



# Determining the impact of green management policies on hotel performance: A manager's perspective

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## Abstract

This paper examines the possibility of a link between green management policies and hotel performance in two Sub-Saharan developing countries from the manager's perspective. The impact of green management policies on hotel performance has raised ongoing debates in which no conclusive positions have been arrived at. Green management policies, regulations, and goals in hotels are to some extent formulated in response to genuine environmental concerns of stakeholders who include (internal stakeholders) customers, employees, shareholders, owners, suppliers, and (external stakeholders) academics, government agencies and competitors (Weng *et al.*, 2015:4997). The research design used to carry out this study was a multiple case study based on its appropriateness to assist the researcher to determine the impact of green management policies on the performance of hotels. This study was carried out on the assumption that managers in hotels have an understanding of the views of the stakeholders as they exert pressure on the hotel to formulate policies to become green. Qualitative research was employed in order to gain a rich understanding of the impact of green management policies on hotel performance. Interviews were carried out on three star hotels. Content analysis was performed to process the data which were displayed in tables accompanied with some descriptive narrative. The interviews revealed that in most hotels green management policies are unavailable, suggesting that there is a lack of awareness, yet green initiatives are being implemented in the hotels, mainly to save resources and for cost reduction. The study revealed that only a few managers in the hotels that were studied have formulated green management policies. Some of the performance factors that emerged from the study include cost reduction, employee edification, and business competitiveness. This study determined the impact of green management policies on hotel performance from the perspective of the manager in the countries that were studied. The study made a distinct contribution to the literature by identifying the perceptions of hotel managers with regard to the implementation of green management policies.

**Key words:** Hotels, green management policies, hotel performance, stakeholders' perspective, hotels managers.



## Introduction

A critical aspect of green management in the tourism and hospitality sector is the compliance with policies. Green policies are environmentally friendly policies and are mainly concerned with the declaration of top management of its commitment to the environment (Hsieh, 2012:105). Policies state the ends to be pursued and they formally define the business approach and its attitude in its dealings with its stakeholders who include customers, employees, shareholders, and suppliers (Medlik, 1994). Policies suggest that green practices reflect an interest in the amelioration of environmental impacts emanating from the operations of a hotel (Miller, 2012:51). The adoption of environmental policy should assist managers to be more environmentally aware and compliant. The hotel company operating with an environmental policy indicates that it is more aware of environmental problems arising from its day-to-day operations (Brown, 1996:22). A study carried out by Brown (1996:18) concluded that although some companies have adopted an environmental policy, in general, the hotel sector is not taking a proactive approach to environmental concerns.

It is possible to consider environmental management as comprising a hierarchy of policies and actions, that is, global environmental policies, national policies, responsibility of business policies, and local action policies (Kirk, 1995:4). Policies may also suggest benchmarks for quality control in a hotel. Where an environmental policy has been formulated, everyone in the hotel organisation should understand the policy and what is expected of employees to achieve the environmental objectives and targets of the organisation (Hsieh, 2012:105). In addition to these measures, which focused mainly on internal factors of the hotel business strategy, Álvarez-Gil et al. (2001:462) included the development of green purchasing policies, green arguments in marketing campaigns, and demands for customer cooperation in environmental protection programs (e.g., voluntary change of towels) as well as external factors such as stakeholder influence and environmental regulation. Moreover, Bohadanowicz et al. (2011:802) advocate community initiatives, programmes to mitigate negative environmental impacts associated with hotel business operations and setting up green teams in charge of implementing the action plans.

