila & Lee, 2016). This topic explores how hotels that adopt environmental sustainability strategies can improve their reputation as socially responsible entities, attracting environmentally aware customers who value sustainability. By incorporating eco-friendly initiatives, hotels can differentiate themselves from competitors, foster customer loyalty, and

boost their brand image. This paper delves into the multifaceted benefits that hotels can achieve by embracing environmental sustainability, thereby solidifying their position in the market. Similarly, Malan's elucidation of benchmarking sustainability performance against leading hotel chains highlights the importance of maintaining a positive reputation in the industry.

Malan   "As an organization, we do practice several sustainability activities, but we are not able to benchmark our sustainability performance with leading hotel chains in Sri Lanka which have strong sustainability governance frameworks."

Hotels recognized for their sustainable initiatives gain a competitive advantage over their peers. A strong reputation for environmental responsibility can attract environmentally conscious guests, resulting in increased occupancy rates and repeat business.

Fulfilling Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Implementing environmental sustainability strategies is not only a business decision but also a demonstration of corporate social responsibility. Hotels are increasingly acknowledging their duty to contribute positively to society and the environment. Embracing sustainability initiatives aligns with their CSR objectives, fostering positive relationships with the community and improving brand perception. The hotel industry's adaption of environmental sustainability strategies is influenced by a combination of factors, as exemplified by Malan, Nalin, and Geetha's' experiences.

Malan   "Hotel has tried to implement environmental sustainability initiatives as CSR projects. But it has not been successful as per the expectation due to various constraints faced during the Covid pandemic and the hotel has struggled to operate business during last few years ."

Malan has explained the efforts that the hotel has made for CSR activities along with the environment sustainable strategies and also numerous challenges faced by the hotel during the last few years. The growing awareness of the environmental impact, stakeholder expectations, regulatory compliance, long-term cost savings, enhanced reputation, and fulfilment of corporate social responsibility play pivotal roles in driving hotels to prioritize sustainability. By aligning with sustainable practices, hotels can foster positive environmental change, improve their competitive position, and contribute to a greener and more responsible future.

Role of Change Champions in the Implementation of Environmental Sustainability

The role of change champions plays a crucial part in successfully implementing environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. The four main themes that emerged from the interviews with Malan, Geetha, and Nalin shed light on different aspects of the change champion's role in driving sustainability strategies.

Developing Culture for Environmental Sustainability

Change champions are responsible for fostering a culture where Environmental Sustainability (ES) becomes everyone's responsibility within the organization. Geetha emphasized the importance of developing a sustainable culture within the hotel, where all employees actively engage in sustainability initiatives as clarified below.

Geetha "Environmental sustainability should be everyone's responsibility and not for one or two departments."

The quote emphasizes the pivotal role of change champions, particularly top management, in developing an environmental sustainability culture within the organization. To successfully implement environmental sustainability strategies, it is crucial that top management exhibits commitment, provides support, and demonstrates visible leadership in sustainability initiatives. This approach sets the tone for the entire organization and influences employees to adopt a culture that values sustainability.

The concept of top management commitment and visible leadership aligns with the theory of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers through their vision and commitment to a shared goal, in this case, environmental sustainability (Bass & Avolio, 1994). When top management displays a strong commitment to sustainability, it sends a clear message to employees that sustainability is a priority for the organization and encourages them to embrace sustainability practices.

Moreover, the integration of sustainability principles into the organizational culture is consistent with the concept of organizational culture (Schein,2010). Organizational culture represents shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide employees' behaviour and decision-making. When top management visibly demonstrates their commitment to sustainability, it becomes part of the organization's culture, influencing employees' attitudes and actions towards sustainability.

To develop an environmental sustainability culture, change champions must not only advocate for sustainability but also incorporate sustainability principles into the organization's policies, procedures, and daily operations. This requires continuous communication, training, and recognition of employees' sustainability efforts. By embedding sustainability into the organizational culture, change champions can foster a sense of shared responsibility for sustainability across all levels of the organization, leading to a more successful implementation of environmental sustainability strategies.

