

# Exploring Hotel Managers' Sustainability Decision-Making: A Case Study on the Amalfi Coast

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation investigates how hotel managers in the Amalfi Coast perceive and manage sustainability practices, addressing the growing need for environmentally conscious strategies within the hospitality sector. The research focuses on three key objectives: understanding managers' motivations for adopting sustainable practices, identifying the perceived benefits of sustainability, and examining how managers motivate and train their staff to align with these practices. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study involved semi-structured interviews with 10 hotel managers from luxury and boutique hotels in the Amalfi Coast. The findings reveal a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors driving sustainability adoption. While managers are motivated by a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship and the desire to enhance their properties' reputations, financial benefits such as cost savings from energy efficiency and government incentives also play a significant role. However, sustainability is not yet perceived as a primary driver for customer loyalty in this high-end tourism market. Additionally, the study highlights the challenges of fostering employee engagement in sustainability, particularly in a region with a highly seasonal workforce. Managers employ a combination of annual training programs, on-the-job education, and recognition strategies to align staff with sustainability goals. The research underscores the need for tailored, culturally sensitive approaches to sustainability, reflecting the unique values and characteristics of the Amalfi Coast. The study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable hospitality by providing insights into managerial perspectives in a globally renowned tourism destination. It also offers practical implications for hotel operators and policymakers aiming to balance environmental responsibility with economic viability in a highly competitive industry. Recommendations for further research include exploring the long-term impact of sustainability on hotel performance, the role of customer perceptions, and comparative studies across different regions and hotel types.

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## **Table Of Contents**

<i>Declaration</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Abstract</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Table Of Contents</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>Chapter One: Introduction</i>	<b>7</b>
<i>1.1 Aims And Objectives – Research Rationale</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>1.2 Research Context – The Amalfi Coast</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>1.3 Research Question And Objectives</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>1.4 Layout Of The Thesis</i>	<b>10</b>
<i>Chapter Two: Literature Review</i>	<b>11</b>
<i>2.1 Introduction</i>	<b>12</b>
<i>2.2 Environmental Sustainability</i>	<b>13</b>
<i>2.3 Sustainability In The Hospitality Business</i>	<b>15</b>
<i>2.3 Motivation Theories</i>	<b>16</b>
<i>Sustainable Practices In Hotels - Integration With Motivation Theories</i>	<b>19</b>
<i>Self- Determination Theory</i>	<b>19</b>
<i>Incentive Theory</i>	<b>19</b>
<i>Integration Of SDT And Incentive Theory</i>	<b>20</b>
<i>2.4 Research Gap</i>	<b>21</b>
<i>2.5 Context: The Amalfi Coast</i>	<b>22</b>
<i>2.6 Conclusions</i>	<b>23</b>
<i>Chapter Three: Methodology</i>	<b>25</b>
<i>3.1 Introduction</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>3.2 Research Objectives</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>3.3 Research Philosophy</i>	<b>27</b>
<i>3.4. Approaches And Rationale</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>3.5. Research Strategies - Qualitative Research</i>	<b>30</b>

<b>3.6. Rationale For Qualitative Research</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>3.7. Tools And Approaches - The Sample</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3.7.1 Snowballing Sampling</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>3.8 Data Analysis</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.9 Limitations</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.10 Research Ethics</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.11 Conclusions</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Findings</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Profile Of The Respondents</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.2 Theme 1 - Sustainability Management</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4.3 Theme 2: Customer Retention And Revenues</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.4 Theme 3 - Sustainable Practices And Respect For The Territory</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>4.5 Theme Four- Employees' Motivation</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>5.2 Objective 1: Explore The Hotel Manager's Motivation Regarding Sustainability Practices. The Journey To Sustainability</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>5.3 Objective 2: Explore The Perceived Benefits Of Sustainability Practices.</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>5.4 Objective 3: Explore How Hotel Managers Motivate And Train Staff To Practice Sustainability.</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>5.5 Conclusions</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Chapter Six: Conclusions</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>6.2 Overall Conclusions</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>6.3 Strengths Of The Study</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>6.4 Recommendations For Further Study</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>6.5 Recommendations For Practitioners</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>List Of References</b>	<b>59</b>