Accordingly, concern for the natural environment would be expressed in corporate policy as well as eco-friendly business practices and an obligation by hotels to use resources responsibly (Jonker & De-Witte, 2006:1). Despite the increasing focus on the environment, few hotels have written environmental policies (Chung & Parker 2008:274; Mbasera *et al.*, 2016:6; Mensah & Blankson 2013:1215). Moreover, many hospitality operations are confronted with two opposed issues. On the one hand, operations such as hotels are trying to create and implement environmental policies, whereas, on the other hand, customers seeking services also expect to be pampered with hot water, high-pressure showers, freshly laundered linen, an ample supply of towels, abundant supplies of food and drink and airport shuttles (Barber 2012:2). The fact that policies and guidelines for employing more sustainable practices for hotels are not sufficient and, in some cases, absent, is of great concern for the future harmony between hotel operations and tourist needs and desires. Accordingly, this study was necessary to determine the impact of green management policies on hotel performance from the manager's perspective in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The study made a distinct literature contribution by identifying the perceptions of hotel managers with regard to the implementation of green management policies. The findings of the study revealed that applying green management policies affects the hotel positively by reducing operational costs especially on utilities such as electricity and water. By



implication, more profits are realised due to reduced bills of resources used in the hotel operations. Moreover, green management principles will witness a hotel implementing policies which result in customer satisfaction, market expansion, employee edification, competitiveness, and sustainability. However, the study also revealed that some of the hotel managers interviewed did not fully understand the concept of green management, which implied a need for training and increased awareness in green management principles.

## Literature review

In this study, the literature review is divided into sections which include environmental policies in hotels and guiding principles for environmental policy formulation in hotels.

### Environmental policies in hotels

Hotels in certain parts of the world have started to implement environmental policies and programmes by addressing such issues as energy saving, waste management and water conservation, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Issues addressed by some environmental policies in hotels**

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Issues addressed by policies to become green</b>
Marriot	“Reduce, reuse, recycle” programme
Red Roof Inns	“Staying red, going Green” programme
Rezidor	“Responsible business” programme
Taj Hotel Group	EARTH, (Environmental awareness & renewal at Taj Hotels) programme
Fairmount hotels	Green Partnership
Eco-meet	Greening our Greens “REACH (Rendering, Encouragement, Assistance, Care and Hope)”

**Source: Adapted from Hsieh (2012:105)**

Many other hotels have adopted the self-initiated environmental policies and programmes which are designed to meet the special needs of the customers, regulators and the public and have made their commitment to environmental protection (Hsieh, 2012:105). This commitment to minimising the hotels’ footprint on the planet is an essential component of their operating philosophy, often formalised in their environmental policy. The environmental policy acts as a guideline for setting environmental objectives and targets (Hsieh, 2012:3). Environmental policy strategy in hotels outlines the environmental principles and philosophy underpinning these principles (Hsieh, 2012:3). Some policies include practices, which can be undertaken in the hotel industry so that they can be more environmentally friendly, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of environmental best practices undertaken in the hotel industry to become more sustainable**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Environmental best practice undertaken</b>
<b>Water</b>	-Low flow fixtures -Greywater



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Rain water</li><li>-Reuse programmes (Moreo 2008, 2)</li><li>-Reduce waste</li></ul>
<b>Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-EMS</li><li>-Compact efflorescent lights</li><li>-Energy star efficient HVAC</li><li>-Renewable energy (Rogerson &amp; Sims 2012, 402)</li><li>-Occupancy sensors</li><li>-Reduce waste</li></ul>
<b>Solid Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Recycling (Timothy and Teye 2009, 86).</li><li>-Compositing</li><li>-Refillable amenities</li></ul>
<b>Air Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Low volatile organic compounds</li><li>-Air filtration</li><li>-Cut vehicle pollution</li></ul>
<b>Environmental purchasing:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Paper bleached without chlorine</li><li>-Paper made from recycled product</li><li>-Purchase of organic food</li><li>-Purchase locally grown food</li><li>-Purchase from environmentally responsible purveyors</li></ul>
<b>Community awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Green teams</li><li>-Conservation training</li><li>-Make an effort visible to guests</li></ul>
<b>Maintenance of permits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Building permits</li><li>-Compliance with legislation</li><li>-Policy</li><li>-Environmental education (Mensah &amp; Blankson, 2013)</li></ul>

**Source: Author's own compilation**

It is clear in Table 2 that greener hotels are now taking cognisance that hotel guests are becoming more and more conscious of environmental problems and have started to consider the environment in their choice of accommodation. The hotel industry is now conscious of this new trend and perceives the need to set policies in this respect. Without reducing the comfort of the clients, many efforts are being made in hotels to apply the best available practices and technological innovations. Such eco-friendly practices enable the hotel management to handle the environmental aspects related to its business operations (Mbasera *et al.*, 2016:5).



