SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND BENEFITS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR OF ZIMBABWE

Ngoni Courage SHERENI[*]
Lupane State University, Department of Accounting and Finance, Lupane, Zimbabwe ;
University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality, Johannesburg, South Africa, e-mail: ncshereni@gmail.com

Jarkko SAARINEN
University of Oulu, Geography Research Unit, Oulu, Finland;
University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality, Johannesburg, South Africa, Department of Civil and
Industrial Engineering, Sustainable Destination Development, Uppsala University, Sweden, e-mail: jarkko.saarinen@oulu.fi

Christian M. ROGERSON
School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, e-mail: chrismr@uj.ac.za

Abstract: A vibrant international literature exists around the sustainable practices adopted by accommodation service establishments in the Global North. Literature on sustainability practices by the hospitality sector in the Global South, particularly Southern Africa is still limited. The central aim in this study was to identify the sustainable practices adopted by hospitality establishments in Zimbabwe and to ascertain the advantages of adopting such practices. The research involved a structured questionnaire administered to 125 respondents of hotels, lodges and guest houses. Data analysis involved the application of chi-squared tests to determine the differences in sustainable practices by hotels, lodges and guest houses and an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) undertaken to analyse the benefits of sustainable practices. The findings revealed that practices that result in regulatory compliance and those that can be adopted at a lower cost are most popular in the hospitality sector of Zimbabwe. Three factors were generated from the EFA, namely (1) operations management, (2) partnership and inclusive development, and (3) environmental management. Overall, the research contributes to the limited literature on destinations in the Global South concerning sustainable practices pursued by the hospitality industry.

Key words: hospitality industry, accommodation, sustainable practices, Zimbabwe, Global South

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INTRODUCTION

Accommodation is one of the most significant sub-sectors of the tourism industry, and it represents one of the most critical agents of contemporary global tourism change (Saarinen and Rogerson, 2021). The hospitality industry creates a significant ecological footprint on the environment based on its resource-intensive operations which consume large amounts of energy and water (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Mensah, 2014; Chan et al., 2018; Chen, 2019; Dube and Nhamo, 2021a). This coupled with carbon emissions exerts a strain on the environment which is supporting the operations of these hospitality enterprises (Sharma et al., 2018; Fatoki, 2021; Thai and Nguyen, 2022). Not only does the hospitality industry impact environmental sustainability but also it affects issues related on economic and social sustainability (Melissen et al., 2016; Eshun and Appaiah, 2018; Verma et al., 2018). The potential negative impacts posed by the hospitality industry make sustainability initiatives imperative for the future of the industry and its development paths (Melissen et al., 2016; Claudia et al., 2017; Dube and Nhamo, 2021b).

Over the past two decades, the sustainability of accommodation service operations has been the subject of research by various scholars in the field of tourism and hospitality (Ismail and Rogerson, 2016; Rogerson and Sims, 2012; Chen, 2019; Dube and Nhamo, 2021b). Research has shown that sustainability in the hospitality industry is now a top priority and that there is a growing consensus that hospitality businesses can contribute positively to the sustainability agenda (Butler, 2008; Chou, 2014; Wijesinghe, 2014; Jones et al., 2016). Many of the leading international hospitality brands, such as Marriott, Hilton, Fairmont, Scandic and Starwood, have introduced sustainability programmes that already have significantly transformed their operations (Bohdanowicz, 2007; Butler, 2008; Bohdanowicz et al., 2011). Arguably, leading international hospitality corporations pro-actively innovate strategies which are oriented around sustainable practices because of the advantages associated with this development concept (Houdré, 2008; Bohdanowicz et al., 2011; Saarinen, 2022). Among the benefits of adopting sustainable practices in the hospitality industry are the reduction of operating costs and increasing consumer demand for environmentally-friendly products and services (Eggeling, 2010; Cometa, 2012; Shereni, 2022).

