THE EVOLUTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY
DRIVERS SHAPING THE SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA

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Introduction and Study Purpose

Hospitality Business leaders are trying to signal their growing interest and concern about operating their companies sustainably. Some of these are driven by the potential future environmental impact of energy, climate and water security issues on their businesses, while others are influenced by the regulatory, policy, development, architectural, financial, and operational and consumer preference, perspectives. As a result, several companies are at various stages of implementing sustainable practices within their enterprises. When one reads Vision 2050, the latest futures report from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), for example, it is clear that the 29 CEOs who signed off this publication see market opportunities created by the sustainability transition as very likely to dwarf those that flowed from the Internet.

Indeed, the agenda for the hotels sector has moved on tremendously since the publication of the book "Holidays That Don't Cost the Earth" in 1992, following on from the success of the 1988 book, The Green Consumer Guide. At the time, even leading hotel groups had yet to adopt environmental auditing—whereas today the best of them talk comfortably about energy efficiency, water footprints, sustainable fish and the like.

However when one looks behind the scenes it soon becomes clear that there is a lot more talk than action. One reason for this is that, despite the best intentions, hotel corporate boards and managers genuinely don't have a clear understanding of their expectations. Their hospitality education was in a world where these issues were marginal, at best, and their minds (and their networks) are as yet poorly attuned to detecting the early, weak signals of change.

The purpose of this research is to provide a review of sustainable development (even before the term was coined) practices from the mid-1950s to the current period. The evolutionary

timeline is intended to show the primary drivers that motivated the hospitality industry to incrementally adopt sustainable practices.

Methodology

This study relied primarily on the historical research approach. The nature of historical data used for this research included, textbooks, journal articles, expert opinion literature published in periodicals, research reports published by industry consultants The historical research was supplemented by an analysis of best practice cases to identify key drivers and successful implementation of sustainable development in the hotel industry.

Summary Results and Key Findings

Ultimately, the research hopes to establish and present the most definitive explanation of sustainable development practices by businesses today: The "Triple Bottom-line," as it comprehensively looks at sustainable development from three perspectives: People, Planet and Profit. The common theme across the evolutionary timeline will be "value creation." While value creation will address all stakeholders in a hotel development or operation, the research will address whether, sustainable development metrics indicate financial incentives for investors, developers, owners, and lodging operators.