

## Tourism Marketing Under NetZero emissions: A Case of Sun City Resort

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### Abstract

COVID-19 brought new marketing disruptions in the tourism sector amid global traction and action towards carbon neutrality, following the Paris Agreement of 2015 and the Glasgow Pact of achieving NetZero emissions by 2050. Drawing from the Ad Net Zero Guide 10-Point Plan for businesses to infuse climate action (SDG 13) into their operations, this study utilizes a qualitative approach through annual and other company reports, interviews, observations, and Question Pros from Sun City hotels to examine the progress of the hospitality industry. The results reveal that the four hotels, Cabanas Hotel, Sun City Hotel, The Palace Hotel, and Cascades Hotel have green initiatives that improve water, waste, and energy efficiency. There is a slow pace to enforce saving the environment at a faster pace in the resort. The findings reveal that marketing communication strategies employed by Sun City Resort in exhibiting green initiatives were moderately successful. The findings reveal that the four hotels in Sun City generally harnessed the 10-Point Plan, although this may not be explicitly credited to the 2020 Ad Net Zero Initiative. The paper recommends that the entities under consideration keep improving their commitment to the Climate Action SDG and market on-the-ground initiatives widely for peer learning and to save the environment, lives, and livelihoods. However, more actions and policies need to be in place to reduce carbon emissions such as reuse, recycling, and reduction and applying sustainable marketing.

**Keywords:** Carbon neutrality; climate change; hotels; marketing; NetZero tourism

### Introduction

Greenhouse gas emissions affect the environment and ultimately cause climate change (Sovacool et al., 2021). The world emitted over 35 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 from fossil fuel and industry (Ritchie et al., 2020). Significant emitters of carbon globally by the year 2017 included China, which contributed 9.8 billion tons per year (27%), USA 5.3 billion tons per year (15%), North America 6.5 billion tons per year (18%), European Union 6.1 billion tons per year (17%), Africa 1.3 billion tons per year (3.7%), and South Africa 456 million tons (1.3%) contribution to global emissions (Ritchie et al., 2020). In South Africa, it is important to understand the individual hotel contribution to carbon emission or the city hotels' contribution so that carbon emission can be reduced at the individual hotel level to be able to measure and reduce the emission at the individual hotel level and cumulatively at the industry level.

The travel and tourism sector's contribution to global carbon emissions was reported at roughly 8% of the world's carbon emissions at the UN Climate Change Conference COP 25 in December 2019 in Chile (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2020). Emissions from the lodging subsector of the tourism industry are among the high emitters because they rely heavily on heating and air conditioning, warm showers, heated pools, and spas to satisfy their everchanging customers' expectations (International Sustainable Travel, 2020). Following the possibilities that hotels contribute to carbon emissions, it is imperative to investigate how Sun City Resort Hotels has initiated some green tourism and marketing activities. It is important to ascertain why hotels indulge in green initiatives and marketing. There is a positive perception of green hotels by green-conscious customers that

hotels with eco-friendly practices embedded in their daily operations tend to have a positive image on customers (De Souza, 2021). Green hotels improve their market share and better competitive edge over their peers (Iwanowski & Rushmore, 1994; De Souza et al., 2021). The justification for green hotels also partly includes financial benefits, strengthening employee commitment, improved customer loyalty, and goodwill of the organisation (Gordon et al., 2011; De Souza et al., 2021)

The hotels may be considered ‘green’ if they conserve water and energy, maintain indoor air quality, and reduce water and land pollution by recycling and reusing products (De Souza, 2021). Higher facilities and amenities related to sustainable practices of hotels, like green open spaces, landscapes, and availability of smoking rooms, are directly linked to customer satisfaction and revisit intention of the guest (Supriadi et al., 2017).

Advertising eco-friendly methods adopted in hotels can create a positive brand image in the market and attract new consumers who want to buy products and services from an environmentally friendly business. Hotels exercising sustainable green practices tend to perform much better than their competitors (De Souza, 2021). Hotels practicing green initiatives tend to have more chances of long-term success (Amandeep & Varshney, 2017).

There is an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions to avoid their negative effect on the climate (Ritchie et al., 2020). Few studies concentrate on green initiatives, green marketing, and sustainable marketing in hotels as mandatory initiatives that can alleviate and help solve environmental issues. This is an emerging debate among academics. The study contributes to the debate to solve the hotel's greenhouse carbon emission by applying a sustainable marketing concept. There is a need to understand how green tourism marketing occurs within the South African tourism and hospitality space. There is also no specific study that was done in South Africa, Sun City resort to specifically resolve the Greenhouse carbon emission with sustainable marketing as the main objective. There are no known studies conducted on green tourism marketing despite its numerous benefits to hospitality establishments, especially in South Africa and Sun City Resort. Studies should be contextual and original; therefore, this study fills that gap with empirical evidence. The following objectives are set: (i) to examine how Sun International, through Sun City, has internalised green tourism marketing, (ii) to identify some of the critical initiatives by Sun City to promote green tourism marketing internally and externally, and (iii) highlight challenges in green tourism achievement.

The study is divided into different sections. Section 1 contributed the introduction and background. Section 2 deals with the Literature review. Section 3 deals with Methodology, Section 4 deals with Results and discussions. The following section explores the literature on sustainable tourism.

## **Literature review**

### ***Tourism contribution to carbon emissions***

Tourism contributes 8% of GHG emissions (Lenzen et al., 2018). In seeking to balance tourism growth and improving carbon efficiencies, countries such as Sweden have adopted the principles and practices of Sustainable Tourism (Makoondlall-Chadee et al., 2017; Toshima et al., 2021). The significant amount of carbon emitted through hotel activities and related travel is an important indicator for assessing tourism's environmental impact (Cadarsó et al., 2022).

The sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the hospitality sector are lighting (Huang, 2015), heating (Nheta, 2016), cooling (Abeydeera & Karuunasena, 2019), and cooking (Youssef, 2022). A Victoria Falls hospitality study found that the fifty accommodation enterprises are largely dependent on electricity, which is powered by coal, and the coal-burning process that produces electricity emits huge amounts of carbon (Nhamo & Dube, 2020). The high carbon emission is exacerbated more by hotels through seventy-percent high usage of

liquified petroleum gas and huge and many air conditioners, powered by electricity, which cater to high temperatures in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (Nhamo & Dube, 2020). The old water boilers in most hotels in Victoria Falls contribute to the high carbon emission because they draw much electricity (Nhamo & Dube, 2020), which corroborate Mearns and Boshoff (2017) finding that most old technologies and appliances in use in hotels have a large carbon footprint due to their age, as efficiencies tend to deteriorate over time.

### ***Water and waste management efficiency in the hospitality industry***

Environmental management is needed, which demands serious consideration of water management as one of the aspects to eliminate environmental degradation and stress (Styles et al., 2015). Water conservation encapsulates all the approaches, methodologies, and exercises to sustainably deal with freshwater resources, safeguard the hydrosphere, and meet future generations' requirements. (Tiwari et al., 2020). In the European hospitality region, water management best practices could reduce annual water and energy use by 16 573 m<sup>3</sup> and 209,541 kWh for a 100-room hotel, saving Euros58,436 in utility bills (Styles et al., 2015). Aerators and flow regulators are minimal in accommodation establishments in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Only three accommodation establishments have a dual cistern system in Victoria Falls, whilst the expansive swimming pools and huge fountains contribute to water wastage and loss, including flood irrigation (Nhamo & Dube, 2020). Implementing best practices applied across hotels and campsites could reduce water use by at least 422 million m<sup>3</sup> per year throughout Europe, significantly contributing to the sustainability of water-stressed tourism destinations (Styles, 2015). Hotels have instituted water-saving methods, including drip irrigations, and using drought-resistant flowers in garden landscaping as water-saving and conservation initiatives (Dube, 2022).

Another environmental issue deserving attention to reducing hotel carbon emissions is efficient waste management (Floričić, 2020). Waste management practices in hotels incorporate recycling grey water from the bathrooms and laundry and linen recycling programs in rooms. Furthermore, the practice should also involve no installation of bathtubs in washrooms, water sprinklers in the hotel landscape, rainwater harvesting, and using dual flush in bathrooms (Tiwari et al., 2020).

### ***Energy efficiency in hotels***

Hotels are one of the most energy-intensive facilities, with high energy costs contributing to high carbon emissions (Cingoski & Petrevska, 2018). Energy emission is the most controllable dimension than the other two, water and waste by up to 20% or more (Natural Resources Canada, 2003). Consequently, there is a correlation between the hotel industry development and the environmental and energy efficiency impacts (Cingoski & Petrevska, 2018).

In South Africa Kruger National Park, the Skukuza Lodge put efforts to adapt to the green environment through several initiatives such as the new kitchen design that uses gas, which assists in reducing the energy consumption at the lodge whilst this new building is well insulated (Nhamo et al., 2023). Other green initiatives at the lodge include lighting in the club, utilises LED lights, low-flow shower heads, and new refrigeration and air-cooling technology equipment. Other energy-saving techniques employed were grass-thatched roofs and insulated in addition to automatic switch lights and keycards (Nhamo et al., 2023).

### ***Green tourism marketing***

Achieving green hotel initiatives can be achieved through three interconnected sustainable marketing concepts. Green marketing facilitates the development and marketing of more sustainable products and services (For example, hotel food waste management, green

buildings, and activities that reduce carbon emission) while introducing sustainability efforts (for example, through policies, practices, and training ) into the core of the marketing process (for example, identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customers' needs and wants) and business practice (Gordon et al., 2011). Social marketing involves using the power of marketing to encourage sustainable behaviour among individuals (For example, customers and tourists), businesses (For example, suppliers and stakeholders), and decision-makers (For example, top executives, and government officials) while also assessing the impact of current commercial marketing on sustainability (Gordon et al., 2011; De Souza et al., 2021). The weakness of the social marketing concept led to the critical marketing concept which involves the analyses of marketing theory, principles, and techniques utilising a critical theory-based approach. Critical analysis assists in guiding regulation and control, development of marketing theory and practice, and challenging the dominant institutions associated with marketing and the capitalist system, encouraging a marketing system in which sustainability is a key goal. which ultimately greatly influences sustainability development goals (De Souza, 2021; Gordon et al., 2011).

The hotels and the customers are making efforts towards the green business of the hotel industry, partially due to customers who are demanding the same (De Souza, 2021; Gordon et al., 2010). Customers are now demanding environmentally friendly and sensitive whereas hotels are trying to do so to attract and satisfy customers (Singhal et al., 2018). Satisfying customers can still be attained through encouraging sustainable consumption. The sustainable consumption behaviour of customers affects the sustainable development of society. Customers' pro-environment behaviour provides economic benefits to society and ensures the sustainable development of the environment (Chung, 2020).

Other studies have identified Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE) as a critical factor for explaining environmental behaviour as it measures an individual's judgment of their ability to affect environmental changes (Roberts, 1996; Hao 2022). For example, Roberts (1996) suggests that if consumers feel they can bring about change due to their actions, they are more likely to consider the social impact of their purchase behaviour. Earlier studies also found that PCE positively affected environmental interests (Allen, 1982; Hao et al., 2022). Social marketing affects behavioural change in customers to act in the expected positive way (Gordon et al., 2011).