Overall, a vibrant international literature exists around sustainable practices in the accommodation services sector of tourism. It is evident, however, that most of the existing scholarship on sustainability practices refers to large hospitality establishments which are operating mainly in the environment of the Global North. Much less is known about the adoption of sustainable practices in the resource-constrained environments of the Global South (Shereni, 2022). The aim in this

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[*] Corresponding author

study is to offer a contribution to address this knowledge gap. The research seeks to analyse the sustainability practices of hospitality establishments in Zimbabwe and ascertain the benefits of adopting such practices. The case study context is of particular interest as in recent investigations Zimbabwe has been styled as a 'distressed tourism destination' with ongoing political and economic challenges that impact tourism development and recovery (Woyo and Slabbert, 2020; Musavengane et al., 2021; Woyo, 2021; Woyo and Slabbert, 2021a). Although the tourism sector is the third most important contributor to gross domestic product, over the past two decades the performance of Zimbabwe tourism has been unpromising (Woyo and Woyo, 2019; Woyo et al., 2019). According to Mkono (2010) and Woyo and Slabbert (2021b) the emascalated performance of tourism is in large measure accounted for by political instability and of the negative international image of the country as a result of the violent land reform programme instituted in 2000. The findings of this study provide a perspective from the Global South concerning how sustainability is practised by the hospitality sector as well as its potential benefits for destinations in these uncertain times for African tourism (Rogerson and Baum, 2020; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2021; Saarinen and Rogerson, 2021). The remainder of the paper unfolds through the following sections of discussion which deal *inter alia*, with a literature overview, methodology, study findings, discussion and conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Sustainable practices by the hospitality industry

Mounting evidence exists that the hospitality industry in the Global North has embraced sustainability in its three forms which are environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Jones et al., 2016). Motivation and strategies towards the implementation of sustainability practices vary. In general, the sustainability strategies by the industry can be based on reacting to external pressures and regulative governance frameworks in the operational environment (Saarinen and Gill, 2019). This reactive approach has been highlighted in climate change adaptation studies in the accommodation sector, for example (Saarinen et al., 2012; Hambira et al., 2013). In contrast, there can be highly pro-active adaptation strategies towards sustainability practices that are driven by learning and decision-making aiming to improve knowledge and adaptive capacity before estimated need to transform the business operations in the future (see Walters, 1986).

Greening initiatives are by far the most popular sustainable practices in the hospitality industry and these are categorized into three broad areas: energy saving, waste reduction, and water-saving (Kuščer and Mihalič, 2019; Luo and Fan, 2019). Aligned with green practices is green certification which is widespread in the hospitality sector and used by customers to determine whether an establishment is adhering to sustainable practices (Baddeley and Font, 2011; Millar and Baloglu, 2011; Ricaurte et al., 2012; Melissen et al., 2016; Alameeri et al., 2018). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives are seen as a common sustainable practice engaged in by hospitality businesses (Kimaro and Saarinen, 2020). Ghaderi et al. (2019) note that as the tourism industry causes disruptive socio-economic and environmental impacts CSR activities are increasingly important in militating against adverse effects. CSR initiatives can include the promotion of gender equality, environmental conservation, funding community education initiatives, charitable donations, supporting local arts, waste management, and water conservation (Bharadwaj and Shyju, 2020).

