


Drivers and Barriers of Carbon Footprint Reduction in the Hospitality Sector

Abstract

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Business operations of hospitality enterprises are subject of intense scrutiny to determine how they are contributing to the climate action agenda. Existing scholarship is dominated by research conducted in the Global North. This paper contributes a Global South perspective and aims to identify the drivers and challenges for the adoption of carbon footprint strategies in the hospitality sector. The study randomly sampled 165 establishments from the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents and SPSS version 29 was used to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. The results reveal that the main drivers for carbon footprint reduction include a positive public image, conforming to industry best practices, as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, reduction in operating costs and gaining competitive advantage. Identified barriers include financial constraints, high costs of procuring energy-efficient appliances, lack of knowledge, skills gap, weak legal framework and lack of industry cooperation. Arguably, policy interventions for the decarbonisation of hospitality enterprises must be country-specific and broadly seek out local interventions designed to increase pressures, lower barriers and boost incentives for climate change action.

Keywords: Climate change, carbon footprint reduction, sustainability, decarbonisation; hospitality

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Introduction

Climate change and global warming are critical international issues with ramifications for destinations and local development (Becken & Scott, 2024; Rogerson, 2016; Scott & Gössling, 2022; Tourism Panel on Climate Change, 2023; Youseef & Zeqiri, 2022). Currently, there is focused attention across all global economic sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to keep on track with the Paris Climate Agreement targets (Becken & Scott, 2024; Gössling et al., 2024). Consensus exists that the global tourism system needs to undergo decarbonization and to achieve net zero emissions by the middle of this century (Tourism Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Arguably, however, it is projected that ‘without changes in policy, greenhouse gas emissions will triple by 2030’ (United Nations Environment Programme 2023: 6). For the tourism industry, climate change has significant impacts on the achievements of sustainable tourism and the long-term viability of tourist destinations (Becken & Scott, 2024; Tourism Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Accordingly, the decarbonisation of the tourism and hospitality industry is receiving considerable attention in contemporary global tourism scholarship (Coghlan et al., 2023; Gössling & Scott, 2024) with some analysts pointing to limited evidence of tangible decarbonisation (Becken et al., 2024). According to Becken (2024), the policy environment in some countries provides favourable conditions for emissions reduction whilst in others the policy context might impede the advance of decarbonisation.

Hospitality is considered one of the highest carbon-intensity sub-sectors of the tourism industry with significant contributions to GHG emissions (Shereni et al., 2022; Tourism Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Most emissions emanate from energy use with a significant component generated from fossil fuels such as coal and oil (Dube & Nhamo, 2019). In this regard, there is a wide recognition that the sector has a critical role to play in the reduction of GHG emissions against the background of its expected strong growth projections (Gössling et al., 2023; Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). As such, hospitality establishments are increasingly adopting and implementing strategies aimed at reducing their carbon footprint (Tourism Panel on Climate Change, 2023). Some of these strategies include reducing energy and water consumption, waste recycling, establishing environmental management systems and green building designs (Chan, 2021a; Shereni, 2022). Within the hospitality sector, notable geographical variations exist in the implementation of sustainable practices (Shereni et al., 2023). Enterprises in the Global North are seen as more proactive and robust in implementing carbon reduction practices as compared to the generally less well-resourced businesses in the Global South (Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). In addition, variations also occur between different establishments on the scale and nature of climate action strategies adopted (Gössling et al., 2024). Further, regardless of hospitality managers adopting various environmental conservation programmes, it is evidenced that there is less focus on carbon footprint reduction within the hospitality sector (Chan, 2021b). This points to contextual differences in what drives the hospitality sector to adopt carbon footprint reduction strategies as well as the challenges encountered.

Although research on climate change in the tourism industry has expanded significantly in the last decade only limited knowledge exists concerning the drivers and barriers to climate action, particularly for the hospitality sector in the Global South context (Chan, 2021b; Shereni et al., 2023). The strong growth projections for tourism in many destinations in the Global South are expected to accelerate the carbon footprint of the hospitality sector (Salehi et al., 2021). It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to answer the question: Within the context of climate change, what are the drivers and barriers to carbon footprint reduction in the hospitality sector? Understanding the drivers and challenges around climate action is critical for informing effective decarbonisation strategies not only in the hospitality sector but across the broader tourism industry. The rest of this



paper is structured as follows; a review of extant literature on drivers and barriers of adopting carbon footprint reduction strategies; a discussion of the research methodology; presentation of results concerning Zimbabwe; discussion of the findings in relation to literature and policy implications, and, conclusions.