The Ad Net Zero team in 2020 developed guidelines on combatting carbon emissions, especially in marketing and advertising companies, though that may apply across all spectrums. The ten points advocated for to be followed were to get top-level buy-in, establish a senior sustainability lead, and a cross-discipline "Green Team" "to select a consultancy partner to support you in gathering data and setting reduction actions, measuring carbon emissions, and reducing carbon emissions. The remaining five other important guidelines were to offset unavoidable emissions, establish scientific and verifiable reduction targets, sign up and be an active supporter of the Ad Net Zero initiative, enable and encourage your people to take the Ad Net Zero training programme and refer to other resources within Ad Net Zero.

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Both primary and secondary sources were used to gather data. Some scholars conceptualised dimensions that complement the credibility of qualitative research, such as structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy as enough evidence (Eisner 1991; Cresswell,2018). Furthermore, in structural corroboration, the researcher uses several data sources to support or deny the interpretation. The study also utilised data collection methods such as interviews with key informants and management at Sun City resort whilst tourists and staff surveys were given Question Pro

research instruments to fill out to solicit more information. The number of respondents in qualitative research can vary from one to twenty or more depending on the type of information needed and the depth of the data with justification (Subedi, 2021). Observations were also utilised. Secondary sources of data were also utilised such as Sun International's Annual Integrated report, Environment and Sustainability Governance (ESG) report, company reports, and peer-reviewed documents from Web of Science and Scopus (see Figure 1).

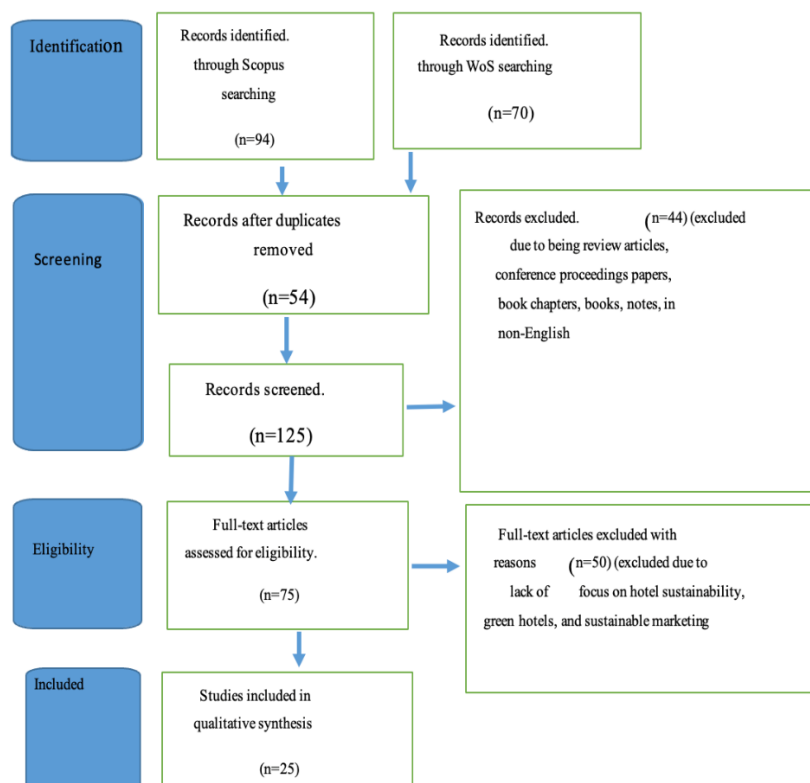


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of documents inclusion and exclusion  
 Source: Own source

The quality of the huge data collected daily by relevant organisations and or individuals such as government institutions and private companies, research organisations, and non-governmental organisations in recent years should be of importance to any system or institution, especially the academic environment (Olabode et al., 2019). The inclusion of secondary documents was based on the relevance of themes to the study title, the objectives of the study, and the study context, such as hotel carbon emissions, hotels sustainability, sustainable marketing, Net Zero emissions, Sun City, Sun International, and green initiatives. Triangulation was achieved by management surveys, management interviews, and document review, in a case study context.

### Study area

The study area included Sun City, Cabanas, The Pace of the Lost City, Cascades, and other facilities such as several recreational facilities in the area including golf courses, conference areas, recreational areas, and several timeshare vacation apartments.

Figure 2 shows the area of study.

