

UDK  
338.488.2:640.43  
005.932:641

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANAGEMENT IN HOTELS

### Abstract

This paper examines sustainable food and beverage management in the hotel industry, with a particular focus on the utilization of local and seasonal ingredients, strategies for reducing food waste, and the incorporation of eco-friendly practices in food preparation and service. Through a comprehensive literature review, we identify the latest trends and best practices, discussing the operational, customer-related, and environmental benefits of sustainable practices. The study aims to provide actionable insights for hoteliers to improve sustainability in their operations, potentially leading to cost savings, enhanced guest satisfaction, and a reduced ecological footprint.

**Key words:** *food and beverage management, sustainable food, hotels.*

## ZNAČAJ ODRŽIVOG UPRAVLJANJA HRANOM I PIĆEM U HOTELIMA

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### Izvod

Ovaj rad istražuje održivo upravljanje hranom i pićem u hotelskoj industriji, sa posebnim fokusom na korišćenje lokalnih i sezonskih sastojaka, strategije za smanjenje rasipanja hrane i uključivanje ekološki prihvatljivih praksi u pripremu i uslugu hrane. Kroz sveobuhvatan pregled literature, identifikujemo najnovije trendove i najbolje prakse, raspravljajući o operativnim, korisničkim i ekološkim prednostima održivih praksi. Rad ima za cilj da pruži korisne uvide hotelijerima kako bi poboljšali održivost svog poslovanja, što bi potencijalno dovelo do uštede troškova, većeg zadovoljstva gostiju i smanjenog ekološkog otiska.

**Ključne reči:** upravljanje hranom i pićem, održiva hrana, hoteli

### INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is an essential sector that plays a crucial role in the global economy. The industry encompasses a wide range of businesses that provide various services to travelers, including accommodation, food and beverage, and recreation (Kvach, Koval & Hrymaliuk, 2018). Within the hospitality industry, hotels are a significant player that provides a temporary home for travelers.

Technology has had a significant impact on food and beverage management in hotels, and it has transformed the way hotels operate, from reservation systems to online ordering and delivery (Davis et al. 2018). This impact has been positive in many ways, as it has enabled hotels to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the guest experience. However, it has also presented challenges, such as the need for skilled labor and the risk of cyber-attacks.

Food and beverage management is an integral part of the hotel industry as it contributes significantly to the overall guest experience (Gu, Li & Huang, 2023; Zrnić, Gajić & Vukolić, 2023). The primary objective of food and beverage management is to provide guests with high-quality food and drinks, in a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere (Ranasinghe et al. 2016). However, with the evolution of technology, the hotel industry has undergone significant changes, which have had a profound impact on food and beverage management.

Given the significance of the social, environmental, and economic implications of the food industry along its full chain of production - from farm to fork - sustainable food practices have been recognized as a critical issue in attempts to develop and monitor sustainable tourism practices (Akanmu et al. 2023; Zrnić, 2020). In light of this, the purpose of the current article is to suggest a thorough framework for reporting or making decisions about sustainable food management in hotels, taking into account the many aspects of the food supply chain.

Also, this research paper will examine the role of sustainable food and beverage management in hotels, including the use of local and seasonal ingredients, reducing food waste, and implementing eco-friendly practices in food preparation and service. Lastly, the paper will review literature on the latest trends and best practices in sustainable food and beverage management and will provide insights into the benefits of adopting sustainable practices for hotels, including cost savings, improved guest satisfaction, and positive environmental impact.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability in the hospitality industry has transcended buzzword status to become a fundamental business imperative (Jones, Hillier & Comfort, 2016). This shift is a response to both external pressures and internal recognition of the long-term benefits of eco-friendly operations. The role of sustainability has been significantly elevated as stakeholders – including guests, employees, investors, and regulatory bodies – increasingly prioritize environmental and social responsibility (Legrand, Chen & Laeis, 2022).

The onset of global environmental concerns, such as climate change and resource depletion, has served as a catalyst for the hospitality industry's sustainable evolution. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has underscored the urgency of implementing eco-friendly practices to mitigate environmental impact (Riti & Shu, 2016). Hotels, as substantial consumers of resources, are in a unique position to contribute to environmental stewardship. Initiatives such as carbon footprint reduction, water conservation, and sustainable sourcing can have profound effects on conserving natural resources and reducing the industry's environmental impact (Mbasera et al. 2016).

Governments and international organizations have also played a pivotal role in shaping sustainable practices within the industry. The adoption of policies and guidelines, like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations, has set benchmarks for sustainability that impact operational norms in hospitality (Abdou et al. 2020). In many regions, compliance with environmental regulations is not just voluntary corporate citizenship but a mandatory aspect of business operations, influencing the industry to recalibrate its practices.