Literature review

Drivers for adopting carbon footprint reduction strategies

Arguably, tourism climate action requires a broad range of enabling drivers to be effective (Becken & Loehr 2022). Essentially, the category of drivers represents those factors that enhance the interest of enterprises to engage with any issue (Alvarez Jaramillo et al., 2019). It is useful to differentiate the category of drivers into ‘pressures’ and ‘incentives’ for climate action. Gössling & Reinhold (2024: 4) stress that it is meaningful to subdivide drivers by their “coercive *versus* incentivising nature as *pressures* and *incentives* to engage in mitigation action”. Core pressures on businesses that potentially trigger climate action relate to cost factors particularly relating to energy, consumer expectations and choices, and compliance issues (Gössling & Reinhold, 2024). The suite of drivers can include the need to attract and retain employees, generate more profits, avoid fines and lawsuits, the urge to behave ethically as well as the need to meet and exceed stakeholder expectations (Lozano, 2015). Leonidou et al. (2013) assert that an organisation’s physical and financial resources are instrumental in the drive towards environmental performance. Kasim & Ismail (2012) point to the regulatory framework, cost considerations, stakeholder demands, trade pressures and green supply chains. Other studies point to a finding that legitimisation that arises out of the introduction of laws requiring hotels to adhere to certain environmental standards can be a strong driver of organisational environmental performance (Ismail & Rogerson, 2016).

Hospitality establishments largely adopt sustainability practices and climate mitigation measures as a business case in order to remain competitive (Shereni & Rogerson, 2023a). Environmental conservation practices help establishments to save costs, improve reputation and gain competitive advantage (Salehi et al., 2021). Shanshan et al. (2023) concur that by focusing attention on decarbonisation, hospitality establishments reap benefits such as expanding market share, enhancing brand recognition, reducing operating costs and improving energy efficiency. Shereni et al. (2023) show that new market opportunities, appealing to sustainable-conscious customers, improving organisational reputation and regulatory compliance are vital pressures for the adoption of sustainable practices including carbon footprint reduction. Certification systems and eco-labels have been flagged as another significant pressure on the adoption of decarbonisation strategies by the hospitality sector (Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021). These systems encourage hospitality establishments to act responsibly and show their commitment to green practices (Luo & Fan, 2019). Mzembe et al. (2020) contend that certification agencies verify sustainability claims, thereby pushing hospitality establishments to conform to the dictates of such certification schemes. In addition, most certification bodies now require organisations seeking to obtain or renew their eco-accreditation to prioritise measuring and reducing their carbon footprint (Apolloni et al., 2023). This, ultimately, motivates hospitality establishments to adopt carbon reduction initiatives to be eco-certified.

Appropriate tourism policy interventions can incentivise climate action by enterprises as they can influence governance structures (Becken & Loehr, 2022). Climate policies and regulatory structures are noted as influential pressures for transformative societal changes (Gilmore & Buhaug, 2021; Gössling & Reinhold, 2024). Indeed, the policy environment and the organisational, institutional and cultural context within which hospitality enterprises operate assumes a vital role in the adoption of carbon footprint reduction strategies (Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). For example, within the context of the institutional environment, municipal by-laws are seen as integral for the guidance of green building designs (Li et al., 2020). Mzembe et al. (2019) further emphasise the relevance of the institutional environment for reinforcing certain organisational behaviours. Overall, therefore, it is argued that a strong policy framework is critical for guiding hospitality establishments on the direction to take regarding carbon footprint reduction. Such frameworks can reinforce the array of incentives for hospitality establishments to engage with climate change including cost savings, performance improvement, greater consumer willingness to pay as well as making available subsidies to support enterprises to pursue climate change actions (Gössling & Reinhold, 2024).

