

Sustainability in Luxury Hotels: Between a Necessary Evolution and a Way of Differentiation

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Abstract : For a long time, luxury hotels devoted little effort to sustainability, and also scientists were fairly attracted to this subject. While some luxury hotels are now increasingly showing engagement in sustainability, the extent of their commitment varies greatly, which makes the whole industry quite intransparent when it comes to sustainable practices. In general, each hotel company and each individual hotel can decide for themselves to what extent they commit to sustainability as long as there are no legally prescribed minimum requirements in the respective countries. Despite pleading and compelling calls from industry experts and representatives of relevant sustainability institutions, this is still reality - although climate change and environmental disasters as well as poor treatment of workers and the local population are also issues in progressive and hotel-dense European cities. This paper therefore deals with the question which sustainability activities (environmental and social) have been established by European luxury hotels so far and to what extent these activities are rather a way to differentiate in the market or are simply evaluated as part of a necessary adaptation of the luxury hotel industry. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with both industry experts and hotel representatives in order to obtain a diverse picture of the current status. The study revealed that a clear agenda is missing so far, which takes luxury hotels by the hand and supports them in the process towards more sustainable hotel management. While a large part of the luxury hotels addressed have already established initiatives and activities regarding sustainability, they are extremely diverse, and range from recyclable toiletries use to comprehensive concepts for energy generation. The study's findings provide insights for both practitioners who seek to implement sustainability in a luxury hotel setting as well as offer an extension of the existing research base on sustainability in hospitality.

Keywords : luxury hospitality, qualitative research methods, sustainability, sustainable hotels

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