### **Guiding principles for environmental policy formulation in hotels**

In any industry, stakeholders are considered to be instrumental in influencing both corporate environmental responsiveness policies and strategies in large companies, but in the smaller family business, the owners make decisions about adopting green policies and innovations (Weng *et al.*, 2015:4999). Some of the fundamental principles that should govern environmental policy for the implementation of any tourism development include, among other things:

- Recognition of a two-way relationship between tourism and the environment, yielding possibilities of conservation through tourism and all its parts.
- Visitor management to reduce pressure.
- Environmental improvement for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- Sensitive development that respects and if possible enhances the environment.
- Responsible operation through ecologically sound practice in tourism businesses and the means of travel (Cooper *et al.*, 2005:371).

The South African government identified an urgent need for regional hotel managers to take greening initiatives seriously (Leonard & Dlamini 2014:2). This would involve the following principles:

- Setting up a functional greening committee, active in carrying out the environmental goals. The committee is composed of managers and representatives from hotel departments.
- Hotels interactively train all staff members on a regular basis on greening initiatives. This greening strategy would also entail creating awareness amongst guests on greening policies at the hotel and their participation and responsibilities in greening initiatives. In addition to visible signage on greening and requirements, reception informs guests upon check in about some of the greening initiatives that are in place in the hotel.
- The South African government saw the need to emphasise the need for greening by turning the responsible tourism guidelines of 2003 into an official policy that is monitored and managed by an appointed government green team. This team was to set industry-specific goals for all companies, establishments, and companies in the country with objectives that need to be met.
- The government penalties are harsher for non-compliance and with no tolerance approach to environmental damage (Enz & Siguaw, 2003; Goodwin *et al.*, 2002; Green Globe certification, 2013).

This meant that regional managers had to communicate with hotel managers on a regular basis to ensure that the hotel implements greening initiatives. However, results of a study carried out by Leonard and Dlamini (2014) indicated that at the macro level, lack of government support and policy direction prevented the tourism and hospitality industry from implementing greening initiatives. Moreover, lack of communication from regional managers to general hotel managers did not assist in implementing greening strategies at hotels (Leonard & Dlamini, 2014:7).

In Zimbabwe, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) observes a variety of principles that are used in environmental management (Environmental management Act 2016:1). These principles help to guide and shape the way people and all businesses interact with the environment. However, a study carried out in Zimbabwean hotels by Mbasera and Mutana (2012:1) revealed that although some hotels have a policy on environmental management, the policies are implemented at various levels. Implementation of responsible environmentally friendly management policies could improve if benchmarks were put in place to influence and affect the hotel's license renewal. The researchers recommended that government policies be put in place to increase the motivation for hoteliers to consider implementation of more responsible environmentally



friendly management practices (Mbasera & Mutana 2012:1). Some of the principles adopted by EMA in environmental management, which could help to guide and shape the way hotels interact with the environment include 'the polluter pays principle' (PPP). The PPP calls for anyone who disturbs or spoils the environment in any way to take the necessary corrective measures to rectify the environmental damage or pay the cost of remediation. This principle is based on the moral basis of responsibility as the environment has many uses for different people. Hence, their ability to meet their needs must not be compromised (Feresu, 2010:187). The purpose of the principle is to make industries absorb the negative externalities they create and to ensure a safe, clean and healthy environment (Environmental management Act Chapter 20:27). It was important to consider green management policies in the two countries that were studied in order to address the problems arising from human impact on the environment in these two developing countries. This was important because, often, many business operations exert a negative impact on human values such as good health or a clean and green environment. Accordingly, a study on determining the impact of green management policy in hotels is intended to deliberately identify and manage human activities in hotels with a view to prevent, reduce or mitigate harmful effects on natural resources, humans and the environment (Knill & Liefferink 2012).