Developing Communication Channels

Change champions are instrumental in establishing effective communication channels to promote environmental sustainability both internally and externally. Geetha pointed out that the hotel property's sustainability initiatives were not effectively communicated through brand marketing channels and annual reports.

Geetha "Our property's sustainability initiatives were not effectively communicated through brand marketing channels and annual reports"

This highlights the importance of incorporating communication theory, such as the Diffusion of Innovations theory by Rogers (2014), to ensure the successful adoption and dissemination of sustainability initiatives throughout the organization and its stakeholders.

Ethical Values

Change champions significantly promote ethical values and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities related to environmental sustainability. Nalin mentioned that motivating and engaging employees in sustainability initiatives is a key role of change champions.

Nalin "Top management commitment, support, and visible leadership approach strongly required to be embedded into organization values and culture for successfully implementation of environmental sustainability strategies"

Change champions play a significant role in promoting ethical values as part of the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies. They are instrumental in shaping the ethical culture of the organization and ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into sustainability practices. Change champions, especially those in leadership positions, can set the tone for ethical behaviour by demonstrating ethical decision-making and upholding ethical principles in their actions (Barnett & Vaicys, 2000).

When change champions prioritize ethical values as a fundamental aspect of sustainability initiatives, it fosters a sense of responsibility towards the environment and society. This commitment to ethical values helps to ensure that sustainability efforts go beyond mere compliance with regulations and instead reflect a genuine concern for the well-being of stakeholders and the environment (Lozano, 2013). Additionally, the role of change champions in promoting ethical values is closely linked to the concept of ethical leadership. Ethical leaders inspire and motivate employees to act ethically by modelling ethical behaviour, providing ethical guidance, and reinforcing the importance of ethical considerations in decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). By exhibiting ethical leadership, change champions create an ethical climate within the organization, where employees are encouraged to act in a manner consistent with ethical principles.

Furthermore, promoting ethical values as a part of sustainability initiatives enhances the reputation and credibility of the organization. Ethical behaviour is valued by stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the wider community. When organizations demonstrate a commitment to ethical sustainability practices, it can lead to increase trust and loyalty from stakeholders, ultimately contributing to the long-term success of the organization (Simpson et al., 2014). Therefore, change champions play a vital role in promoting ethical values as a part of the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies. Their commitment to ethical behaviour and leadership sets the foundation for an ethical culture within the organization, leading to more meaningful and impactful sustainability efforts.

ESG Framework

Change champions play a significant role in promoting and executing the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework as a part of the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies for hotels in Sri Lanka. Geetha emphasized the importance of strictly practising the ESG framework regularly to assess the overall ESG performance of the hotels.

Geetha "We should strictly practice ESG framework regularly to assess our overall ESG performance ."

The ESG framework is a comprehensive approach that incorporates environmental, social, and governance factors into an organization's decision-making processes. It helps hotels to align their sustainability initiatives with broader environmental and social responsibilities while ensuring transparent and accountable governance practices (Hahn & Kühnen, 2013).

Malaka "Current management approach required to be changed and there should a strong governance framework for implementation of environmental sustainability strategies for the hotel."

Further, Malan elucidated that the current management approach required to be changed and there should be a strong governance framework for the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies for the hotels as he felt that there are some gaps in the integration of ESG standards.

Therefore, change champions act as catalysts for the adaption of the ESG framework within the organization. They advocate for the integration of sustainability principles into all aspects of hotel operations, from waste management and energy conservation to social impact and stakeholder engagement. By championing the ESG framework, change champions ensure that sustainability becomes integral to the organizational culture and business strategy (Obeidat et al., 2019). Furthermore, change champions are responsible for driving the implementation of ESG-related initiatives and monitoring their progress. They establish a steering committee and hold regular ESG progress review meetings to track the performance of sustainability initiatives and make necessary adjustments to achieve the desired outcomes (Munir et al., 2019).