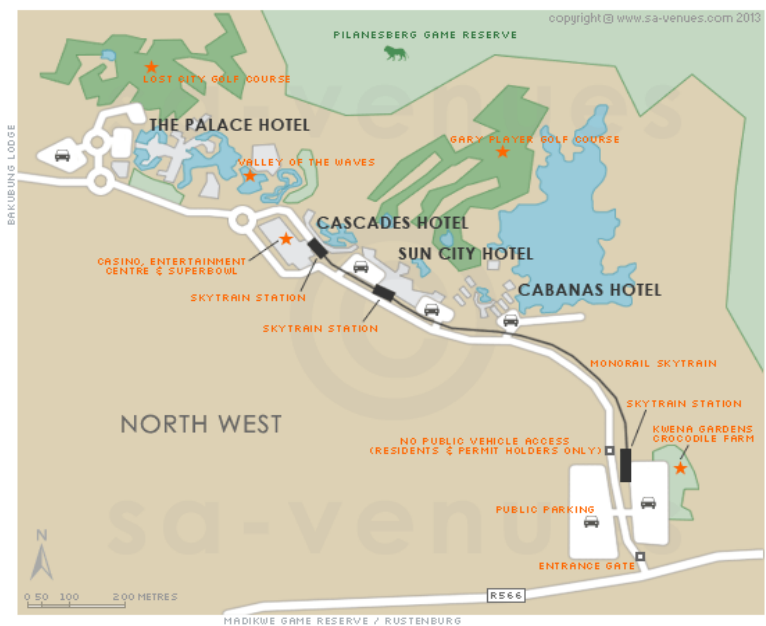


Figure 2. Area of study Sun City resort.  
Source: www.sa-venues.com 2013

## Results, discussion, and implications

### *Energy saving initiatives analysis at Sun City*

The study found that Sun City Resort practices energy saving. A total of 62.5 percent reported that energy audits are being done whereas no one denied that such audits take place. The regular audits are in tandem with governance issues which are supposed to be fulfilled as part of King Report IV and the environmental policy and compliance with International Standards Organisations (ISO14001). ISO 14064 and 14065 relate more to hotels' compliance with environmental issues. Corroborating these findings is a similar study which found that eco-efficiency and energy audits can directly affect environmental performance which leads to hotel sustainability (Saputra et al., 2023). Furthermore, the study findings of installing energy efficient measures and regular audits in line with Net Zero guidelines resonate with another study in the Western Balkan states with 280 hotels in which a new energy management system was formulated to save energy in line with the ISO 50001 standard (Rajić, 2022). The new proposed model, specifically developed for service organizations, was based on the Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle which empirically proved helpful in the context of hotels (Rajić, 2022).

The implication of the finding is that marketing plays a role in awareness by key informants that energy audits take place within the resort. Marketing communication in all its forms plays a pivotal role in conveying messages to all stakeholders to be aware of such activities as energy audits within the hotel or resort. The hotels also employ marketing communications strategies like publicity through Integrated Annual Reports such as the tool used by Sun International group of hotels.

The study found that 71.43% of key informants and staff surveyed claim they prioritise procurement of energy-efficient equipment, whereas 14.29% do not agree with the statement. Corroborating the study findings is the Ethiopian hotels study, which discovered three green purchasing initiatives (Lammi et al., 2021). The first green purchase initiative finding was that 93.5 % of hotel supply in Addis Ababa depends on local sources for consumable goods, whilst 79.6% of Ethiopian Addis Ababa hotels buy eco-friendly products such as food items, cleaning materials, and other items made for guest houses or hotel operations. The third green purchase



initiative avoiding excess purchase packages. About two-thirds of surveyed hotels (63.4%) agreed they were not accustomed to purchasing extra products (Lammi et al., 2021).

Table 1 Energy efficiency initiatives analysis within Sun City Resort

Statement	Yes	No	To some extent	To a large extent	We are planning for it	I don't know	Overall
We conduct an energy audit	5 62.5%	1 12.5%	0 0%	1 12.5%	0 0%	1 12.5%	8 100%
We prioritise the procurement of energy-efficient equipment	5 71.43%	1 14.29%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 14.29%	7 100%
We make use of LED lights	4 66.67%	1 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 16.67%	6 100%
We make use of hotel keycards	5 83.33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 16.67%	6 100%
We have centralized heating and cooking	4 66.67%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 33.33%	6 100%
We make use of smart geysers to reduce energy	4 66.67%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 33.33%	6 100%
Our building encompasses green building design techniques	0 0%	3 50%	0 0%	0 0%	3 50%	0 0%	6 100%
We make use of slow-flow shower heads	4 66.67%	0 0%	1 16.67%	1 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We have automated lights	4 66.67%	2 33.33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
Our guests have the option to offset their carbon footprint	3 50%	3 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%

The study found that LED lights were used as one of the retrofitting initiatives by hotels in the green drive initiatives wherein 66.67 percent of key informants and staff surveys revealed usage of LED lighting for their hotels. Corroborating the study finding was a study which found that Protea Hotel Group in South Africa invested huge amounts in retrofitting their hotels including LED lights slow-flow with the expenditure of one million rand on LED lights by Melrose Arch, whilst Protea Hotel Balalaika in Sandton spent about two million rand on retrofitting project including LED lights (Ismael & Rogerson,2016).

The study found that 66.67 percent of respondents revealed that they use slow-flow shower heads in the resort. Corroborating the study finding, a similar study, contrary to the energy-saving initiatives, the use of low-flow shower heads and sinks was perceived as less priority for green hotel concept by hotel tourists, so tourists were not willing to pay more for hotels with such facilities (Wiastuti,2022). Similarly, another study revealed that guests either do not notice such initiatives as low-flow shower heads and LED lights or are supportive of such energy-conservation measures whilst a positive finding in the study was that most guests were willing to pay more for such sustainability initiatives (Susskind & Verma, 2011). The use of fourth industry technology in hotels can also increase energy efficiency and reduce Greenhouse gas emissions (Youssef & Zeqiri, 2021)

Measuring and reducing energy consumption are guidelines in Net Zero emission marketing drives for companies. To fulfill such demands, companies are encouraged to ensure they report and comprehend these activities; annual electricity usage periodically, annual gas usage as an alternative to electricity, air con refrigerants consumption, business travel such as public transport and taxis, flight information such as origin, cabin class, destination, and distance travelled, hotel stays and fleet car data such as fleet and fuel type, as well as distance, travelled. Complementing the positive sustainable marketing initiatives responses alluded to adopted by Sun City Resort is a key management informant who said;

*‘We have electric cars and hybrid cars to reduce carbon emission. We also record electricity consumption and report to the Head office periodically our electricity consumption. We also have shuttle transport’.*

