CSR AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: GREENING THE ACCOMMODATION SECTOR IN MALAYSIA

Mohd Rizwan Abd Majid and Izyanti Awang Razli

School of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaysia Sabah
Email: rizwan@ums.edu.my

ABSTRACT

One of the core resources for destination appeal stems from the availability of quality accommodation. As destinations compete to improve their global ranking, those responsible for managing the hotel and accommodation sector will play a major role in the delivery of positive destination image. Hotels like any other product must, like any market-driven business, become attractive "products". The need to improve skills, particularly those of the front-line service staff, in communicating its corporate responsibility to society effectively to target markets is seen to be critical. This research paper reports on the findings of a fourteen months study on "Redefining Tourism Management: Identifying Critical Success Factors on Tourism Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility" in Malaysia. It examines the challenges faced by the hotel industry as guests become more selective in terms of accommodation choices while on vacation and comparatively seen as a reflection of their lifestyle at home. A qualitative approach to in-depth interviews was conducted with 64 respondents. This included outbound travel agencies and inbound tour operators, accommodation facilities, tourism related non-government organisations and international tourists vacationing in Malaysia. The evidence has shown that corporate social responsibility can no longer be seen as a trend but has implications on the sustainability of the business and may improve market share in the long term.

Keywords: accommodation, hotels, CSR, destination image, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within the tourism industry is a relatively new area of study in Malaysia. The main reasons for the interest in the tourism industry's contribution to CSR can be attributed to the continuous increase in tourist arrivals and the increase in the numbers of tourism enterprises in the country. Although CSR has been documented in large (and generally, listed) companies, due mainly to organizational size, revenue and extend of its impact, CSR is not documented officially as an area for consideration within the tourism industry because of the size of most tourism operations (mainly small to medium enterprises). Additionally, tourism has only been seriously looked into as an industry which can contribute to the Malaysian economy in 1980s. Hence, the contribution of CSR in tourism has only recently been receiving attention is not surprising.

In order to incorporate the interests of stakeholders into the policies, strategies, and operations of an organization, directors, executives, managers, and rank and file, must understand the nature of stakeholders' interests and the values which underpin them. The reputation of the organization and the degree of support garnered from stakeholders will depend on this understanding. The ability of the organization to manage the risks facing it, as well as those which impact its stakeholder is contributed to the understanding of what CSR means.

Numerous approaches (UNEP, 2013) have been developed over time for examining the interests of stakeholders, such as surveys, focus groups, and mapping according to stereotypes. In addition, investigation on the values that lie behind stakeholder interests are also taken into consideration so that organization policies, strategies, and procedures can be taken into account. These values differ somewhat depending on the stakeholder group (UNEP, 2013), as well as regional differences. However, progress had been made towards a set of *hypernorm* (Wall, 2006), – values that are respected by most organisations or cultures around the world. Based on the data analysis, the values which come closest to universal application are an organization's accountability to its stakeholders which includes employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, lenders, activists and government.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two phases. The first stage of data collection involved initial telephone interviews, which was done to test the level of interest in the greening programme within the tourism industry; as well as, to investigate the level of awareness of hotel owners, and managers on environmental issues to match market demands. A minority of managers and hotel owners were unavailable for telephone interviews, thus these interviews were conducted throughout the field visit in the second phase of the study. The initial survey consisted of knowledge, attitude, perception and behavior based questions, some of which were adapted and included in the second phase of the survey.

The second survey instrument was a qualitative analysis (Salkind, 2003), which was divided into six sections dealing with water management, energy management, waste management, employee and community considerations. This survey examined predominantly the operational practices. However, knowledge and perception based questions pertaining directly to performance areas were also included. This survey was administered in international, regional, and local chain hotels in selected states in Malaysia based on the number of hotels and tourist arrivals to the region.

The objectives of this project are:

(1) To investigate whether management and marketing practices of tourism businesses contribute to or can contribute to the sustainable management of the destination.
(2) To critically analyze the current situation and identify situations where tourism has or has not contributed to sustainable development.
(3) To examine the compliance of guidelines on best practices for sustainable tourism.
(4) To present the current institutional structure and the priorities given for implementation of CSR.
(5) To identify relevant and applicable CSR indicators which are linked to achieve long term benefits.