The role of change champions in promoting and executing the ESG framework is crucial for hotels in Sri Lanka to enhance their overall sustainability performance, fulfil their environmental and social responsibilities, and meet the expectations of stakeholders. Through their efforts, hotels can build a reputation as responsible and sustainable organizations, which can lead to improve brand image, increase customer loyalty, and enhanced competitive advantage (Sinicropi & Cortese, 2021).

Therefore, change champions play a vital role in promoting and executing the ESG framework as part of the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies for hotels in Sri Lanka. Their dedication and leadership in adapting the ESG principles contribute to the long-term sustainability and success of hotels, as well as the preservation of the environment and the well-being of society.

Driving Sustainability and Excellence: Organizational Contributions in Sri Lankan Hotels

The implementation of environmental sustainability and organization contribution in Sri Lankan hotels can indeed be classified into three main segments: environmental, social, and financial.

Contribution to the Environment

Hotels play a crucial role in contributing to environmental sustainability through the implementation of various strategies. One significant environmental contribution of hotels is the adaptation of energy-efficient practices. By incorporating energy-saving technologies, such as LED lighting, smart thermostats, and motion sensors, hotels can significantly reduce their energy consumption and carbon footprint (Gössling et al., 2020). Similarly, the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels involves various contributions aimed at preserving the environment and minimizing ecological impact. Malan highlighted the significance of managing waste through the 3R approach, which stands for Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

Malan "We should consider all possible avenues of managing waste considering the 3R approach."

This approach entails reducing the generation of waste, reusing materials where possible, and recycling materials to minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills. Waste management is another essential aspect of sustainability. Hotels can implement recycling programs, composting, and waste reduction initiatives to minimize the amount of waste sent to landfills (Han et al., 2010). Additionally, water conservation measures, such as low-flow fixtures and water recycling systems, can help reduce water usage in hotels (Tan et al., 2017). By implementing these environmental sustainability strategies, hotels can make a positive impact on the environment and contribute to the preservation of natural resources. Similarly, Geetha also emphasized the importance of minimizing environmental pollution as a crucial contribution of Sri Lankan hotels.

Geetha "We should consider all possible opportunities of managing waste and minimizing environmental pollution."

One example discussed was the adaptation of eco-friendly practices in the kitchen, such as reducing single-use plastics and ensuring proper waste segregation for recycling.

Social Contribution

Apart from environmental initiatives, hotels also make significant social contributions through their sustainability efforts. One of the primary social contributions is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Hotels engage in various community development projects, charity events, and educational programs to support local communities (Deng et al., 2021). Similarly, Sri Lankan hotels recognize their role in making positive social contributions to various stakeholders. Nalin discussed the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities related to environmental sustainability. These initiatives aim to benefit employees, customers, local communities, and other stakeholders.

Nalin   "Protecting the environment is a social responsibility of all of us. It is an individual and organization's social responsibility as well."

In addition to community involvement, hotels focus on creating a positive impact on their employees' well-being. Implementing employee welfare programs, providing training opportunities, and promoting work-life balance are some examples of social contributions

toward employees (Rather,2018). Furthermore, hotels often support cultural heritage conservation and promote responsible tourism practices to preserve local cultures and traditions (Cherapanukorn & Focken, 2014). By aligning their sustainability strategies with social contributions, hotels demonstrate their commitment to being responsible corporate citizens and enhancing the overall well-being of society.

Similarly, Geetha further emphasized the importance of focusing on employee well-being as part of the social contribution.

Geetha "It is an important element for an organization to consider about employee well-being that in-turn contribute for organization's productivity."

This includes providing a safe and healthy working environment, offering training and development opportunities, and fostering a sense of community among employees.

Financial Contribution:

The implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in hotels can lead to significant financial contributions. By adopting energy-efficient practices, waste reduction, and resource optimization, hotels can experience substantial cost savings. For instance, the installation of energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems can lead to reduce energy consumption and lower utility bills (Chen, 2019). Proper waste management practices, such as recycling and composting, can also reduce waste disposal costs (Teng et al., 2012). Moreover, implementing sustainable practices enhances a hotel's brand reputation, attracting environmentally conscious customers and potentially increasing revenue (Chen, 2019).