Internationally common 'greening' initiatives by hospitality establishments include the use of energy-efficient lighting, recycling of waste, use of environmentally-safe cleaning products as well as allowing guests to decide whether linen should be changed or not. In addition, the use of greywater, replacement of inefficient heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems, and the fitment of low flow water systems in rooms are further manifestations of sustainable practices in accommodation establishments (Millar and Baloglu, 2011). In Ghana, Mensah (2006, 2013, 2014) observes an array of environmental sustainability practices pursued by hotels that range from energy and water conservation, eco-labelling to environmental management systems. Verma (2014) identifies other strategies by hospitality organizations such as using serviettes and toilet paper made from 100% recycled paper, natural beauty spa products free from preservatives, eco-labelled insect killers, clean power sources, use of LED lights, local sourcing of products and using 100% natural soap and shampoos. Beyond these environmentally-friendly practices, Verma et al. (2018) maintain that the hospitality industry also often implements green supply chain management (GSCM), which entails variously the use of environmentally-friendly raw materials, green manufacturing, eco-friendly packaging, proper disposal of waste and green marketing. Manganari et al. (2016: 223) assert that "green marketing in the lodging industry involves the effective creation, communication and delivery of green value through product and service offerings". Green marketing communication promotes an organisation's sustainability initiatives in order to persuade customers to participate in such initiatives (Lee and Oh, 2014). Regardless of the wide adoption of sustainable practices by the broader tourism industry, Robinson et al. (2019) argue that the social dimension of sustainability practices has been given lesser attention as compared to the environmental and economic dimensions.

Benefits of adopting sustainable practices

The advantages of hospitality enterprises adopting sustainable practices have been pinpointed in several investigations. For Del Reyes-Santiago et al. (2019) the justification for hotels to go 'green' is related to the reputational advantages and the potential to attract and retain environmentally-conscious customers. Butler (2008) further notes that 'going green' will assist hospitality organisations to achieve energy savings that have an economic impact on the bottom line and parallel even to increasing the Available Daily Rate (ADR). Verma (2014) claims that sustainability practices, such as green supply chain management, aids the hospitality industry to reduce costs by a margin of between 5-20%. Additionally, Susskind (2014) contends that guests are more likely to show commitment to sustainable practices by paying a premium price when organisations communicate their activities to them. A premium is usually charged on green products to recoup additional costs of hospitality establishments (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). A significant finding is that 73% of millennials are prepared to pay for sustainable properties as compared to only 51% of the generation of baby boomers (UNWTO and OAS, 2018).

Environmental management allows hotels to differentiate their product and appeal to environmentally-conscious customers (Claver-Cortés et al., 2007). By engaging in sustainable practices, accommodation service providers can benefit from positive public relations, which assists in opening new markets and increasing demand for their products (Bader, 2005). Research has shown that given a choice between an ecological hotel and an ordinary hotel, customers are more likely to choose the former (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). In addition, sustainable hospitality properties are seen as a good investment option as they can generate high returns for investors. A green building is considered attractive to investors as it is deemed a 'safe' investment with less likelihood of experiencing lawsuits from the inability to adhere to environmental regulations (Bader, 2005; Butler, 2008; Eggeling, 2010; Zengeni et al., 2013).