## **Research Methodology**

In this study on determining the impact of green management policies on hotel performance, a qualitative research approach was adopted to reach the goals of this study. However, the selection of the qualitative research paradigm with the multiple case study as the research strategy was based on the appropriateness of the nature of the study. Evidence drawn from multiple cases is often considered more compelling and strengthens the overall study. In this study, primary data were collected from managers in eight (8) hotels, four (4) in South Africa and four (4) in Zimbabwe, through personal interviews.

The key instruments used were the interview guide as well as personal and telephone interviews. Consent was obtained from all the participants prior to the interviews. Interviewees were assured that the data would be kept confidential and that there would be no mention of their names

Data analysis was presented through the use of data displayed in tables and detailed write-ups as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994:10). Data analysis took the following steps formulated by Creswell (2009). These include: Step 1: Organise and prepare data for analysis; Step 2: Read through all data, gain a general sense of the information and reflect on the meaning; Step 3: Conduct analysis based on the specific theoretical approach and method (This often involves coding or organising related segments of data into categories); Step 4: Generate a description of the setting or people and identify themes from the coding. Search for theme connections; Step 5: represent data within a research report; and Step 6: Interpret the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009).

## **Discussion of results**

The findings of the study are discussed under two main headings, demographic information and the impact of green management policies on hotel performance.

### **The demographic profile of respondents**

Regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondents who were interviewed in the hotels that were studied, two were females whose ages were twenty-four and twenty-

five years, while age range of the males was thirty to forty-eight years. The managers in these hotels are relatively young. Only one of the managers holds a diploma in hotel management; three are first degree holders, while the rest hold postgraduate qualifications. This suggests that the managers may possess an ability to implement policies accurately once they are made available to them. The respondents had worked in their current positions for durations ranging from one to sixteen years. It was also quite noteworthy that the hotels that were studied had been in operation for a number of years ranging from eleven to twenty-six years. This implies that they are well acquainted with the hotel business and could be trusted to supply reliable data.

**Table 3: Demographic information of the interviewed hotel managers**

Aspect	Case P1	Case P2	Case P3	Case P4	Case P5	Case P6	Case P7	Case P8
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male
<b>Age</b>	35	38	45	30	35	25	24	48
<b>Nationality</b>	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	South African	South African	South African	South African
<b>Level of Education</b>	Post Grad	Post Grad	Degree	Degree	Diploma	Post Grad	Post Grad	Degree
<b>Location of hotel</b>	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	S/Africa	S/Africa	S/Africa	S/Africa
<b>Star grading</b>	5 Star	3 Star	5 Star	4 Star	4 Star	3 Star	4 Star	3 Star
<b>Capacity of hotel</b>	250 rooms	151 rooms	250 rooms	151 rooms	31-75 rooms	30 rooms	30 rooms	76-150 rooms
<b>Hotel number of years operating</b>	26+	26+	26+	26+	11-15	6-10	11-15	26+
<b>Managerial position</b>	General Manager							
<b>Years working in current position</b>	5	6	5	8	6-7	1	2	16

Author's own compilation

### **Impact of Green Management policy on hotel performance**

The questions guiding the study sought to place into perspective aspects which included the impact of hotel green management policy on hotel performance as well as ways in which green management affects hotel performance. In the following subset, a few themes were identified (Table 4) concerning ways in which green management policy affects hotel performance, leading to the conclusion of the study.

Based on the results of the interviews, five themes (*reducing cost, customer satisfaction, market expansion, employee edification, competitiveness, and sustainability*) were identified. These themes are the factors in this study which describe the impact on



performance resulting from the perceptions of managers in hotels when green practices and policies are practised in hotel establishments.