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

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## **1.1 Aims And Objectives – Research Rationale**

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing industries globally, and its rapid expansion has led to increasing pressures on socioeconomic and environmental systems (Abdou et al., 2020). As the hospitality industry plays a pivotal role in fostering tourism, it faces the dual challenge of ensuring profitability while upholding ecological responsibility (Kuhlman & Hill, 2010). Sustainability is increasingly recognized as a critical aspect of the hospitality industry, driven by the growing need to minimize environmental impacts while maintaining economic viability (Abdou et al., 2020). Hospitality businesses, which heavily rely on natural resources and local communities, are uniquely positioned to adopt practices that promote environmental protection, social equity, and economic resilience (Kuhlman & Hill, 2010). The need for sustainable practices is particularly urgent in regions such as the Amalfi Coast, where the tourism sector is deeply intertwined with local ecosystems and cultural heritage (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). This study explores the motivations behind sustainable practices in hospitality, particularly in the context of the Amalfi Coast, which is striving to balance tourism growth with environmental conservation efforts (Gössling et al., 2009). Sustainable practices, such as reducing energy consumption, managing waste, and sourcing responsibly, not only help mitigate negative environmental effects but also improve a business's long-term profitability by attracting eco-conscious customers, reducing operational costs, and enhancing brand reputation (Duric & Topler, 2021). The success of sustainability initiatives in hospitality depends on both financial incentives and intrinsic motivations, with hotel managers often balancing external rewards—such as cost savings and regulatory compliance—with personal values and a sense of responsibility to future generations (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Herzberg, 1959). The adoption of green certifications and eco-labels has become an effective way to signal commitment to sustainability, which, in turn, boosts customer loyalty and competitiveness (Abdou et al., 2020). Additionally, incorporating sustainability into business operations fosters a positive organizational culture, improving employee satisfaction and engagement, which are crucial for overall business success (Saarinen, 2014). By examining these factors through frameworks like the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), this research offers insights into the drivers of sustainability in the hospitality sector. The importance of aligning economic success with environmental and social goals is emphasized, as businesses that adopt sustainable practices not only reduce their ecological footprint but also enhance their long-term competitiveness and resilience

in a dynamic market (Duric & Topler, 2021; Jones et al., 2017). Thus, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of motivation in advancing sustainability within the hospitality industry, offering valuable perspectives for managers and policymakers alike. As the hospitality sector faces increasing pressure from both consumers and regulatory bodies to adopt sustainable practices, aligning business strategies with sustainability goals has become an essential factor for achieving long-term success and resilience in the industry (Gössling et al., 2009).

### **1.2 Research Context – The Amalfi Coast**

The natural environment plays a crucial role in shaping the appeal of tourist destinations, as seen on the Amalfi Coast, where its breathtaking landscapes and biodiversity form the core of the region's tourism offering. The hospitality sector, responsible for about 18% of tourism's environmental impact, directly links the natural environment to the attractiveness of destinations (Puig, 2018). On the Amalfi Coast, both local and governmental stakeholders have long been committed to protecting its natural beauty and cultural heritage. By positioning itself as a sustainable tourism leader, the Amalfi Coast enhances its competitiveness in an eco-conscious market, attracting repeat visitors who value environmental responsibility (Lee et al., 2010).

### **1.3 Research Question And Objectives**

In that context, this research's aim is to answer to the question

*How do hotel managers perceive and manage sustainability? A case study in the Amalfi Coast.*

To address this question, the research encompasses three research objectives, which are:

Research objective 1: Explore hotel manager's motivation regarding sustainability practices.

Research objective 2: Explore the perceived benefits of sustainability practices.

Research objective 3: Explore how hotel managers motivate and train staff to practice sustainability.

#### **1.4 Layout Of The Thesis**

Chapter Two will comprise a thorough review of the literature on both environmental sustainability in hospitality and motivational theories. The literature review will furtherly consider the gap in the existing literature and start to address it with the research undertaken in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Three will outline the methodology for primary research, the objectives, the philosophy and paradigm. As well as this, a presentation of the sampling will be made and a descriptive overview on how data were collected.