There were several limitations to this study. Difficulties were encountered in determining the exact level of CSR implementation as there was limited documentation within the organization, on all the information on units under investigation. The list of available accommodation facilities was compiled from members of hotel associations such as Malaysia Association of Hotels (MAH), Malaysian Association of Hotel Owners (MAHO) and tourism related associations Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA), Sabah Tourist Association (STA), Tourism Malaysia, Sabah Tourism Board, and from websites. Units were therefore added at various stages in the study.

Another limitation was the time at which the study was done. As the researchers were from Sabah (East Malaysia, within 2 ½ hour flight from main hubs of Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johore and Kuching), data collection was done once for each hotel. As a result of this, some owners and managers (decision makers) were not readily accessible for an in-depth interview. The determining factors in policy related to laws and governance on environmental practices affecting the operations of the hotel were hence, perceived to be in place by personnel interviewed. The data was sorted and entered in Microsoft Excel and the statistical analysis was performed in SPSS version 10.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia comprises of fourteen states, two of which forms the eastern part of Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Tourism development has been progressively on the rise, both in terms of infrastructure and arrivals (MATTA, 2013) since the 1980s. This has been in part due to the increasingly competitive growth of tourism destinations in Asia, in general. As the travelling public becomes more demanding, destinations are actively promoting its own unique specialties and local products, as well as services, to boost its tourism industry. As tourists become more information-driven and knowledgeable when choosing a destination (Chen, 2006), this has led to a greater demand for quality services and products.

Pike (2008). Chen (2006) and Beerli (2004) describe this increase due to the interests generated in the region through travel shows and media influences, and an increasing trend of people traveling due to the affordability of air travel. This is no exception for Malaysia, as well. Tourism and services in Malaysia has become the major economic generator to the nation (MOTOUR, 2013) and claimed as the second largest national income after the petroleum industry. This significant contribution to the Malaysian economy has led to the continuously increase in funding to promote Malaysia, as the preferred travel destination in the region.

Malaysia is a country renowned for its multi-cultural and multi-racial background (Tourism Malaysia, 2013). This diversity in ethnicity, has contributed to its colorful culture to interest all travelling markets. In the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), accommodation was featured as the largest component spent during a visit. The receipts generated through accommodation spending are expected to increase (Tourism Malaysia, 2013) as there is a need to increase the number of hotels to cater for the potential increase in tourist arrivals.

Across the world, unique tourist destinations (Anderson, 1994) are generally based on its iconic attractions. Accommodation facilities are increasingly being listed as a reason for the visit such as Jumeirah (Dubai), Dorcester (London), Four Season George V (Paris), Four Seasons (New York), Imperial Hotel (Tokyo)**,** International chain hotels and resorts are promoting its flagship hotels as a reason to visit a destination (Pike, 2008, Fakeye, 1991).

Since the success of Tourism Malaysia's "Visit Malaysia 2007", many international chains are now competing for prime locations in main tourist hubs such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor (West Malaysia) and Kota Kinabalu and Kuching (East Malaysia). The Ministry of Tourism (MOTOUR), which sets the direction for tourism policy has set itself an ambitious target of generating 23 million tourist arrivals by 2015 and 36 million tourist arrivals by 2020 (MOTOUR, 2013). As one of the core resources for destination appeal stems from the availability of quality accommodation (MATTA, 2013), the availability of recognised brands in hotels (Kotler, 2003, Fakeye, 1991) and resorts in any given destination, this has become the benchmark of a destination's international recognition. As destinations compete to

improve their global ranking, those responsible for managing the hotel and accommodation sector will play a major role in the delivery of positive destination image.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND AGENDA 21

Tourism is essentially, a consumptive industry. As a signatory to the United Nations (UN), Malaysia is obliged to adopt the concept of sustainable development which was launched in 1987 (UNWTO, 2013). Through the Agenda 21 Plan of Action that emerged from the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, and the Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, these have served to be the documents of choice when it comes to sustainable development (UNDP, 2013) of the tourism industry.

Sustainable development has been defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as "*a process to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*". Sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (UNWTO, 2013).

There are three pillars of sustainability and 12 aims (UNWTO, 2013) as outlined by UNEP and UNWTO. These three pillars are economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. The prominence of environmental degradation peaked at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This then resulted in Agenda 21 being formed, and being endorsed by nations, businesses and NGOs.