**Table 4: Ways in which green management policy affects hotel performance**

Hotel case	Impact of hotel green management policy on hotel performance	How green management affects hotel performance
Case 1	Making employees and guests aware of the importance of saving  Good cause in society helps on brand value and brand equity. This finding suggests that there is a need for employee training and brand recognition	Green management affects the hotel by reducing costs
Case 2	Help raise the return on sales  Hotel saves money through green initiatives  Customers will be happy. This implies that there are cost saving and customer satisfaction	Green management affects the hotel by reducing costs.  Customer satisfaction
Cases 3	The hotel will receive more business as more customers will come, resulting in market expansion	Market expansion
Case 4	More customers will visit the hotel  Employees will be taught how to conserve electricity. Therefore, there is market expansion and employee edification	The hotel realises more profits. Moreover, there is a reduction in costs.  Market expansion
Case 5	The hotel is doing very little on green management and considers that performance will depend on what needs to be changed by the policy.	This leads to increased profit (reduced cost) and employee edification
Case 6	Having green management policy will help the hotel to keep pace with the rest of the world. The sub-theme is keeping up with change	Competitiveness / sustainability
Case 7	The green management policy will help the hotel clients to make repeat visits, in essence, there is customer loyalty	Customer satisfaction and loyalty
Case 8	Green management policy helps the hotel to protect resources and leads to continuity in business as there <b>is the sustainable use of resources</b>	There is competitive advantage / Sustainability

Author's own compilation



### **Theme 1: Reducing costs**

Adopting a green management policy makes employees and guests aware of the importance of saving resources such as electricity, water, and even financial resources. In line with that finding So et al. (2013:31) observe that, to be successful, the business needs to be efficient and well managed as well as offer quality products and services at reasonable costs. They also have to demonstrate their commitment to the environment in fulfillment of their stakeholder expectations, including customers and employees. Costs of electricity are reduced when occupancy sensors or timers are installed in low traffic areas. Electricity costs are also reduced when renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal energy are used. The hotels reduce costs of water by employing water efficiency and conservation methods (Wang, 2012:141). In this study, Cases 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 said that green management affects the hotel positively by reducing costs of utilities such as electricity and water. Cases 5 and 6 added that green management benefits the hotel financially by switching off air conditioners, using energy-saving electric bulbs and switching off lights when the room is not in use. This finding is affirmed by Cvelbar and Dwyer (2016:496) who consider the reduction of costs of resources to be an item which falls under general financial performance, an indicator relevant for any company with profitability as a performance objective.

### **Theme 2: Customer satisfaction**

In this study, the findings revealed in cases 4, 7 and 8 that more green customers visit a hotel with green policies, thus compelling the hotel to enhance its customer care skills through employee training on conservation of resources. A hotel with a green management policy seeks to understand the purchasing behaviour of its guests to ensure customer satisfaction throughout the stay of the guests. Hall et al. (2016:2) support this view, noting that the green attitude of consumers is a key mediator of their intention to stay at a green hotel if they are satisfied with the services. Satisfied customers regularly bring repeat business to a hotel helping managers to predict future demand for their products and services and ensure that they have sufficient provisions to satisfy their green customers (Nezakati *et al.*, 2015:59). Relationships with customers is a performance factor that covers issues concerning a hotel and its guests, necessary for the projection of a good image of the establishment, customer loyalty and repeat business (Cvelbar & Dwyer, 2016:496).

### **Theme 3: Market expansion**

Waseema (2017) argues that green hotels gain more business as more customers visit the establishment, implying enhanced customer loyalty and possible market expansion through word of mouth marketing. Managers can use effective marketing strategies that induce the green purchasing behaviour, thus expanding the market to individuals who perceive themselves to be an integral part of the natural environment (Nezakati *et al.*, 2015:59). In this study, cases 2, 3, 4 and 7 mentioned customer loyalty, observing that customers always come back for service, resulting in market expansion and thus the hotel benefits financially. This is in agreement with Hall et al. (2016) who affirm that customer loyalty leads to considerable market expansion.