Similarly implementing environmental sustainability strategies can also lead to significant financial contributions for Sri Lankan hotels. Nalin discussed the cost-saving benefits of sustainability initiatives. For instance, hotels can reduce energy consumption through energy-efficient technologies and practices, resulting in lower utility bills.

Nalin   "We can reduce energy consumption through energy-efficient technologies and practices, resulting in lower utility bills ."

Studies have shown that hotels with sustainability initiatives experience improved financial performance compared to non-sustainable hotels (Singjai et al., 2018). Sustainable practices can create a competitive advantage for hotels, leading to increase market share and profitability (Singjai et al., 2018). Furthermore, Geetha highlighted how sustainability efforts can enhance the brand value of hotels. By adopting sustainable practices and promoting their environmental initiatives, hotels can attract environmentally conscious customers and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Geetha "Promoting our environmental sustainability initiatives, hotels can attract environmentally conscious customers and gain a competitive edge in the market."

Hence, the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in Sri Lankan hotels goes beyond environmental considerations. It encompasses meaningful contributions to the environment, society, and the organization's financial performance, demonstrating the

commitment of the hotels to achieving holistic sustainability goals. Overall, the financial contribution of environmental sustainability strategies in hotels is evident through cost savings, increased revenue, and improved brand reputation, making it a valuable investment for long-term financial success.

Findings

The research findings of this article on "Implementation of Environment Sustainability Strategies in Sri Lankan Hotel Industry: A Change Management Perspective" revealed crucial insights into the adaption and challenges of environmental sustainability strategies within the hotel industry. The study identified four key themes: the purpose behind implementing sustainability strategies, constraints faced during implementation, the role of change champions, and the contributions of organizations as a result of sustainability implementation. These themes shed light on the drivers, barriers, and transformative impact of sustainability efforts within the Sri Lankan hotel industry. The key findings are presented in Table 1.

Conclusion

In conclusion, "Implementation of Environment Sustainability Strategies in Sri Lankan Hotel Industry: A Change Management Perspective" presents a compelling and transformative exploration into the realm of environmental sustainability within the Sri Lankan hotel industry. The study delves into the purpose behind adopting sustainability strategies, revealing how internal requirements such as ISO 14001 compliance and commercial benefits align with external demands from stakeholders. Moreover, it brings to light the constraints faced by hotels, ranging from financial limitations to waste management challenges, developing staff, and leadership commitments. The study identifies change champions as instrumental figures in fostering a sustainability-oriented culture, supported by effective communication channels, and ethical values, and overcoming the organization's constraints for the successful implementation of environmental sustainability strategies.

Further, this article showcases how hotels can make profound contributions by embracing a circular economy model and implementing environmental management systems. This not only minimizes environmental pollution but also reinforces corporate social responsibility, brand value, and stakeholder expectations. The transformative potential of this research cannot be overstated, as it guides hotels towards a future where sustainability is more than a mere buzzword but a deeply ingrained philosophy. The significance of this study extends far beyond the borders of Sri Lanka, resonating with the global hospitality industry's urgent need for eco-conscious transformation. By acknowledging the role of change champions, this article illuminates the path toward a greener and more responsible future for hotels worldwide. As the hotel industry plays a pivotal role in shaping travel and tourism, embracing environmental sustainability becomes an ethical imperative. In essence, this article serves as a clarion call for change, inspiring hotels to rise as beacons of environmental stewardship. The paradigm shift towards sustainability is not only a matter of survival but a golden opportunity to create a positive impact on our planet and future generations. By embracing the insights and opportunities for change and improvements revealed in this article, the Sri Lankan hotel industry can pave the way for an inspiring, responsible, and prosperous future, leading by example for the entire global hospitality sector.