Barriers for adopting carbon footprint reduction strategies

The most fundamental barrier to engagement with climate action is considered to be that of business owners’ awareness of their role in climate change (Gössling & Reinhold, 2024). Lack of awareness of their potential agency in climate change inevitably would result in them not contemplating climate action under any circumstance (Pandy & Rogerson, 2020). Overall, barriers to carbon footprint reduction include business owners with no perceived urgency to contribute to climate change goals, lack of resources for innovation, minimum collaboration amongst stakeholders, a lack of relevant systems, and the unavailability of a standardised approach to carbon auditing (Chan, 2021b; Gössling & Reinhold, 2024). Shereni et al. (2023) cite further challenges such as lack of knowledge and skills, budgetary constraints, lack of quantifiable targets as well as the attitude of customers, employees and management. For establishments which operate in nature-based tourism destinations, lack of awareness and concern, lack of information and insufficient financial and human resources are noted to be major barriers (Jamaliah et al., 2021). Abeydeera & Karunasena (2019) further observe that there is a lack of a universally applicable GHG emission reporting mechanism within the hospitality sector. Shereni (2023) disclosed that challenges in carbon emission accounting within the hospitality sector can also be attributed to the unavailability of a common carbon reporting standard. This, according to Salehi et al. (2021), makes it difficult to accurately estimate hotel carbon footprint and to carry out cross-sectoral comparisons of their environmental performance.



Hotels provide a range of services in pursuit of guest satisfaction which is seen as a precursor of increased profitability and improved revenue generation (Salehi et al., 2021). However, this can result in hospitality operations sacrificing the environment to meet guest expectations (Salehi et al., 2021). Previous studies have noted that this is compounded by guests' unwillingness to participate in carbon footprint reduction strategies that reduce their satisfaction (Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021). Some guests exhibit irresponsible behaviour due to a lack of knowledge whereas variations in guest preference on issues like indoor temperatures may result in an increase in the hotel's carbon footprint (Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). Shereni et al. (2023) suggest that the negative attitude by customers as well as the negative influence on customer experiences are constraints in decarbonising the hospitality sector, most especially in the environment of the Global South.

The size, age, type and structure can also influence the carbon footprint of a hospitality establishment and the strategies adopted. Small hospitality establishments are observed to be constricted by knowledge and capacity gaps in the adoption of sustainability practices (Gössling & Reinhold, 2024; Shereni & Rogerson, 2023b). Large hospitality establishments and star-rated hotels have a high carbon footprint because of the nature of services provided, high service quality and large number of guests catered for resulting in more energy and water usage (Li et al., 2020). Further, older buildings are seen to have a high carbon footprint due to the limited scope of retrofitting the existing designs (Ismail & Rogerson, 2016; Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2021). Earlier studies have flagged numerous barriers encountered in the adoption of sustainability practices that can condition the adoption of carbon footprint reduction initiatives in the hospitality sector. For example, Chan et al. (2018) mention internal barriers (misplaced budgetary priorities, lack of interest from owners, resource limitations and the duration of management contracts) and external barriers (influence on customer experiences, bureaucratic government tendencies and unfavourable weather to adopt solar technologies). Mzembe et al. (2018) cite knowledge capacity gaps as well as lack of resources such as human resources, time and finances. This, according to Mzembe (2021), is more pronounced in small to medium (SMEs) hospitality establishments due to their low level of operations. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, cuts in public spending, bureaucratic red tape, corruption, lack of cooperation between sectors and challenges in evaluating sustainability results can be additional notable barriers (Gusmão Caiado et al., 2018).

Materials and methods

A quantitative approach was adopted to interrogate the drivers and barriers to climate change action in a Global South environment. The research randomly sampled 165 accommodation service establishments located in the Bulawayo and Victoria Falls tourism development zones of Zimbabwe. Respondents were selected from a list of registered designated tourism facilities obtained from the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. The sampled establishments include hotels, lodges, guest houses, bed & breakfast, and self-catering facilities. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the identified hospitality establishments. The questionnaire was composed of 24 items eliciting respondents' opinions on what drives hospitality establishments to adopt carbon footprint reduction strategies as well as challenges encountered. Measurement used a 5-point Likert Scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics were generated using SPSS version 29. The profile of the establishments discloses that most of them were hotels (34%), followed by lodges (32%), guest houses (15%), bed and breakfast establishments (7%), and self-catering facilities (10%). Most of these sampled establishments were individually owned and would be classed as SMEs. Of the sampled cohort of hospitality establishments 71 were located in the Bulawayo Tourism Development Zone and 94 in Victoria Falls Tourism Development Zone.

Results

The respondents were asked to identify the drivers for adopting carbon footprint reduction strategies in their respective hospitality establishments (see Table 1).