### **Water-saving initiatives as part of green marketing**

The study results show that a hundred percent of all respondents agree that there is a water recycling program in place, 83.33% concur that grey water is used in gardens, and 80% agree that they have a dedicated water leakage response team and various other water conservation

initiatives. Recycling of water is another means to save the planet Earth in the three buzzwords of sustainable ways of reducing, recycling, and reusing products and services. In Sun City, there are also no leaks, and water campaigns are taking place to save water. Corroborating the water saving and recycling initiatives was a similar study of Lucknow hotels where eighty-three percent follow water recycling, linen program, and rain harvesting systems, thirty-three percent of hotels use no bathtub to save water sixty- seven percent of hotels use water sprinklers in the hotel landscape and hundred percent of hotels use dual flush systems in the bathroom for water conservation (Tiwari et al., 2020). Furthermore, resonating with the study results is a study in Mallorca where the main drivers for introducing water-saving measures were the reduction in costs, followed by environmental concerns, while legal requirements and customer loyalty were found to be the least important drivers (Tirado et al., 2019)

Table 2. Water efficiency initiatives analysis in Sun City resort

Statement	Yes	No	To some extent	We are planning for it	We would love to do it but not yet	We lack the financial resources to do so	We lack the technical capacity to do so	Overall
We have a water recycling program in place	8 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 100%
We use grey water in our garden	5 83.33%	0 0%	1 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We use low-flow showerheads	3 50%	1 16.67%	2 33.33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We use low-flow toilets	4 66.67%	0 0%	2 33.33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We encourage guests in our rooms to at least use towels and linen twice before changing them	2 33.33%	3 50%	0 0%	1 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We have aerated taps/faucets	1 20%	4 80%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We have water harvesting technology built into our hotel infrastructure	2 40%	3 60%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We conduct regular water audits	3 50%	2 33.33%	0 0%	0 0%	1 16.67%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We have a dedicated water leakage response team to attend to all water leakages	4 80%	1 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%

Measuring water consumption is one of the guidelines in the Net Zero guidelines which can assist in marketing the company as abiding by the carbon emission reduction. It is also evident management communicates through its various marketing channels information to all employees. This is another Net Zero guideline which Sun City is meeting where communication of green initiatives must be communicated by management to all employees and external stakeholders. Complementing efforts by Sun City respondents on efficient water management and reducing water wastage a key informant interviewee said;

*‘We have a good water management system. We also use grey water for irrigation of the golf course greens and gardens.*

Another key respondent interviewee said

*‘We record the amount of water we use. We also report to the Head office periodically how much water we have used and try to manage it properly*

### **Waste management as part of green marketing**

The results show that waste management initiatives are taking place within Sun City towards sustainability The study found that 87.5% of respondents agree that there is a compost site, 71,57% agree that they conduct waste separation on point,50% agree that there re is a landfill, whilst 100% of respondents concur that they have recycling bins in public areas. There are also kitchen recycling projects that are starting to take place in Sun City to complement waste management. The study findings resonate with similar studies where 33% of hotels donate leftover food to local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and convert compost waste



into useful manure (Tiwari 2020). A lot of waste from hotels comes from food waste that deserves attention. Another study resonating with the study findings but offering a different perspective of food waste is when food waste (FW) occurs along the entire food supply chain, starting from farm to fork (Kasavan et al., 2022) whereas the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), reports that nearly 1.3 billion tons of edible food never gets eaten annually. This uneaten edible food usually ends up as waste on a global is estimated to be US \$750 billion (Gustavsson et al. 2011; Heidari et al. 2019). Areas where food waste in the value chain occurs include purchasing food ingredients, storage of raw food material, preparation of food, serving food, management of buffet leftover food and plate waste, and disposal of food waste (Kasavan et al., 2022). From a marketing perspective food waste also occurs through wrong packaging, spoilage, and damage during the distribution phase. Measuring waste, and waste efficient waste disposal is one of the marketing guidelines required by the Net Zero emission team to show compliance with carbon emissions reduction. To successfully measure waste and waste disposal the company needs to identify the source of the carbon emission such as usage of recycled and non-recycled paper.

### ***Waste management***

The study results also show that most respondents say that no measurement of waste takes place due to 60% of respondents claim so whilst 40% say they do have some form of measuring the waste amount. It is of paramount importance to measure waste as an antecedent to know what to reduce and how to reduce the waste. Before measuring waste, the hotel's management should understand the source of the waste. For example, knowing how many kilograms of food waste per day, per week, per month, will enable the management to keep track of the loss and find ways to reduce the waste. Complementing measuring waste is one of the management interview responses who said that:

*'We measure our waste and manage the waste because we also have a landfill for such purposes'.*

Another key informant interviewee responded.

*'We have an environmental policy to guide us in waste management although it may not be implemented hundred percent, we are doing our best.'*

Reducing Carbon emission is one of the Net Zero emission guidelines and Sun City Resort has adhered to such marketing guidelines through for example purchasing refurbished equipment where possible, instead of new ones, and sourcing office supplies from companies providing recycled and recyclable material. Complementing the Question Pro responses, one of the key informant interviewee responses to reducing waste was;

*'We try to reduce waste in our organisation by recycling.'*

One of Net Zero's guidelines is that there must be a green team in the organisation. Sun City has a Sustainable officer and a Group Sustainable manager whilst a manager at Sun City has the responsibility to ensure sustainability measures are taking place. One of the key informant interviewees attests to this finding who said;

*'We have officers responsible for ensuring environmental and social management'.*

Reducing waste can be done through several initiatives such as limiting buffet food, taking food for children instead of children taking on their breakfast buffet, the accuracy of employees in providing the right menu the first time, and guests' conviction of not wanting to bite more than they can chew. The finding resonates with other studies that suggest waste reduction could be accomplished by retraining employees, using proper equipment, better menu planning practices, accurate forecasting of demand, and implementing efficient storage practices. Educating customers with attractive, informative, and innovative portion guides can also help



reduce food waste from excess ordering and consumption (Okumus, 2020). It is important to note that in the end, the customer needs satisfaction and to be able to come back again and be the hotel ambassador through word of word to others whilst at the same time the hotel needs the guests’ cooperation in reducing waste which demands a lot of marketing skills, persuasion public relations and exceptional negotiation skills. Social marketing takes precedence in trying to influence customer behavioral changes.