Chapter Four will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews and the three themes will be extracted from the result

In Chapter Five, these findings will be compared to the findings previously undertaken in the literature review and the research objectives will be answered

Chapter Six will be the conclusive chapter, which will offer some practical recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

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## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

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## **2.1 Introduction**

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing global industries in recent years, with socioeconomic variables increasingly influencing its development (Abdou et al., 2020, p. 1). The interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems underscores the urgent need for sustainable practices (Kuhlman & Hill, 2010). Within this context, hospitality businesses face the critical challenge of balancing ecological responsibility with profitability. As a dynamic and rapidly expanding sector, the hospitality industry is pivotal in advancing sustainability efforts, contributing directly to achieving the 169 targets outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Abdou et al., 2020).

Set against the backdrop of the Amalfi Coast, renowned for its stunning beauty and rich cultural heritage, this study presents a unique and relevant context. With its high dependence on tourism, the region faces the dual challenge of catering to the growing demand for tourist services while preserving its fragile ecological and cultural heritage (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). With ongoing efforts to secure UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, the Amalfi Coast exemplifies the delicate balance between fostering tourism development and ensuring environmental conservation (Gössling et al., 2009). This dual focus creates an ideal setting to explore the motivations behind sustainable practices in hospitality, as businesses must navigate the economic pressures of the tourism industry and their responsibility to local communities and ecosystems (Saarinen, 2014).

Research underscores that sustainable practices reduce environmental impacts and provide long-term economic advantages, such as customer loyalty and enhanced competitive positioning. For example, adopting energy-efficient technologies, responsible procurement, and waste management strategies can improve profitability and resilience to market fluctuations (Duric & Topler, 2021; HyperGuest, 2021). Green certifications, like eco-labels, have been found to attract eco-conscious tourists, which boosts occupancy rates and brand reputation (Abdou et al., 2020; Kuhlman & Hill, 2010). Additionally, sustainable practices positively affect employee motivation and customer satisfaction, ultimately strengthening the financial performance of hospitality businesses (Saarinen, 2014).

The adoption of sustainability initiatives in hospitality is influenced by financial incentives and various motivational factors that shape managerial decision-making. Managers often emphasize financial considerations but are also profoundly influenced by

intrinsic motivations, such as their environmental values and the desire to contribute to societal good. These internal drivers play a crucial role in shaping decision-making, as research demonstrates that when managers align their actions with their values, they are more committed to sustainability initiatives (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gössling et al., 2009). This intrinsic motivation fosters a long-term commitment to sustainable practices beyond immediate financial gains, strengthening organizational values and environmental outcomes.

While financial considerations are often emphasized, intrinsic motivations, such as personal environmental values and the desire to contribute to societal good, also play a crucial role. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that managers driven by intrinsic motivations are more likely to engage in sustainability efforts aligning with personal values and organizational goals, ultimately leading to more sustained commitment to green practices (Gössling et al., 2009). Furthermore, employee engagement—fostered by shared values—plays an integral role in the success of these initiatives, highlighting the interplay between motivation and sustainability in hospitality management.

## **2.2 Environmental Sustainability**

Sustainability is rooted in responsibility, encompassing the management of human, economic, and natural resources (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). This concept is framed within the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model, first introduced by Elkington, which posits that businesses should go beyond financial profitability to also focus on social and environmental well-being. The TBL emphasizes that companies should measure their success by profit and impact on employees, society, and the environment (Elkington, 1997; Hahn & Figge, 2011). Environmentally, sustainability involves minimizing ecological footprints by reducing emissions, preserving ecosystems, and adopting renewable energy solutions. Social sustainability ensures equity and justice, focusing on essential rights like access to food, clean water, education, and healthcare. Economically, sustainability advocates for patterns of production and consumption that conserve resources efficiently and contribute to long-term value creation without depleting environmental or societal capital.