Table 1: Drivers for adopting carbon footprint reduction strategies

Drivers	Total	Hotel	Lodge	Guest House	Bed & Breakfast	Self Catering	One-way ANOVA	
	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	F-Value	P-Value
Promoting public image	4.01 .984	4.16 .869	3.92 1.115	3.92 1.060	4.00 .853	3.94 .966	.503	.733
To conform to industry best practices	3.94 .979	3.98 .921	3.86 1.000	3.96 1.136	3.92 .900	4.00 1.000	.121	.975
Corporate Social Responsibility initiative	3.94 .963	3.96 1.053	3.88 .887	3.92 1.060	4.00 .953	4.06 .827	.130	.971
Reduction in operating costs	3.92 .980	4.06 .925	3.90 1.035	3.83 .917	3.67 .985	3.88 1.111	.507	.730
Gaining competitive advantage	3.90 1.008	3.85 1.113	3.90 .964	3.88 1.076	4.08 .669	3.94 .966	.135	.969
Ethical considerations by managers	3.88 1.037	3.83 1.060	3.82 .983	3.96 1.197	4.00 .953	4.00 1.033	.193	.942
Eco-certification requirement	3.85 1.040	3.94 .979	3.86 .980	3.67 1.204	4.08 .793	3.65 1.320	.606	.659
Regulatory compliance	3.85 1.042	4.02 .971	3.78 1.036	3.75 1.189	3.75 .835	3.65 1.222	.615	.653
Attract new customers	3.81 .985	3.98 .942	3.80 .939	3.63 .970	3.67 1.231	3.65 1.115	.797	.529
Part of organizational values	3.80 1.065	3.85 1.035	3.68 1.077	3.88 1.076	3.92 .996	3.82 1.237	.253	.907
Supply chain/customer Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies	3.79 1.038	3.87 1.055	3.84 .987	3.75 1.032	3.92 .793	3.35 1.272	.926	.450
Adhere to franchise/chain operation standards	3.71 1.093	3.73 1.008	3.53 1.157	3.75 1.189	4.25 .622	3.71 1.263	1.075	.371
Pressure from industry associations	3.69 1.009	3.69 1.052	3.86 .872	3.63 1.135	3.45 1.036	3.41 1.064	.869	.484
Pressure from green-conscious customers	3.57 1.088	3.76 .999	3.67 1.013	3.42 1.060	3.17 (1.403)	3.18 1.286	1.651	.164
Opportunities to charge a premium price	3.54 1.115	3.53 1.200	3.55 1.006	3.35 1.112	3.58 1.084	3.76 1.251	.344	.848
Incentives from the public sector	3.50	3.58	3.41	3.46	3.42	3.65	.265	.900



	1.084	1.134	1.043	1.215	.996	.996		
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Note: Responses based on a 5-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One-way ANOVA is significant at p<0.05

It was revealed that all the items on the measurement scale are drivers for the adoption of decarbonisation strategies albeit at a varying scale. The major items identified include promoting public image (M=4.01), conforming with industry best practices (M=3.94), Corporate Social Responsibility initiative (M=3.94), reduction in operating costs (M=3.92), and gaining competitive advantage (M=3.90) with mean scores in the agree range. In addition, issues around ethical considerations, attracting new customers, regulatory compliance and organisational value were also cited as important drivers. The results reveal a combination of external and internal factors as drivers for hospitality establishments to adopt decarbonisation strategies in different ways. It was observed also that items like pressure from green-conscious customers (M=3.57), opportunities to charge a premium price (M=3.54) and incentives from the public sector (M=3.50) were identified as significant drivers even though they lie in a weak agree range. One-way ANOVA did not show any significant differences between the sampled hospitality establishments (hotel, lodge, guest house, bed & breakfast and self-catering). This result implies that the different establishments are motivated by similar drivers to adopt carbon footprint reduction strategies.

Table 2 presents the findings from the analysis of the barriers faced in reducing carbon footprint in the hospitality sector. Financial limitations (M=3.91), high cost of procuring energy-efficient appliances (M=3.82), lack of skilled decarbonisation experts (M= 3.75), lack of government support (M=3.74), difficulties in measuring carbon emissions (M=3.73) and limited alternative sources of energy (3.70) were identified as the major challenges. Other relevant barriers identified by the respondents include a weak policy and regulatory framework, lack of knowledge, human resources limitations, overdependence on fossil fuels, lack of industry cooperation and minimal trade pressure. Furthermore, the following items were ranked in the neutral range, viz., lack of urgency by management and owners (M=3.30) and negative impacts on customer experience (M=3.24). This suggests that they might not be seen as barriers to the adoption of carbon footprint strategies within the hospitality sector. One-way ANOVA was done to determine if significant differences in opinion exist between the different sectors of the hospitality establishment. The results shown in Table 2 do not show any significant differences suggesting once again that the different sub-sectors of the hospitality industry are affected in the same manner by the identified barriers.