Table 3. Waste management initiatives analysis in Sun City resort

Statement	Yes	No	Maybe	To some extent	We are planning for it	We lack the financial resources to do so	We lack the technical capacity to do so	Overall
We have a compost site	7 87.5%	1 12.5%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	8 100%
We conduct waste separation on point	5 71.57%	2 28.4%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	7 100%
We make use of landfill	2 40%	3 60%	0 %	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 %	5 100%
We have recycling bins in public areas	5 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 %	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We rationalize the food we give to each person	2 40%	2 40%	1 20%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We have a waste minimization program	3 60	1 20	1 20	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%
We have refills and reusable water containers	3 60	2 40	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	5 100%
We are making efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastics	2 40	2 40	1 20	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We have eliminated plastic in our operations	3 50%	3 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We have eliminated the use of plastic water bottles	4 66.67%	2 33.33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 100%
We have purified tap water with reusable drinking containers	5 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%
We measure the amount of waste produced	2 40	3 60	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%

It is also interesting to note that good products also reduce food waste. It is therefore important from a marketing perspective that products are well prepared, including even buying them in bulk but quality inspired. Hotels tend to buy substandard products in bulk to reduce costs, but this ends up causing a lot of waste. The study assertion corroborates with similar sentiments where it was argued that good and quality food and drinks reduce food waste because customers do not just taste different food and leave and try the next one.

The results show that there is effort by Sun City for single-use plastic usage with 40% agreeing with that statement whilst the other 40% do not. If not curbed these plastics will end up in the oceans forming tons of cabbage which contributes to climate change. It is important to note that using one plastic to carry many things like lunch boxes and food by guests may reduce waste. It is also important to note that the use of paper wrappers and glass containers rather than plastics may also assist. A single-use plastic policy could also assist in bringing sanity to the environment. The study finding resonates with other studies wherein Macau hotels where hotel managers said they used to give guests two plastics to hold lunch boxes but later found that one plastic bag is enough to hold it and therefore we have a policy to give only one whilst other managers in smaller hotels said their strategy is having fewer wrapping papers and plastic bags (Wan et al., 2017).

Table 4. Management perspectives on green marketing perspectives

Serial	Key informants’ management responses
1.	50% agree on ‘We have set Net Zero targets for the hotel’
2	66.67% agree on ‘We conduct energy and water efficiency training to our staff’
3.	50% agree on ‘We make use of reflective / insulated windows’
4.	40% agree on ‘We allow and encourage carbon our guests and suppliers to buy carbon offset credits’
5.	83.33% agree on ‘We make use of LPG cooking stoves’
6	80% agree on ‘We have electric charging stations’
7.	40% agree on ‘We have a green roof that has trees/ plants on top’

The study found that the four hotels’ management perceptions on achieving green marketing tourism are generally positive 50% of management acknowledge that they have Net Zero targets. This is one of the Net Zero emission marketing guidelines that mention the setting of

targets by organisations to achieve carbon emissions reduction by communicating their efforts to various stakeholders and implementing their promises in this relationship marketing strategy. 66.67% of management responses acknowledge that training in energy and water efficiency takes place. This finding resonates with Net Zero emission guidelines that stipulate that for the success of Net zero emissions companies are encouraged to offer training on how to reduce it then implement.

***Tourist perspectives on environmental, social and governance matters in Sun City Resort***

Tourists are important stakeholders in reducing carbon emissions through their buy-in initiatives. If tourists are willing to change their behaviour positively in reducing greenhouse emissions by taking relevant or supportive actions, the NetZero emission target by the year 2050 may be a reality. Examples of actions tourists could take to support the initiative are the choice of transport they decide to use to the resort, the choice of transport they decide to use whilst in the resort, the type of food, that is eco-friendly they may decide to consume, the decision of not wasting food, responsible use of resources like water, and changing linen frequency among others. All sustainable marketing approaches would interplay with each other in the dynamics to ensure the customers are happy, the environment is saved, and the company makes a profit, sustainably.

Table 5 Analysis of tourists’ perspectives on green marketing matters

Serial	Results
1	39% of tourists agree to low carbon transport usage of electric cars and hydrogen fuels
2	31% Most tourists agree to the usage of public transport
3	37% of Tourists agree to buy low carbon environmentally friendly products such as carbon credits
4	36% of tourists agree on considering their carbon footprint before embarking on a journey to Sun City resort
5	51% of most tourists are moderate on the sentiment that Sun City promotes low-carbon diets
6	50% of most tourists are moderate that Sun City promotes public transport
7	52% of most tourists are moderate on the fact that Sun City Resort provides green accommodation facilities
8	51 % of tourists agree that Sun City Resort provides carbon-friendly recreational activities
9	52% of tourists are moderate that Sun City promotes resource use efficiency
10	37% of Tourists agree to buy low carbon environmentally friendly products such as carbon credits

The study found some tourists are satisfied with the green initiatives being undertaken. Tourists are important stakeholders who should be satisfied with the destination's products and services. All green initiative efforts that Sun City resort is doing are to satisfy the needs and wants of the stakeholders, especially the customers. All the green initiatives are there to ensure the tourists are happy while meeting the expectations of the other stakeholders such as government and green initiative regulatory authorities in their marketing drive. When customers are happy, they are bound to harbour revisit intentions by the tourists and eventually, they will visit. Revisiting tourists is guaranteed business and continued profitability.

The tourists’ satisfaction with the new marketing repositioning strategy is evidenced by the positive responses by the tourists regarding green initiatives. 52% of most tourists are satisfied that Sun City Resort provides green accommodation facilities. Green conscious tourists now demand such accommodation to be happy and save the planet at the same time and future generations.