Seeliger and Turok (2015) maintain that sustainable practices also benefit the well-being of employees and the residents where the property is located. Indeed, Stylos and Vassiliadis (2015) maintain that tourism businesses can benefit from improved employee-employer relationships by adopting sustainable practices. Eggeling (2010) avers that hotels could contribute to a positive relationship between the locals and the tourists by practising social sustainability (buying local produce, including local dishes on the menu and employing locals) therefore helping to reduce tension between the two groups. In addition, corporate sustainability ensures that organisations might enjoy a competitive advantage by enhancing their reputation and building a solid brand appeal (Jones et al., 2016). Zavyalova et al. (2018) argue that the level of business engagement in sustainability issues can be a significant determinant of its competitiveness
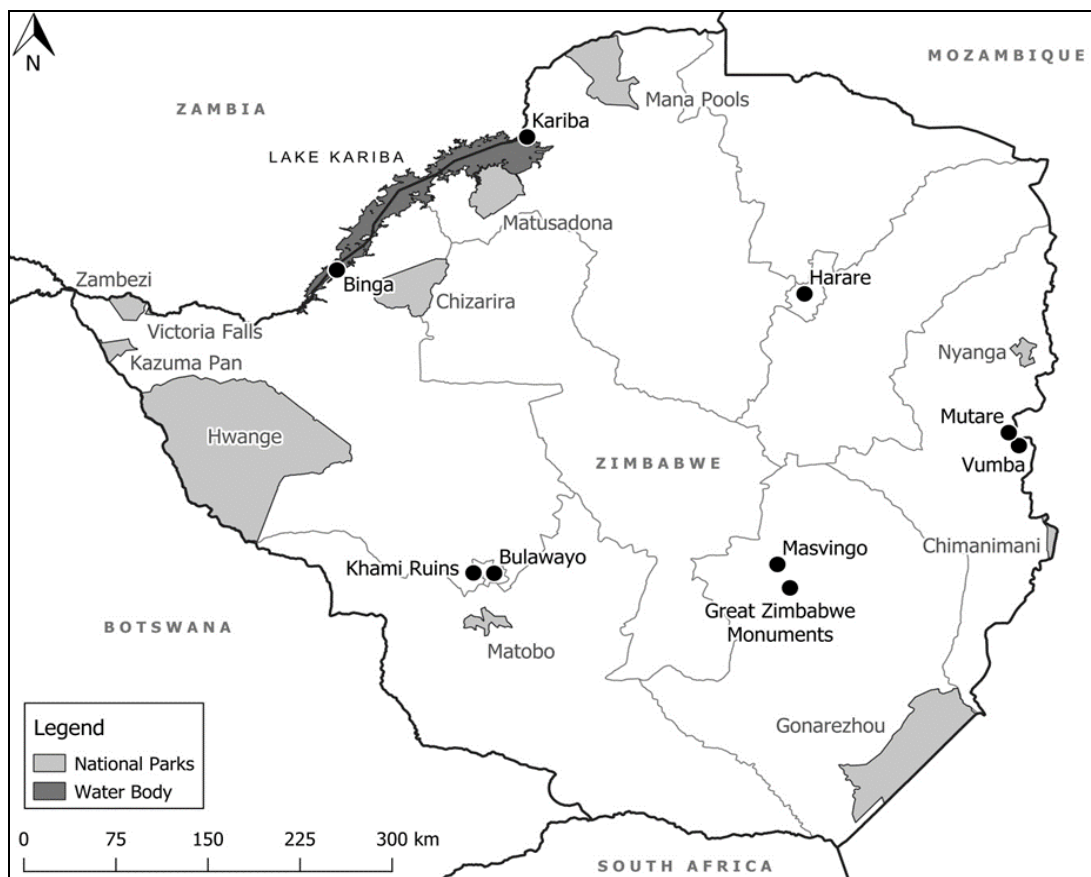

Figure 1. Location of major tourism areas in Zimbabwe (Source: Authors)

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a quantitative approach by surveying hospitality establishments operating in the main tourist locations of Zimbabwe (Figure 1). The leading tourist areas are Harare, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Eastern Highlands (Mutare), Masvingo and Kariba. Victoria Falls is the major focus for international tourists visiting the country (Dube and Nhamo, 2020; Sibanda and Cheer, 2021). In all other locations domestic tourists are the primary source market for local accommodation service providers. Random sampling was applied to registered hospitality establishments located in these tourist areas. Respondents were drawn from hotels, lodges and guest houses. A self-administered structured questionnaire was developed based on literature to determine the sustainability practices of hospitality operators in Zimbabwe and their benefits. Questions asked included a set of practices and benefits that respondents would select to highlight the circumstances of their organisations. Multiple response questions on sustainability practices were extracted from literature so that respondents would select the ones they implement. Scaled questions were used on the questions that sought the benefits associated with implementing sustainable practices. A five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to gauge respondents' opinions. A total of 125 usable respondents were collected. Descriptive and inferential statistics were generated using SPSS version 25. A combination of frequency distribution, Chi-squared test and Exploratory Factor Analysis were used in this study. The profile of the sample in terms of different forms of accommodation establishment was that 21

respondents were from hotels, 49 from lodges and 55 from guest houses. In terms of designation 46 respondents occupied a supervisory role, 33 were head of departments 30 were general managers and 16 owners of the surveyed establishment.