Agenda 21 challenged governments, businesses and organizations to strive for sustainability in fulfilling environmental responsibilities in the pursuit of economic success. There is now much emphasis for both governments and businesses to incorporate the principles of sustainable development into every day practices. There is a clear need for hotels to take a leading role (Anderson, 1994) if significant progress is to be achieved in making tourism more sustainable. The tourism industry is fragmented and it is therefore difficult for any one business to make a significant difference as a high level of co-ordination and collaborated effort is required for its success (Kotler, 2003, Mayo, 2012),). The hotel industry has in many ways contributed to the damage of the physical environment in its exploitation of natural resources such as the increase in water and energy usage of the area, and relative types of pollution **(**McCool, 2010)

The management of natural resources in daily hotel operations is one aspect of sustainable tourism that ought to be given greater attention. The accommodation sector is one of the most important sectors (Beeli, 2004, McCool, 2010) within the tourism industry, as it contributes substantially to the economic stability of the tourism industry in general. However, the accommodation sector if not properly managed, can be a major source of environmental degradation particularly through negative effects on the natural environment **(**Kotler, 2003, McCool, 2010). These can be summarized into 3 types of environmental impacts; Excessive use of renewable and non-renewable resources emissions of pollutants (UNWTO, 2013) through inappropriate disposal of waste water, solid waste disposal, hazardous chemical usage and physical impact on the environment such as inappropriate building design.

In order to minimize these negative effects a number of solutions may be derived from three main guiding principles:

(1)   Eco-efficiency
(2)   Cleaner production
(3)   Eco-design

These principles may be achieved at the national level (Parsons, 2010) to address the problem of degradation of natural resources. United Nations Environmental Programme (UNDP) lists some of these efforts as improved land use planning and development control, the development of environmental management tools and preparation of policies to deal with negative impacts on natural resource use and the involvement of local groups and non-governmental organizations.

The UNEP in 1999 (UNDP, 2013) identified action areas that could be addressed by the accommodation sector which includes:

(1)   Environmental policy
(2)   Water
(3)   Energy
(4)   Solid waste
(5)   Purchasing
(6)   Wastewater
(7)   Transport/ traffic
(8)   Noise
(9)   Air/emissions
(10)   Landscape/surroundings
(11)   Training of staff
(12)   Guest communications

Internationally, there are agreements, policies and organizations that have developed infrastructure to promote sustainable development, and sustainable tourism, in particular. These include the UNWTO Code of Ethics for Tourism 1999 (UNWTO, 2013); The Convention on Biological Diversity (UNWTO, 2013), Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, 2003 (UNWTO, 2013); Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism, 2002 (UNWTO, 2013) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002 (UNWTO, 2013). Within the tourism industry, there have been several attempts to include sustainability in the accommodation sector.

These include projects and programmes such as the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, Sustainable Tourism Awards, and Environmental Audit for Sustainable Tourism (EAST) Awards, and Green Globe Awards. Additionally, Green Globe 21 is the global bench-marking, certification and improvement system (Parker, 2001) for sustainable travel and tourism. These are generally based on Agenda 21 (UNDP, 2013) and its principles for sustainable development. Green Globe certification (Green Globe, 2013) looks at a number of performance areas within the industry including freshwater management, waste management, and hazardous chemical usage, conservation of biodiversity and community development.

Malaysia as a whole has a very limited number of Green Globe certified properties. Currently there are 57 certified properties in the Asian region and 12 that are benchmarked

and working towards certification (Green Globe, 2013) of accommodation sector in Malaysia. There is no formal means by which the categories of facilities in Malaysia are defined, aside by the star rating which is accorded by The Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia (MOTOUR).

The star rating does not include CSR as a unit of benchmarking (MATTA, 2013), nor does it look into the social and/or environmental sustainability of a property. Additionally, information regarding the accommodation categories is limited to what is published by MAH, MAHO and MATTA; none of which indicate or feature CSR or environmental information at the time of the study. Although MATTA members are predominately tour and travel operators (MATTA, 2013), some of their members are also, owners of hotel and resorts.