The study found that 51 % of tourists agree that Sun City Resort provides carbon-friendly recreational activities. The finding suggests that the new brand awareness campaigns that the destination has been projecting to the stakeholders as a green conscious destination has been acknowledged by tourists as one of the stakeholders.

The study found that 52% of tourists are moderate that Sun City promotes resource use efficiency. The realisation by tourists that Sun City promotes water, energy and waste resources efficiently resonates with the marketing corporate image individually being projected by the

four hotels in Sun City Resort (Cabanas, The Palace, Sun City and Cascades) which cumulatively achieve the new destination image the resort is projecting of green marketing tourism.

The study found that 36% of tourists agree on considering their carbon footprint before embarking on a journey to Sun City resort. The finding suggests that the public relations campaigns to lower carbon emissions has been successful to the extent that one of the stakeholders like the tourists would like to join as part of a core owner and actor in trying to reduce the emissions carbon emissions. In a related acknowledgement of the public relations campaign success 50% of most tourists are moderate that Sun City promotes public transport which also reduces carbon emissions while 37% of tourists agree to buy low carbon environmentally friendly products such as carbon credits. The acknowledgement by tourists that carbon emissions are reducing and willingness to partake in the carbon emission reduction initiatives shows the success of the marketing communication strategies by the Sun City resort. The findings on tourists' satisfaction partially resonate with similar study where hotel guests tend to attach a high degree of importance to value for money attribute, whereas the appearance of the hotel was least important to them (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2017).

### ***Other significant green initiatives in Sun City resort***

The study found that Sun City has installed 2,584 560W monocrystalline solar PV modules at Sun Central Rooftop in 2023 as a destination marketing tool while simultaneously contributing to reducing carbon emission, to meet new expectations of the stakeholders. Panels cost 16 million and have a 25-year lifespan and a payback period of 5 years. This is an equivalent of what 329 average-sized South African households consume over a year. Maximum production can translate into 14% of Sun City Resort's energy use. The project will reduce resorts' CO2 equivalent emissions by an estimated 2,510 tons per annum. The desired outcome of being perceived as a good corporate citizen is achieved while improving marketing goals such as heightened brand awareness, brand association, brand equity and improved corporate and destination image.

The New Lefika villas project utilizes some of the modern technology in energy and water savings. The project also uses some of the modern most efficient technology, star-rated equipment, fridges, and air conditioners, among others to satisfy customers and other stakeholders utilising the relationship marketing strategy. There is also a wholesale approach to gas usage for cooking. The ambitious project of tree planting in surrounding schools is part of the carbon offset project.

### ***Overall study implications***

The cornerstone of business strength for the hotel sector is guest satisfaction with food and beverage services and guest loyalty, which are essential marketing elements. Symbiotic mutual relationships between hotel staff and guests are important for cooperating in environmentally friendly practices and ensuring all stakeholders understand their role in reducing food waste. Although hoteliers may have taken every possible step to minimize food waste, they still could not control plate food waste due to wasteful guests' habits when consuming food from different personal choices, cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds (Kasavan et al., 2022)

Advertising eco-friendly methods adopted in hotels can create a positive brand image in the market and attract new consumers who want to buy products and services from an environmentally friendly business. Hotels exercising sustainable green practices tend to perform much better than their competitors and have more chances of long-term success (Amandeep, 2017).

A positive attitude towards environmentally friendly practices strongly relates to customers choosing green hotels (Jauhari & Manaktola, 2007). Gagić et al. (2013) stated that hotels' sustainable operations help to get the attention of the guests and concluded that energy-efficient technology might initially be expensive but in the long run reduces the daily operational cost of the hotels. Huh & Chang (2017) indicated in their study that Generation Y consumers are more concerned about recycling and waste disposable programs. They also stated that hotels' green certification and visible green advertising are the main two motivators for their revisit intention. Berezan et al. (2013) pointed out that sustainable practices framed in hotels should be convenient and comfortable to the customers. They stated it positively correlates with customer satisfaction (Tiwari et al., 2020).

As part of the responsible tourism agenda, Sun City's operations are anchored on the three pillars of sustainability, namely, Environmental, Health and Safety, and Socio-economic development. These are operationalised by several policies, namely, Sustainability Policy, Environmental Policy, Health and safety policy, Safe food policy, and Enterprise and Supplier Development Policy, amongst others. The environmental policy at Sun City Resort entails issues that the hotels must address to maintain an environmentally friendly atmosphere that is favourable to achieving a green environment for the planet and the people and balancing it with the profit agenda. Corroborating the study findings is a similar study where fifty hotels were investigated on their environmental and sustainability practices disclosure on their websites. It was found that hotels disclosed mostly twelve areas regarding environmental policies (Hsieh, 2012). The twelve areas covered under environmental policies included energy management, environmental education for employees and management, water conservation, waste management, green purchase and supply, environmental partnership, carbon footprint reduction, green building design and construction, ecosystem or biodiversity, ecological food, guest room air quality, and reduction of noise pollution (Hsieh, 2012). Resonating with other studies, the introduction of environmentally friendly measures aimed to reduce the hotel's carbon footprint, reduce costs, and enhance brand image which gives the hotel competitiveness impetus, and higher profits which motivates the greening of hotels (Ismael & Rogerson, 2016).

### ***Challenges in fulfilling environmental social and governance imperatives***

The findings also revealed that the initial investment cost for green set-up is very high, which is one of the prime challenges faced by hotels in the implementation of green practices. Managers will choose not to undertake this expensive green project and concentrate on profits. Starting to fit double-glazed windows, new waterless urinals, solar geysers, LED lights, and faucet showers, for example, would be a very expensive project, especially considering disturbing guests.