RESULTS
Common sustainable practices in the hospitality sector

Respondents were asked to identify the sustainable practices they engage in their establishments from a list of nineteen activities (Table 1). It was disclosed that the most frequent practices indicated by respondents include the use of energy-saving light bulbs (selected by 92.8 % of the respondents), adherence to fair pricing (79.2%), proper waste disposal (76.8%), linen and towel reuse policy (74.4%), payment of salaries in line with national employment council (NEC) grades (72.8%), and the employment of locals (70.4%). A disaggregated analysis of the sustainable practices was conducted across the three sub-sectors of accommodation, namely hotels, guest houses and lodges. This confirmed that across each of these sub-sectors the use of energy-saving bulbs is the most widespread practice. It was observed that among hotels, the prioritization of local companies in the supply chain was a widespread practice but in lodges and guest houses this was accorded only limited prioritization. Other common practices in hotels are the provision of employee benefits (such as pension funds, health insurance and funeral cover), installation of energy management systems, promotion of local arts, adherence to green certification standards, and the recycling of waste. Of significance is that hotels implement sustainable practices that often require substantial capital as they do not have the resource constraints that limit small lodges and guest houses. In addition, as most hotels are part of chains corporate policies compel them to prioritise and invest in sustainability initiatives.

Among Zimbabwe's lodges and guest houses the use of solar energy is common mostly because their energy requirements are lower as compared to hotels, making it cheaper for them to install solar technologies. Recycling of waste, adhering to green certification standards, promotion of local arts, use of refillable soap dispensers and adoption of energy management systems (EMS) are less common in guest houses and lodges because of high costs. Practices such as linen reuse policy, employing locals and use of local products in menu design are less costly to implement and hence are more widely taken-up in the less well-resourced cohort of small-scale lodges and guest house establishments. Chi-square tests revealed that significant relationships exist between sustainable hospitality practices and sub-sector of the hospitality industry at p<0.05 significance level (Table 1). The following practices were perceived as significantly differently across hotel, lodges and guest houses respondents: prioritization of local companies in the hotel supply chain, promotion of local arts, installation of refillable soap dispensers, and installation of Energy Management Systems (EMS). The Chi-square test further confirmed that these practices are significant in hotels as compared to the small scale establishments (guest houses and lodges).

Table 1. Common sustainable practices in the hospitality industry (n=125)

Sustainable practices	Total		Hotels		Lodges		Guest houses		Chi-square (χ2)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	χ2 value	P-value
Use of energy saving light bulbs	116	92.8	20	95.2	44	89.8	52	94.5	1.099	.557
Adhering to fair pricing	99	79.2	17	81.0	40	81.6	42	76.4	.484	.785
Proper waste disposal practices	96	76.8	18	85.7	40	81.6	38	69.1	3.413	.181
Enforcing linen reuse policy	93	74.4	19	90.5	38	77.6	36	65.5		0.67
Pay salaries according to the National Employment Council (NEC) grades	91	72.8	19	90.5	36	73.5	36	65.5	4.823	.090
Employing a significant number of locals	88	70.4	17	81.0	36	73.5	35	63.6	2.551	.279
Use of local products in menu design	85	68.0	16	76.2	34	69.4	35	63.6	1.172	.557
Proper waste water management practices	83	66.4	15	71.4	34	69.4	34	61.8	.952	.621
Employee benefits such as health insurance, funeral cover & pension funds	81	64.8	17	81.0	30	61.2	34	61.8	2.891	.236
Prioritize local companies in the hotel supply chain	78	62.4	20	95.2	27	55.1	31	56.4	11.618	.003*
Organisational policies that provides for growth of employees	74	59.2	14	66.7	26	53.1	34	61.8	1.405	.495
Use of low flow shower systems in bathrooms	71	56.8	12	57.1	28	57.1	31	56.4	.008	.996
Use of solar energy	62	49.6	7	33.3	27	55.1	28	50.9	2.854	.240
Recycling of waste	60	48.0	14	66.7	22	44.9	24	43.6	3.540	.170
Adhering to green certification standards	54	43.2	11	52.4	21	42.9	22	40	.953	.621
Use of local themes in building designs and names	52	41.6	10	47.6	20	40.8	22	40	.384	.826
Promotion of local arts (gift shop with local products)	45	36.0	13	61.0	19	38.8	13	23.6	9.929	.007*
Installation of refillable soap dispensers	43	34.4	12	57.1	14	28.6	17	30.9	5.848	.054*
Installation of Energy Management Systems (EMS)	31	24.8	13	61.9	13	26.5	4	9.1	22.859	.000*