Table 2: Barriers faced in carbon footprint reduction

Barriers	Total	Hotel	Lodge	Guest House	Bed & Breakfast	Self Catering	One-Way ANOVA	
	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	Mean SD	F-Value	P-Value
Financial limitations	3.91 1.172	3.80 1.193	3.92 1.064	4.20 1.225	3.67 1.155	3.94 1.391	.632	.640
High cost of procuring energy efficient appliances	3.82 1.085	3.96 1.073	3.69 .905	3.88 1.262	3.75 1.215	3.71 1.312	.489	.744
Lack of skilled decarbonisation experts	3.75 1.221	3.78 1.287	3.73 1.168	3.83 1.129	3.50 1.168	3.82 1.425	.179	.949
Lack of government support	3.74 1.128	3.78 1.223	3.61 1.041	3.84 1.068	3.50 1.168	4.00 1.173	.595	.667
Difficulties in measuring carbon emissions	3.73 1.181	3.76 1.159	3.63 1.131	3.75 1.189	3.83 1.337	3.82 1.380	.155	.960
Limited alternative sources of energy	3.70 1.159	3.65 1.200	3.70 1.015	3.84 1.248	3.25 1.138	4.00 1.323	.851	.495
Lack of knowledge	3.69 1.192	3.57 1.291	3.69 .969	3.96 1.241	4.00 1.095	3.53 1.463	.717	.582
Weak policy and legal framework	3.58 1.202	3.59 1.156	3.58 1.054	3.71 1.233	3.25 1.603	3.65 1.498	.303	.876
Scarce green suppliers	3.57 1.178	3.46 1.255	3.62 1.013	3.77 1.193	3.33 1.371	3.71 1.312	.465	.762
Lack of industry cooperation	3.53 1.181	3.40 1.198	3.66 1.081	3.74 1.214	3.25 1.055	3.47 1.463	.676	.610
Size of the organization	3.51 1.147	3.38 1.229	3.58 .950	3.36 1.254	3.27 .905	4.12 1.269	1.688	.156
Human resources limitations	3.48 1.099	3.38 1.214	3.61 .981	3.38 1.056	3.58 .996	3.53 1.231	.384	.820
Overdependence on fossil fuels such as coal and petroleum	3.48 1.287	3.30 1.278	3.43 1.291	3.88 1.130	3.75 1.422	3.41 1.417	1.031	.393
Non-existent trade pressure	3.42 1.101	3.38 1.123	3.37 .979	3.46 1.141	3.00 1.206	3.88 1.219	1.237	.297
Lack of urgency by management and owners	3.30 1.252	3.17 1.240	3.39 1.097	3.56 1.417	3.00 1.206	3.29 1.532	.659	.622
Negative impacts on customer experience	3.24 1.170	3.15 1.123	3.35 1.128	3.13 1.262	3.33 1.371	3.29 1.263	.283	.889

Note: Responses based on a 5-point Likert scale range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One-way ANOVA is significant at p<0.05

Discussion

The research sought to ascertain the drivers and barriers to carbon reduction in the hospitality sector in the context of Zimbabwe, a case study in the Global South. The findings reveal different internal and external drivers impacting hospitality establishments differently. Internal drivers identified include promoting public image, Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, reduction in operating costs, ethical considerations by managers and organizational values. The external drivers include among others gaining competitive advantage, conforming with industry best practices, eco-certification requirements, regulatory compliance, attracting new customers, supply chain/customer Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies, pressure from industry associations and pressure from green-conscious customers. Overall, the results of this investigation are comparable with findings from certain previous studies. For example, Mzembe et al. (2018) confirm the existence of several internal and external drivers that influence the environmental performance of hospitality establishments. These include the owner’s commitment to responsible practices, cost considerations and parent company influences in the case of multinational corporations. In addition,



the growth in environmentally-conscious consumers who often use sustainability practices as a criterion to choose establishments to patronise also motivates hospitality businesses to pursue carbon reduction strategies (Shereni et al., 2022a, 2022b). More importantly, the major drivers for adopting carbon footprint strategies noted in this study such as promoting the public image, reduction in operating costs, gaining competitive advantage, conforming to industry best practices, regulatory compliance and attracting new customers are strongly linked to business profitability which is a common concern across all enterprises in the hospitality sector (Ismail & Rogerson, 2016). In this regard, Salehi et al. (2021) pointed out that the non-utilitarian drivers of adopting environmental practices in the hospitality sector are still limited.