However, as there are no set categories which document CSR practices within these three major industry based associations, individual hotels have devised either informal means of categorization or used the ISO 14001 standards or Green Globe guidelines as a benchmark for documentation. The categories are based predominantly on how the owner chooses to name his facility and are as follows:

(1)   Hotels/resorts
(2)   Guest houses
(3)   Service Apartments
(4)   Villas
(5)   Eco resorts/hotels

GLOBAL BENCHMARKING

The global bench-marking, certification and improvement system for sustainable travel and tourism includes Green Globe 21 and Agenda 21. These tourism guidelines focus on the wise and sustainable use of natural resources which involves stakeholders' participation. The goals of these programmes are to develop functioning participatory co-management (Batra, 1990) for integrated sustainable development globally and based its working framework on local issues and concerns (Juwaheer, 2006). Additionally, it also encapsulate that host communities at the destination gain maximum benefits (Wall, 2006, Batra, 1990), with minimal negative impacts on the natural environment in which it relies on. It usually involves a number of stakeholders, including governments, NGOs and private sector businesses in order for its core ideals to be realized.

A number of isolated projects and workshops have been undertaken by local government authorities in realizing the Local Agenda 21 platforms (UNWTO, 2013) and these include, and are not limited to tourism. The available natural resources in Malaysia has allowed for the development of the more convention "sun, sea and shopping haven" brand of tourism. Malaysia has also attracted investments in developing its high end market (Selangor, Penang, and Johore in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak, the Eastern States of Malaysia) (MOTOUR, 2012). However, due to the increasing demand for hotel rooms in Malaysia, the development of any more property calls for a clearly defined policy on any development in fragile areas of demand (such as marine and coastal areas, islands and forested hills cleared for tourism development),   particularly as this relates to the sustainability of tourism, including development type, size of development and its long term sustainability.

The mission of the Ministry of Tourism is "to position Malaysia as a diverse, globally competitive tourism destination through effective planning, management and sustainable

use of the natural resources of the country; while facilitating the preservation of cultural heritage as a vehicle for instilling national pride and for managing national identity" (MOTOUR, 2013). Hotels like any market-driven business must become attractive "products" (Dredge, 2003). The need to improve skills, particularly those of the front-line service staff, in communicating effectively its corporate responsibility (Wall, 2006, Mohamed, 1994) to target markets is seen to be critical.

THE RISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The definition for tourism is that it comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment (Dredge, 2003, Wall, 2006), for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (UNWTO,2013). The tourism industry has become an important sector to both developed and developing countries, including Malaysia, as it is seen to be a generator of economic growth. In Malaysia, tourist arrivals rose to 25,032,708 compared to 24,714,324 in 2011; with receipts of RM60.6 billion in 2011, compared to RM58.3 billion the previous year. This has ranked tourism to be the second major source of revenue to the Malaysian economy (MOTOUR, 2013).

Following Malaysia's tourism transformation plan to target 36 million tourist arrivals by 2020, (MOTOUR, 2013) carbon emission, energy usage and water wastage will be a main cause for concern if the eco-hospitality practices have yet to be seriously adopted by the industry in Malaysia. Although the accommodation sector may not be the key guilty party which creates environmental pollution and consumes significant amounts of global resources, (Chan and Wong, 2006) it does however, become the main player due to its primary purposes of providing comfortable services/supplies (e.g., hot water, food, drinks, linens, towels, lighting, air-conditioning, limousines, swimming pools, etc. (Han, H., Hsu, L.J., Lee, J.S. & Sheu C., 2011).

The accommodation sector clearly consumes a large amount of water, energy, non-recyclable goods, and natural resources, and thus directly or indirectly contributes to the degradation of the environment. (Han, H., *et al*. 2011) and social fabric of societies (Bigne, 2001), in terms of its consumptive operations. With the green decade came green consumers, as people began to understand how consumption habits (Rahman, I., Reynolds, D. & Svaren, S., 2012) affect the environment. As society becomes increasing aware of their individual contribution and need to become more sustainable in their lifestyle, the choice of green hotels will no doubt, rise.

An eco hotel is defined as a hotel or accommodation which has made a conscious effort to incorporate environmental improvements to its structure to minimize its impact on the environment (Eco-Hotel Management Guidebook). The basic definition of a green hotel is environmentally responsible facility that follows the practices of green living. The term "green" is interchangeably described as "eco-friendly", "environmentally friendly", or "sustainable" (Han, H et al, 2011). Wolfe and Shanklin (2001) indicating that "green" refers to managerial operations which decrease negative impacts on the environment such as recycling, eco-purchasing for food and beverage outlets within the property.

Similarly, according to the Green Hotel Association (2013) a green hotel is also termed as an eco-friendly property that has implemented various green practices and institutes sound and environmentally friendly programs to protect the environment and reduce operational costs.