The major challenge prohibiting or slowing down the process is time. Managers need time to implement these projects specially dedicated to them through written down policies and not on sustainable green initiatives which are done haphazardly anytime or as secondary or ancillary duties (Khatter, et al.,2021). Equally, managers need to allocate time for sustainable green initiatives and seriously consider the initiative that demands their commitment without being pushed from outside to achieve sustainability goals.

The lack of resources to support green initiatives is a concern. Green initiatives demand a lot of resources, machinery, and equipment, including money (Khatter et al.,2021). Without enough resources, including human resources expertise, eco-friendly green hotels may not be possible. Lack of technological expertise to install or maintain some of the green technology. Unavailability of some of the technology required to go green fully. Knowledge gaps in terms of the efficacy of some of the technology on the market. The fusion of human resources, knowledge, financial resources, equipment, and money brings the best.

The support and perceptions of hotel owners and shareholders. If shareholders and owners support the green initiatives, it would be easy for managers to implement such projects. If there is support from shareholders and hotel owners it would be easy to get resources (Khatter et al., 2021). If there is no such support from stakeholders and hotel owners, it would be difficult to use marketing tactics and strategies.

There are gaps in allowing tourists to offset their carbon footprint during their stay at the resort. Leaving the tourists as participants in offsetting carbon emissions is important but only willing hearts and minds will participate (Khatter et al., 2021). It demands marketing initiatives to persuade guests to participate without offending the tourists in the process. It is a long process that demands meticulous appropriate messaging and correct targeting of the market segments to obtain good results. Offsetting carbon emission is one of Net Zero emission guidelines.

Old infrastructure is challenging to retrofit old hotel buildings and technology. Newly built green buildings and retrofitted buildings reduce their carbon footprints by implementing environmentally friendly measures such as LED lighting, double-glazed windows, solar geysers, water storage tanks, recycling, occupancy sensors, half-flush/ full-flush systems, waterless urinals, and locally sourced products amongst others (Wu & Teng, 2011; Rogerson & Sims, 2012; Ismael & Rogerson, 2016). One of the initial Green Building Rating Tools (GBRT) was the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), whose agenda is to reduce the consumption of natural resources within the built environment (Asdrubal, Baldinelli, Bianchi & Sambuco, 2015; Chen et al., 2015; Ismael & Rogerson, 2016). It is a huge challenge for old buildings to be converted to meet these new green initiatives and possibly one of the reasons could be the architecture, the design initially adopted which may not perfectly meet the sustainable green new look expectation.

The low demand from customers is another obstacle for hotels to adopt green practices, especially in the Asian context (Wan, 2007; Rahman et al., 2012). In a similar study, tourists did not consider staying in a green hotel, despite their concern for the environment (Kasim, 2004). Other tourists had a perception that green hotels cost more to stay in than non-green hotels (Millar & Baloglu, 2011). The lack of government regulations on hotel EM is another barrier (Mensah, 2006; Wan et al., 2017)

Sharing responsibilities in carbon emissions reduction is problematic between regions, countries, and individuals which has ignited endless contentions in international discussions. The sentiments were echoed in similar studies (Ritchie et al., 2020) where different regions give varying importance to reducing carbon emissions whereby heavily industrialized nations may not pay so much attention to green initiatives. Africa still has an agenda 2063 for which demands heavy industrialization and along with these initiatives may be an increase in carbon emissions.

Greenwashing is another challenge where hotels and related tourism enterprises lie about their green initiatives and pay lip service to it also just to lure ecotourists who are conscious about eco-friendly hotels. Greenwashing is regarded also as unsupported claims deceiving tourists that their products are environmentally friendly and have a more positive impact on the environment than reality (Westerveld, 1986). Dishonest tourism operators embrace ecotourism as a new unique selling proposition, promoting ecotourism while effectively doing the opposite (Fosbury, 2006). Many ecotours are just ordinary operations that “greenwash” themselves by embracing the tourism label while doing little to act in an environmentally responsible manner (Constantineau, 2007). Greenwashers give the appearance of ecotourism (nature-based, learning-focused, environmentally, and socio-culturally responsible) without the substance of sustainability (Weaver, 2002). Because ecotourism is growing fastest in developing countries with the weakest regulations (but some of the most

stunning environments), strong standards are needed to minimize greenwashing (Clayton, 2004). Given the aforementioned, companies need to be ethical, and have a marketing orientation in their business by being honest and truthfully satisfying their customers and making sustainable profits, because the exact opposite would happen should they not.

## Conclusions

Stringent green initiatives and policies that enhance sustainability need to be formulated by Sun City resort management and hotels therein with timelines. Those who do not comply should be punished. The imperative green hotels should be implemented by all and ensure the initiatives are implemented, with continuous monitoring teams in place. Quarterly reports on Environmental Social and governance matters should be advocated for. It is imperative to note that green hotels and sustainability cannot be handled successfully by ESG officials only but by different stakeholders, such as employees, managers, sustainable partners, suppliers, distributors, and customers. The study reinforces the importance of continuous communication with both hotel guests and potential future hotel consumers, through various educational programs to influence positive behavioral change towards green hotels' success. The formation of public opinion about the importance of the perception of both positive and responsible activities and sustainable innovations would also suffice.

Challenges faced by Sun City Resort and even other green hotel initiatives elsewhere could be resolved with concerted efforts, commitment, and resource provision from the hotel owners, managers, and sponsors. Moving away from greenwashing by some hotels and related companies in the whole value chain would greatly alleviate some of the challenges. Challenges should be turned into opportunities by all stakeholders and fulfill the sustainable development goals, especially SDG 13 of climate change in this context, so that we have a conducive planet earth, happy people who live in it, and achieving a profitable hotel industry, sustainably.

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