Note: *significant at the p < 0.05 significance level Source: Authors

Benefits of practising sustainability

The benefits of using sustainable practices were investigated by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) carried out using principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation in SPSS (25.0). Twenty-two items measuring the benefits of practising sustainability were subjected to EFA in order to identify underlying dimensions and constructs that help to categorize and explain relationships among the items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine if EFA is applicable to this data. The results disclose that the KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.836 is above the acceptable standard of 0.6. According to Worthington and Whittaker (2006) this means that the sample is adequate to run an exploratory factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at P<0.001, which further confirms that the data is suitable for EFA to be applied. The principal component analysis using a criterion of Eigenvalues above one combined with the scree plot analysis yielded three factors which explain 54.8% of the variance. The three factors are (1) operations management, (2) partnership and inclusive development, and (3) environmental management. All items with a factor loading of above 0.4 were considered to be important and were

retained on the factor they were loaded onto. Items that were cross-loaded onto two or more factors were retained under a factor which they could be best interpreted. Cronbach's coefficient was used to test for reliability of items in each factor, and all the factors had sufficient reliability above the threshold of 0.7. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

The first factor termed 'operations management' accounts for 37.1% of the variance with seven items loaded on it. Test of reliability on this factor yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.825 which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.7. This factor constitutes items that relate to improving the operational efficiency of hospitality organisations. Issues such as employee job satisfaction, guest satisfaction, reduced absenteeism at the workplace, and attracting more customers were identified under this factor. The second factor, 'partnership and inclusive development', consisted of eight items which explain 11% of the variance. This factor has high internal reliability, as shown by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.858.

Benefits loaded onto this factor are concerned with forging partnerships in various areas as well as promoting an inclusive approach to development. Promotion of sustainable agriculture had the highest factor loading under this factor, followed by promoting the wellbeing and participation of community members, fostering partnerships for sustainable development, improved health and welfare of employees, and improved company reputation. The third factor, 'environmental management' had seven items accounting for 6.7% of the variance. This factor passed the reliability test with a Cronbach's coefficient of 0.861. This factor is composed of the environmental benefits of practising sustainability. Items loaded under this factor include lower energy usage, combating climate change, protection of fragile ecosystems and lower water usage, promoting the use of sustainable and modern energy, and the sustainable management of water resources among other benefits.

The results of this study revealed a varied adoption of sustainability practices by large and small establishments. Small establishments were noted to adopt strategies that are cost effective because of their constrained financial resources. On the other hand hotels as large establishments have the capacity to fully adopt sustainable practices. On the benefits of adopting sustainable practices operations management dominated the benefits sought. This seems to suggest that hospitality businesses in this study adopt practices that make business sense to them by improving their operational efficiency.