### **Theme 4: Employee edification**

In this study, cases 5 and 6 applauded green management policies saying that they lead to employee edification. For any business brand to be recognisable and to deliver quality service associated with the brand, it is essential for it to engage in training and development of staff who are essential to ensuring that guests enjoy symbolic benefits, liking and yearning for a service (Sallam, 2015:44). One good example is a memorable experience



during a guest stay in a hotel resulting in possible repeat business because services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained employees who are competent in their areas of expertise. In hotel establishments with green management policies, there is a possibility to form environmental committees and green teams who are responsible for ensuring that all environmental practices in which the hotel participates are timeously and correctly performed (Wang, 2012:143). The training of employees and guests on green practices is made possible by guidance through a green management policy. This falls in line with one of the key principles that govern environmental policy given in literature that points to the need for training on environmental improvement for the benefit of service providers and visitors (Cooper *et al.*, 2005:371). Moreover, implementation of environmentally friendly practices leads to a great change in employee behaviour and attitude towards eco-friendly business. Such greening efforts do not only contribute to fulfilling the needs of employees in the workplace but lower operational costs by reducing the consumption of resources (Chung *et al.*, 2016:705).

### **Theme 5: Competitiveness**

Adopting a green management policy helps to raise the return on sales as the hotel delivers quality services and brands that are generally expected by clients, thus improving hotel competitiveness within the environment in which it operates (Sallam, 2015:44). In the market, green management affects hotel performance in that there is a competitive advantage as customers look for hotels that manage their waste, conserve water and electricity. This is consistent with literature as Millar *et al.*, (2012:395) argue that 85% of leisure travellers consider themselves environmentally conscious, that is, “green” consumers. As a result, the hotel benefits financially, increasing its competitive advantage in the market as customers look for green hotels.

### **Theme 6: Sustainability**

Chung *et al.*, (2016:705) note that green hotel establishments adopt policies and patterns that minimise the use of natural resources. Such hotels avoid the use of toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of business, taking into consideration the needs of future generations. Cases 6 and 8 note that a green management policy helps the hotel to enjoy continuity and sustainability of business as resources are conserved and employees are motivated. Moreover, green management policy helps the hotel to protect resources and leads sustainable use of resources and continuity in business.

### **Findings and Recommendation**

It is clear from the results of the study that the following significant findings were identified as a result of implementing green management policies which influence the performance of the hotel.

Firstly, *reduction in cost* is the most important theme based on the responses of the interviewees. Secondly, *employee edification* is another factor resulting from the development of green management policies in hotels. Thirdly, *competitiveness* of a hotel resulting from implementing green management policies emerged as an important aspect of this research.

It is recommended that hoteliers should find the best possible options to reduce costs through environmental management and include them in their hotel policies for greening as reduction of cost is one of the items relating to general financial performance,. It is further recommended that hotel managers embrace green management policies not only for competitiveness in their operations, but for employee edification. Further research on



rating the importance of each performance factor and gaining an awareness of all the items of the performance factors may be a prerequisite action taken to implement policies and practices which will make a positive impact on hotel performance.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the possibility of a link between green management policies and hotel performance in two Sub-Saharan developing countries from the manager's perspective. The impact of green management policies on hotel performance has raised on-going debates in which no conclusive positions have been arrived at. Green management policies, regulations, and goals in hotels are to some extent formulated in response to genuine environmental concerns of both internal and external stakeholders.

The main findings confirm that green management affects the hotel positively by reducing operational costs, especially of utilities such as electricity and water. By implication, more profits are realised due to reduced bills of resources used in the operations of the hotel. Electricity is saved by switching off air conditioners and lights and using energy savers for lights. Moreover, the findings of this study imply that a hotel that practises green management will enjoy the positive general financial performance, customer satisfaction, and employee edification. The possibility of market expansion, competitiveness of business, sustainability, customer satisfaction and loyalty increases as more clients seek green hotels that use resources sustainably.

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