Green Hotels are environmentally-friendly properties whose operations and management are willing to institute programmes which save water, energy and reduce solid waste, while saving money and protecting the earth (Green Hotel Association, 2013).

Findings and Discussions

A total of 1,163 outbound travel agencies and inbound tour operators were selected in the major hubs of Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johore Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. Of these, 64 outbound travel agencies and inbound tour operators were available for the field in-depth interviews. The analysis of the environmental practices is therefore based on these in-depth interviews. It is important to note that when the General Manager/owner of the property was not available, senior management staff was interviewed instead. Additionally, several large agencies did not wish to participate in the investigation as they were skeptical of the purpose, despite the fact that the objectives were explained.

It has been considered and acknowledged that one owner may also own several agencies. So the practice is that if one agency does not have an environment or CSR policy, this may also mean that all their properties will not have similar practices. However, there are cases where although there is a CSR and environmental policy in place, the implementations of these were unclear to staff in terms of practice. The initial survey sought to investigate the respondent's knowledge, attitude and behavior towards environmental issues relating to the accommodation sector (either as a user or provider) and the level of understanding of global, national and local environmental issues.

As guests become more selective in terms of accommodation choices while on vacation, providers of accommodation facilities must come to terms that environmental concerns is fast becoming a lifestyle which includes travel choices. The perception of 62% of the respondents felt that the biggest challenge was the cost of implementing environmental guidelines in their operations even though they have keen interest in the "greening" process. The survey instrument was designed to also reveal areas of weak knowledge about issues relating to environmental best practices.

The survey results indicated that 93% of the accommodation facilities recommended by tour operators were members of various organizations specific to tourism, while 7% did not belong to any organization. These organizations included national and state associations, such as MAH, MAHO, MATTA, SHA and STA; some of which were compulsory and others discretionary, in the application of trading licenses. The majority of tour operators (77%) used accommodation facilities with 180 rooms and under.

The initial survey results revealed that 60% of all operators claimed that they had at least heard of environmentally friendly practices for hotels, while 37% did not and 3% responded it was not applicable to them. As far as they were aware, 66% of the operators interviewed stated that accommodation facilities did make attempts to implement environmental best practices. There was no significant relationship between hotel size and the implementation of environmental practices or hotel size and knowledge of environmental practices.

However, when respondents were asked how they would rate the success of implementation of these practices on a scale of 1 to 5, only 40% rated the success of the environmental practices in the higher ranges of 4 and 5. A mere 12% of the properties claimed to have an environmental policy (written documentation of the facility's

environmental goals and beliefs). However, no visible copies of these policies were available; due in part to the person in charge was not available for interviewing. Nevertheless, 56% of property managers interviewed claimed to have an environmental policy that was "verbal", and its policy had its validity as it was deemed to be practiced.

There was a significant relationship between the hotel size and the presence of an environmental policy. Chain hotels (irrespective of room numbers) were more inclined to have an environmental policy, visible and readily located. Possible reasons for this may be that chain hotels may have a better managerial structure and environmental practices have already been in place for some time. The majority of these properties (81%) said that it was important or very important for hotels to implement environmentally friendly practices. The majority of the respondents (78%) selected a rating of 4 on the importance of hotels and accommodation facilities' in its contribution to environmental best practices.

The 2nd and 3rd most common answers were 5 and 4 with 78% and 63% respectively. This is a strong indication that for the most part, tour operators in Malaysia are indeed aware that the choices they make will impact negatively on the environment; including their selection of hotels to promote to their clients and the hotels they choose to frequent. A total of 75% of respondents expressed interest in participating in a "greening" workshop, should there be any conducted in the future.

The lack of time and human resources were the main reasons (94%) that tour operators were reluctant to participate. Some of the smaller tour agencies were family run and the owner would usually also be the only senior member of staff eloquent with sustainability issues and concerns. Despite the large percentage of respondents who claimed to know (87%) and implement best environmental practices (79%), the responses indicate that they might not be particularly concerned about how the operations of a particular property implement their practices. The details of visible implementation will need further investigation as this is not seen to be of priority to most tour operators when it comes to recommending "green hotels".

The majority of respondents (86%) believed that the implementation of guidelines would be beneficial to their business; and the roles of management and marketing could contribute to sustaining Malaysia as a premier tourism destination. Furthermore, 90% thought being a certified sustainable tourism practitioner would be beneficial to the organization and felt (82%) that in lieu of government policy in regulating the tourism industry, then self regulation might be the way forward. It was felt that the main motivator for compliance was economic; and main reason for non compliance was the costs in implementation.