Table 1: Synthesizing the major findings

Questions	Themes of the main study	Synthesising of the findings
Purpose of Implementation of Environmental Sustainability Strategies **(Why)**	Two main themes emerged as the purpose of the Implementation of Environmental Sustainability Strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry as listed below. **Internal requirement:** Manage (ISO 14001:2015) standards, commercial and marketing benefits, competitive advantage, and ethical reputation. **External requirement:** External stakeholder's demands such as customers, travel agents, legal (regulatory compliances), government authorities, etc, environmental impact awareness, corporate social responsibility	The Sri Lankan hotel industry pursued environmental sustainability agendas driven by two main themes. Internally, hotels aimed to adhere to ISO 14001:2015 standards, gain commercial and marketing benefits, secure a competitive advantage, and enhance their ethical reputation. Externally, factors like customer demands, regulatory compliances, government authorities, and environmental impact awareness influenced their actions. Additionally, embracing corporate social responsibility initiatives was crucial. By addressing these internal and external requirements, hotels aspired to cultivate a responsible and eco-conscious approach, aligning with global sustainability efforts while positively impacting local communities.
Constraints for Implementation of Environmental Sustainability **(What)**	There were five main themes emerged as constraints for the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry as listed below. **Financial constraints**: (High capital investment, cash flow) **Waste management constraints:** (Disposal of polythene, plastic, and food waste) **Managerial constraints** :(Management support and commitment, Management awareness about ES strategies) **Constraints for developing human Capital** :(Staff motivation and engagement, reward and recognition system, employee's self-initiatives, performance management) **Organizational constraints:** (Complex centralized organization structure, Noninteraction of ES as a strategic business objective.	Five main themes emerged as constraints for implementing environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. Financial constraints, including high capital investment and cash flow issues, hindered sustainability initiatives. Waste management constraints, such as the proper disposal of polythene, plastic, and food waste, posed challenges. Managerial constraints, including the lack of management support, commitment, and awareness about sustainability strategies, were significant barriers. Developing human capital encountered hurdles in staff motivation, engagement, recognition systems, and employee-driven initiatives. Lastly, organizational constraints, such as complex centralized structures and the non-integration of sustainability as a strategic business objective, impeded progress. Overcoming these challenges is essential to foster a more sustainable hotel industry in Sri Lanka.
What is the role of a change champion when	Four main themes emerged as the role of change champions when implementing environmental	Four main themes emerged as the role of change champions in implementing environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri

implementing environmental sustainability **(What)**	sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry as listed below. Developing culture for ES: - (Make environment sustainability strategies everyone's responsibility) Developing communication channels: - (Brand marketing, Internal, External communication channels) Ethical values :-(CSR activities related to ES, ethical brand) ESG framework:-(Steering committee, monthly ES progress review meetings, and management control system)	Lankan hotel industry. Firstly, developing a culture for environmental sustainability involves making ES strategies everyone's responsibility. Secondly, establishing effective communication channels, encompassing brand marketing and both internal and external communication is crucial. Thirdly, fostering ethical values includes engaging in CSR activities related to environmental sustainability and building an ethical brand. Lastly, implementing an ESG framework involves the formation of a steering committee, conducting monthly progress review meetings, and implementing a management control system. By embracing these roles, change champions play a pivotal part in driving sustainability initiatives and shaping a more environmentally conscious hotel industry in Sri Lanka.
Contribution of the organization as a result of implantation of environment sustainability **(How)**	Three main themes emerged as contributions of the organization because of the implantation of environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry as listed below. Contribution for environment: - (Managing waste with 3R, minimizing environment pollution) Social contribution :(Corporate social responsibility, the well-being of employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders.) Financial contribution: (cost saving, brand marketing value, efficiency improvement.)	Three main themes emerged as contributions of organizations resulting from the implementation of environmental sustainability strategies in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. Firstly, there was a significant contribution to the environment, achieved through waste management with the 3R approach (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and minimizing environmental pollution. Secondly, hotels made substantial social contributions by engaging in corporate social responsibility initiatives, prioritizing the well-being of employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders. Lastly, financial contributions were evident, including cost savings through efficient practices, increased brand marketing value, and overall efficiency improvements. These collective contributions reflect the positive impact of environmental sustainability strategies, fostering a more responsible and socially conscious hotel industry in Sri Lanka.

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