Consumers have increasingly shown a preference for brands that demonstrate environmental consciousness. A online study indicated that majority of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands (Biswas & Roy, 2016). This consumer drive is particularly pronounced in the hospitality sector, where guests often make decisions based on a hotel's environmental credentials. The rise of ecotourism and green certifications has further highlighted this shift in consumer behavior, compelling hotels to integrate sustainability into their core offering (Merli et al. 2019).

From an economic perspective, sustainable practices are proving to be cost-effective in the long term. Energy-efficient appliances, waste reduction programs, and water-saving initiatives contribute to significant operational savings. Additionally, sustainable practices can lead to an enhanced company image, which can drive increased occupancy rates and customer loyalty – key metrics in the hospitality industry's success (Walsh & Dodds, 2017).

Leading hospitality companies have set ambitious sustainability targets, signaling an industry-wide recognition of the importance of eco-friendly practices. For instance, major hotel chains have pledged to eliminate single-use plastics and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with global efforts to combat climate change. This leadership has a cascading effect, spurring innovation across the industry as hotels seek to differentiate themselves by developing and implementing cutting-edge sustainable solutions.

As the hospitality industry endeavors to align with sustainable practices, food and beverage management encounters specific challenges that impede progress. These hurdles are multifaceted, stemming from operational constraints, supply chain complexities, and customer behavior patterns. A significant challenge in sustainable food and beverage management is the retrofitting of existing operations. The installation of energy-efficient equipment, composting systems, and waste reduction processes often requires considerable capital investments. Additionally, the operational shift towards sustainability may initially lead to a reduction in efficiency as staff adapt to new protocols and technologies, potentially impacting service quality and turnover rates. The procurement of locally sourced and organic produce presents logistical challenges. Seasonal fluctuations and inconsistent supply can affect menu stability and pricing, which traditional food and beverage operations are not typically designed to accommodate. Furthermore, the verification of suppliers' sustainability claims adds a layer of due diligence that can be resource-intensive for hotel management.

While there is a growing trend of consumers preferring sustainable options, there is also a segment that remains indifferent or resistant to changes in traditional dining experiences. Hotels must navigate these diverging expectations, balancing the introduction of sustainable practices with the need to satisfy a broad customer base.

The food and beverage sector in hospitality operates with thin margins, where cost control is critical. Sustainable products and practices often come with higher upfront costs, and the economic model of passing these costs to the consumer can be risky in a competitive market. This economic pressure creates a challenging environment for the widespread adoption of sustainable practices. Navigating the labyrinth of sustainable certifications can be daunting. Achieving certifications like LEED, Green Seal, or the Green Key Eco-Rating Program involves complex processes and criteria that can be a barrier, especially for smaller operations. Moreover, inconsistency in regulations across different regions complicates the standardization of sustainable practices. Reducing waste in food and beverage operations is an area of concern. While recycling and composting are viable solutions, the lack of infrastructure and logistical support can hinder implementation. Moreover, reducing food waste without compromising guest expectations of abundance and variety remains a delicate balance for many establishments.

## CONCLUSION

Economically, sustainable practices in food and beverage management can lead to substantial cost savings for hotels. Energy-efficient appliances, reduced water usage, and comprehensive waste management systems can decrease operational costs. Moreover, sustainability initiatives often qualify for government incentives and can enhance the hotel's appeal to the growing market of eco-conscious consumers, thereby increasing potential revenue streams. From an environmental perspective, the food and beverage sector within hotels is a major consumer of resources and a significant contributor to waste. Sustainable management practices, such as sourcing food locally, opting for seasonal ingredients, and minimizing food waste, can reduce carbon emissions, conserve water, and decrease the reliance on unsustainable farming practices. These efforts contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and the reduction of the industry's carbon footprint. The adoption of sustainable food and beverage management is also integral to building and maintaining a positive brand image. Hotels that demonstrate commitment to sustainability often enjoy enhanced reputation and brand loyalty. This can differentiate them in a crowded market and position them as leaders in corporate social responsibility. Sustainability in food and beverage management ensures compliance with evolving regulatory requirements focused on environmental protection and waste reduction. By leading in this domain, hotels can influence the industry at large, setting standards for others and driving

forward the agenda for a more sustainable future in hospitality. Finally, there is an ethical imperative for sustainable management practices. As global citizens, hotels have a responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the communities they operate within. This includes supporting local economies through the purchase of local produce, contributing to the reduction of global food waste, and ensuring the well-being of future generations through responsible environmental practices. The importance of sustainable food and beverage management in hotels cannot be overstated. It intersects with economic performance, environmental preservation, customer satisfaction, brand development, compliance, and ethical responsibility. As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, sustainable food and beverage management will remain a key determinant of a hotel's success and its ability to operate within the planet's ecological limits and social expectations.

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