As aforementioned, the majority of the respondents are aware of the sustainable tourism and they think that they practice "best practices" of sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, the adoption of sustainable tourism is mainly driven by economic concerned. Interestingly, when cross tabulated with the result for compliance and non-compliance, there is a significant gap between outbound travel agencies and inbound tour operators. Inbound tour operators have significantly higher levels of awareness and adoption pertaining to sustainable tourism aspects.

In the overall findings of compliance of sustainable tourism guidelines, inbound tour operators are more susceptible towards sustainable tourism and the benefits of certification. The guidelines adopted are from:

a)   Malaysian Association Of Tour And Travel Agents (MATTA)
b)   Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)
c)   World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
d)   National Ecotourism Plan part 3

Currently, there are no set standard guidelines for the implementation of CSR practices. Hence, the adoptions of CSR and sustainable tourism best practices are based on the operators own interpretation. Due to the responses that the levels of adoption is linked to economic factors or benefits, then the availability of tax incentives for compliance which can be linked to the renewal of licenses annually would encourage self compliance; likewise, financial penalties can be applied for non-compliance.

The assumption is that the top 4 factors which can promote sustainable tourism were deemed to be better promotion (27%), better safety (27%) and political stability (22%), better enforcement (20%). When respondents were asked on how the quality of service within the tourism industry could be improved, 66% believed that this could only be achieved when operators were more responsible and improved their respective organization's quality of service delivery, 17% considered this could only be accomplished when the government (Ministry of Tourism) enforced non-compliance by not renewing their tour license and 9%, on when their clients dictated it.

It is the intention that the results of this study may be used towards the achievement of instilling tourism best practices and act as an initiative in achieving sustainable tourism and Agenda 21 objectives. On this basis, the accommodation sector, outbound travel agents, inbound tour operators, local government agencies and NGOs can be brought together to develop an approach to improve environmental practices within the tourism industry in Malaysia

Conclusion

All outbound travel agencies, inbound tour operators, hotel management and owners are registered members of one or the other tourism related associations such as MATTA, MAH, MAHO, SHA or STA.   This means that they are able to receive the benefits of large scale sustainable best practices such as CSR programmes. Even generic best practices promoted by any one of these associations can be tailored specifically for small, medium or large organisations which may often have limited human, financial and technical resources.

As all tourism related businesses are members of these organizations, implementation amongst its members as possible stakeholders for the "greening" process in instilling environmental consciousness can easily be achieved as the majority in the industry has claimed that they are knowledgeable on environmental practices and follows environmental guidelines, although not many has documented environmental policies in place.   An environmental policy can serve as the cornerstone of the organization's environmental beliefs, goals and practices. The minority of the respondents who has claimed to have an environmental policy was found to be among the most environmentally conscious operators.

Environmental consciousness and the implementation of environmental practices for water and energy were found to be the highest as this was deemed to affect their operation costs the most. One area that needed improvement was perhaps the monitoring of such practices. It was hoped that the government (ministry of Tourism), could play a significant

role in the monitoring of best practices by implementing a reward and penalty system through the renewal of tourism licenses. This could significantly impact on the industry's readiness to support future environmental initiatives which would go towards the promotion of sustainable tourism.

The Green Globe 21 and Local Agenda 21 benchmarking specifications entail the daily monitoring of utilities such as water and electricity. This practice should therefore be promoted as it is beneficial and require little additional manpower and is not costly to implement. These environmentally friendly practices may be expensive in the short term, but offer payback within a short time-frame. Additionally, the evidence has shown that CSR can no longer be seen as a trend but has implications on the sustainability of the business and may improve market share in the long term.

As the findings reveal a relatively high level of environmental knowledge and awareness of the concerns of CSR, this may indicate that current national and local strategies should be reviewed and new ones developed to complement its implementation. With the tourism and hospitality services industry going towards an upward trend, hotels in Malaysia may have no option but to improve its environmental and social responsibility towards an increasingly discriminating travelling market. The accommodation sector within the tourism industry makes it uniquely equipped to promote positive change as the majority of visitors will require accommodation during their stay. In order that the tourism industry can continue to reap rewards for Malaysia, best practices towards a more sustainable future needs to be considered.

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