Table 2. Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (n=125)

Benefits of practising sustainability	Factor Loadings	Eigen values	Percentage Variance	Percentage cumu-lative Variance	α	Mean Scores
Factor 1: Operations management		**8.164**	**37.1%**	**37.1%**	**0.825**	**3.80**
Results in high job satisfaction among employees	.866					
Results in high guest satisfaction levels	.786					
Helps to end poverty in all its forms	.776					
Reduced absenteeism at the workplace	.717					
Helps to make human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable	.505					
Helps to attract more customers	.491					
Promotes the construction of resilient and sustainable infrastructure	.466					
Factor 2: Partnership and inclusive development		**2.422**	**11.0%**	**48.1%**	**.858**	**3.32**
Promotes sustainable agriculture	.734					
Promotes the wellbeing and participation of community members	.653					
Fosters partnerships for sustainable development	.619					
Improved health and welfare of employees	.567					
Improved company's reputation	.567					
Promotes multicultural understanding and tolerance among people from different cultural and ethnical backgrounds	.550					
Promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities	.514					
Helps to achieve gender equality and empower minority groups	.503					
Factor 3: Environmental management factors		**1.464**	**6.7%**	**54.8%**	**0.861**	**4.0**
Results in lower energy usage	.796					
Helps to fight climate change	.795					
Protects fragile ecosystems like wetlands, mountains, forests, inland water bodies as well as preserving threatened species	.700					
Results in lower water usage	.689					
Promotes the use of sustainable and modern energy	.664					
Promotes sustainable management of water resources	.424					
Promotes sustainable production and consumption of resources	.409					

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation (Source: Authors)

DISCUSSION

This study sought to identify the sustainability practices undertaken by hospitality establishments in Zimbabwe as well as the benefits associated with such practices. The analysis of sustainable practices reveals that the most widespread sustainable practices in the country's hospitality industry are those that are linked to regulatory compliance. This reflects a reactive or passive implementation of sustainability strategies in the industry (see Saarinen, 2022). Indeed, hospitality organizations readily adopt practices that avert legal consequences that come with non-compliance as both regulatory and corporate watchdog groups are seen to be putting pressure on businesses to become more sustainable (Jose and Lee, 2007). Legitimation informs sustainability in the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe as it helps establishments avoid lawsuits related to non-compliance and protects the reputation of organisations. On sustainability awareness in the hospitality industry, respondents indicated a high awareness of sustainability policies put in place by the regulatory authority. This explains why legitimation is at the top of sustainable practices as establishments are conscious of regulatory policies they should adhere to. Practices such

as installation of energy-saving bulbs, paying of salaries according to the National Employment Council grades, fair pricing, and proper disposal of waste were widespread in Zimbabwe because of their legal implications. This finding concerning regulatory compliance is in line with that recorded in other research in sub-Saharan Africa. For example Mensah (2006) pinpoints that urban hotels in Ghana mainly are concerned with issues of regulatory compliance in their sustainable practices.

The research revealed that also practices that do not require much capital investment were those most widespread; correspondingly, high capital investments required for certain sustainability practices were a constraint and deterrence resulting in a lower uptake. Such practices include employment of locals, prioritizing local companies in the supply chain, and use of local products in menu design. This was significant particularly in small establishments that are in most cases constrained financially. Adherence to green certification standards, sustainable building designs, installation of Energy Management Systems (EMS) and installation of refillable soap dispensers were noted to have a lower uptake especially in lodges and guest houses because of their cost implications. These findings resonate with similar research conducted in other countries in the Global South. In Vietnam Trang et al. (2018) observed that hospitality enterprises, most especially small establishments, are not committed to implementing sustainable practices mainly because of the huge investment requirements. Likewise, in a study conducted in Ghana, Eshun and Appiah (2018) demonstrated that the prohibitive costs of acquiring green technology could lead hotels to focus on less costly practices. Agyeiwaah (2019) further showed that cost issues and the lack of financial resources hinder what was styled as 'micro-tourism and hospitality accommodation' enterprises in Ghana from adopting certain sustainable practices. These issues also pertain to Zimbabwe where the take-up of sustainable practices was lowest for small lodges and guest houses.