The study identified various barriers to the adoption of carbon footprint strategies within the hospitality sector. These barriers include financial resource constraints, lack of skilled decarbonisation experts, limitations in adopting alternative sources of energy, lack of government support, a weak policy and regulatory environment and lack of industry cooperation. Arguably, therefore, it is not surprising that the study noted that the lack of urgency by managers and owners as well as the negative impact on customer experience were not perceived barriers. This is a recognition that even in the resource-constrained environment of the Global South climate change is now a major issue that is difficult for hospitality enterprises to ignore. Business managers and owners are now paying attention to how their operations impact climate change. Also, customers are utilising sustainability practices as a criterion for choosing hospitality establishments to patronise (Berezan et al., 2014; Shereni et al., 2023; Weaver et al., 2013). Several researchers have also observed limitations in resources such as finance, human capital and time as major impediments to the adoption of carbon footprint reduction strategies in the hospitality sector (Chan et al., 2018; Jamaliah et al., 2021; Mzembe et al., 2018). In relation to this study, Shereni (2023) signals that difficulties in the measurement of carbon emissions are a result of a lack of a universally acceptable carbon accounting system. Regarding legitimation, Rogerson & Sims (2012) observe that in the absence of regulatory measures, progress towards greening initiatives is inevitably limited in a Global South environment. Whereas some researchers have noted the negative influence on customer experiences to be a barrier (Chan et al., 2018; Gössling & Lund-Durlacher, 2021), this study discloses that carbon footprint reduction strategies do not affect customer experiences. Arguably, this finding may be attributed to the increase in environmentally conscious tourists willing to pay more for businesses that adopt environmentally friendly practices (Dube & Nhamo, 2021; Shereni & Rogerson, 2023a; Vourdoubas, 2018).

Conclusion

This study provides a timely analysis of the drivers and challenges to the adoption of carbon footprint reduction strategies in the hospitality sector within a Global South environment. The research addresses a knowledge gap in international debates on what drives the decarbonisation of the hospitality sector as well as possible challenges encountered in the process. Varied internal and external drivers are noted and most of them make a business case for hospitality establishments. Understandably, businesses exist to make profits, therefore they are attracted to activities that improve their profit-making capabilities. Undoubtedly, to achieve effective decarbonisation of the hospitality sector, there is a need to put in place measures to counter the challenges identified in this study. As is crisply argued by Gössling & Reinhold, (2024: 10) in policy development for advancing decarbonisation and greater climate change action what is needed is that “interventions would seek to increase pressures, lower barriers and boost incentives”.

Prioritising carbon footprint reduction initiatives in budget allocation can be an effective strategy for hospitality practitioners to counter the challenge of limited financial resources. This helps to ensure that funds are made available for decarbonisation activities. In addition, hospitality establishments can hold periodic in-house training programmes to ensure that employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement carbon reduction initiatives. Furthermore, industry associations can lobby the government to put in place a strong regulatory framework that makes it mandatory to engage in carbon footprint reduction. This can act as a strong pressure point for the adoption of decarbonisation initiatives, especially, if aligned with discouraging punitive measures for non-compliance. Hospitality establishments should also start to invest in renewable technologies to reduce their carbon footprint specifically in situations where electricity is generated from fossil fuels. In the final analysis as pointed out in one recent international study, for any hospitality enterprise “there are boundedly rational reasons not to engage in mitigation action that ground in different barriers, and in a lack of pressures and incentives” (Gössling & Reinhold, 2024: 13). Detailed policy actions, however, must reflect the specificities of the destination. The suitable policy pathway is one that lowers barriers, heightens incentives and tightens pressures on hospitality enterprises. In the case of Zimbabwe, this study offers insight into the directions that a policy framework for climate action might follow. Further local research studies are merited to provide a foundation for such a framework.

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