

Peer Review

Review of: "Sustainability in the Hotel Sector: A Research Study in Greece"

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Akrivi Vagena's exploration of sustainability within Greece's hotel industry is an important addition to the growing discourse on environmentally responsible tourism. Tourism is the lifeblood of Greece's economy, contributing over a quarter of its GDP, and hotels serve as the sector's backbone. This study arrives at a time when the hospitality industry is facing immense pressure to align with sustainability goals without compromising its economic vitality.

From the outset, the article captures the urgency of integrating sustainable practices in hotels. It frames the issue through a dual lens: the global imperative of addressing environmental challenges and Greece's need to remain competitive in a crowded international tourism market. The connection to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adds weight to the discussion, situating Greece's efforts within a global context.

The argument is clear: sustainability is no longer a choice for Greece's hotel sector—it is a necessity. Hotels must balance their environmental responsibilities with their economic and social roles. Vagena's framing of this balance is one of the paper's strongest points.

One of the study's most engaging elements is its use of real-world examples. Hotels such as the Four Seasons Astir Palace and Santorini Eco Suites are brought into focus as models of energy efficiency and resource management. For instance, the installation of solar panels that cover 70% of energy needs in some establishments is more than a statistic—it's a tangible demonstration of what is achievable.

Local sourcing practices, particularly those aimed at supporting regional economies, also stand out. These examples underscore that sustainability is not just about reducing environmental impact; it's about creating value for local communities, too. Initiatives like food waste composting and rainwater harvesting offer pragmatic solutions that other hotels can replicate.

Despite its optimism, the article does not shy away from the barriers that Greek hotels face. Financial constraints, particularly for smaller establishments, remain a persistent issue. The initial costs of implementing sustainable technologies, such as rainwater harvesting or energy-efficient systems, can be prohibitive. This economic challenge is further compounded by a lack of government incentives and fragmented regional policies.

The discussion of "greenwashing" raises an important point. While many hotels tout their sustainability efforts, skepticism from guests about exaggerated claims can undermine trust. However, this section feels underexplored. A deeper dive into how hotels can combat greenwashing—perhaps through transparent reporting or third-party certifications—would have strengthened the argument.

While the article provides a strong foundation, there are areas where it could push its analysis further. For example, the behavioral gap between guests who express a preference for eco-friendly accommodations and those who actually book them deserves more attention. Are price concerns the main barrier? Or is it simply a lack of awareness about what sustainable hotels offer? This insight could have been enriched with data on guest perceptions.

Similarly, the focus on major tourist hubs like Athens, Santorini, and Crete, though understandable, limits the scope. Greece's lesser-known regions have their own sustainability challenges, and exploring these could have added depth and nuance to the study.

Conclusion

Akrivi Vagena's article is a reminder that sustainability in the hotel sector is not a distant goal—it is an urgent need. The future of Greek tourism depends on its ability to align environmental responsibility with economic resilience. While the study's focus on practical solutions and real-world examples is commendable, its greatest strength lies in its optimism: the belief that Greece can lead by example in sustainable tourism.

For hoteliers, policymakers, and academics, this work serves as both a call to action and a roadmap. There is still much to be done, but with the right support, Greece's hotels can transform their challenges into opportunities, securing a sustainable future for one of the world's most cherished tourism destinations.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.