The benefits of practising sustainability were disclosed through the findings from the Exploratory Factor Analysis. It was disclosed that the three identified factors were operations management, partnership and inclusive development, and environmental management. The category of operations management includes benefits that improve the operational efficiency of hospitality organizations. This suggests that hospitality organisations engage in sustainable practices because they contribute to the efficient operations of their properties. An increase in customer awareness of sustainability issues, coupled with the adoption and advertising of sustainability achievements can attract new customers and engender loyalty among environmentally conscious guests. Improved employee satisfaction and reduced absenteeism help to decrease labour turnover within hospitality organisations. This has a positive impact on the bottom line of hospitality establishments. Cometa (2012) in a study of hotel consumers in the USA stated that hospitality organisations could benefit from an increase in demand from environmentally conscious customers. In this regard, green practices help to improve the well-being of employees as suggested by Seeliger and Turok (2015) in their study conducted in South Africa. This also improves employee satisfaction and likely reduces absenteeism at the workplace. The results of research done in Greece by Stylos and Vassiliadis (2015) reveal that sustainability practices enhance the employee-employer relationship and are a key factor in driving employee satisfaction. The second category of benefits on partnerships and inclusive development attributed sustainability to fostering partnerships and providing opportunities to spread benefits to different sections of society. This category emphasizes mutual benefits to community members, employees, the business and promotes partnerships among different stakeholders.

In parallel Seeliger and Turok (2015) argue that sustainable practices help to ensure the wellbeing of employees, a factor that assists in improving the health and wellbeing of employees. In addition, Eggeling (2010) in research focused on Scandic, the Swedish-based hotel chain, noted that observation of social sustainability helps to improve the relationship between tourists and the locals. Environmental management represented the third broad category and comprised a number of benefits relating to the protection and preservation of the environment. Reduction in energy usage, combating climate change, protection of fragile ecosystems, lower water usage, sustainable production and consumption of resources, as well as the use of sustainable and modern energy are certain benefits that fall under this category. In an earlier study in Zimbabwe Zengeni et al. (2013) asserted that the adoption of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry helps to save water and reduces energy use. In other investigations in sub-Saharan Africa the environmental benefits associated with adopting sustainable practices have been demonstrated (Rogerson and Sims, 2012; Mensah, 2014; Ismail and Rogerson, 2016; Eshun and Appiah, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Sustainability practices of the hospitality sector are one critical dimension of tourism change in the Global South (Saarinen and Rogerson, 2021). The results of this study add to the limited body of knowledge that focuses on sustainable practices in the tourism industry of the Global South. Arguably, this research provides a perspective from the hospitality sector in Zimbabwe on a critical set of issues that currently is dominated by studies conducted in the more resource-rich setting of the Global North. The study highlights variations in the sustainable practices which are adopted by different sub-sectors of accommodation services. Overall, the results indicate that a majority of the hospitality sector's sustainability practices and their implementation is based on a reactive strategies guided by external pressures and change needs. This finding points to the importance of creating efficient governance and regulative frameworks for tourism destinations as they still represent the key drivers for advancing sustainability initiatives in the resource-constrained environments, such as the Global South. Indeed, as the UNWTO (2017: 4) has emphasized, in order to make positive contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represents the key sustainability practice agenda for the industry, "a well-designed and managed tourism sector" is needed. One limitation of this study is that it focuses on views from one country in the Global South. Further studies can be done focusing on other countries in the Global South to allow comparison with the findings from Zimbabwe. In addition to the call for better governance frameworks, the major benefits from the adoption of sustainable practices in such resource-constrained environments appear to relate to improving the operational efficiency of hospitality enterprises. Currently, with the existence of only a small cohort of research studies on the sustainable practices of hospitality enterprises it is apparent that the need exists for further research investigations, most especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Such research would

inform policy development and contribute to further moving forward the sustainability agenda for the hospitality sector to contribute meaningfully to the SDGs that is urgently needed in the Global South. Rogerson and Baum (2020) emphasise the importance of post COVID-19 tourism developments in Africa to be aligned to the achievement of the SDGs.

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