The 1987 Brundtland Report significantly shaped the concept of sustainability by defining it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on

Environment and Development, 1987). This definition has since guided various sustainability frameworks and practices across industries (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010; Dong et al., 2017). This foundational definition has been further developed and applied across various sectors, including business, where sustainability has become a strategic approach to ensure long-term viability while safeguarding natural resources and fostering social responsibility (Dong et al., 2017).

Businesses must establish clear, measurable, and rational goals to implement sustainability. Researchers have developed several methodologies to standardize sustainability practices and create frameworks that guide decision-making (Dong et al., 2017; Steffen et al., 2015; United Nations, 2015). These approaches enable businesses to effectively measure and track their sustainability efforts while addressing environmental, social, and economic challenges. Among these are:

- **Planetary Boundaries:** Defined by Steffen et al. (2015), planetary boundaries delineate the "safe operating space for humanity" based on biophysical processes that regulate Earth's system stability. These boundaries provide critical thresholds to prevent catastrophic environmental damage.
- **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA):** This tool quantifies all relevant emissions, resource consumption, and the associated environmental and health impacts of products or services (Dong et al., 2017). LCA helps businesses evaluate their sustainability performance throughout the entire lifecycle of their offerings.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Introduced by the United Nations in 2015, the SDGs consist of 17 overarching goals and 169 specific targets designed to address global sustainability challenges by 2030. These goals encompass various issues, from eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable economic growth to fostering environmental conservation (United Nations, 2015).

For example, organizations such as Failte Ireland are leading efforts in integrating sustainability by focusing on waste reduction and energy consumption and creating a long-term, internalized process for sustainability. This holistic approach ensures that sustainability is embedded into the core business strategy, contributing to long-term success (Failte Ireland, 2020).

In summary, sustainability in business, particularly in the hospitality industry, requires a multidimensional approach that integrates environmental protection, social equity, and

economic viability. By leveraging tools like planetary boundaries, life cycle assessment, and aligning with the SDGs, businesses can navigate the complexities of sustainability and contribute to a more sustainable future.

### **2.3 Sustainability In The Hospitality Business**

Sustainability in the hospitality industry requires a comprehensive, multidimensional approach that integrates environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate for such an approach, urging businesses to actively participate in driving positive change (Jones et al., 2017). By aligning with the SDGs and leveraging tools like planetary boundaries and life cycle assessments, businesses can seize opportunities for new revenue streams and stronger stakeholder relationships and effectively address the urgency of adopting sustainable practices. This holistic integration enables businesses to navigate the complexities of sustainability while fostering long-term profitability and contributing to a more sustainable future. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, urging businesses to drive positive change actively (Jones et al., 2017). Adopting these goals presents businesses with a broad spectrum of opportunities, including creating new revenue streams and developing stronger relationships with customers, employees, and other stakeholders. However, implementing such strategies requires substantial organizational changes, pushing companies to adopt more sustainable practices. This necessity highlights the urgency of addressing these challenges and compels businesses to take immediate action toward a more sustainable future.

In the tourism sector, the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2015) defines *sustainable tourism* as an approach that satisfies the needs of the environment and host communities while carefully considering the environmental impacts of tourism activities. The hotel industry is widely recognized as one of the most resource-intensive tourism sectors, consuming significant amounts of water, energy, and non-durable goods (Jones et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2010). This high level of resource use highlights the urgent need for hotels to adopt more sustainable practices to reduce their environmental impact and align with the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly options. However, the growing emphasis on sustainability presents a promising opportunity for the sector, demonstrating that it can offer high-quality services while minimizing environmental harm.

In recent years, several factors have prompted hotel managers to begin integrating sustainable practices. Consumer demand for eco-friendly options has surged, with travelers increasingly seeking hotels prioritizing energy efficiency and environmental responsibility (Abdou et al., 2020). As a result, adopting proper waste disposal systems, utilizing energy efficiently, and investing in sustainable energy sources have become critical goals for hospitality managers (Jones et al., 2017). These changes point toward a more sustainable future for the hotel industry.

Moreover, hotels' environmental sustainability directly influences guest satisfaction and loyalty. Tourists who stay in sustainable hotels are more likely to return, leave positive reviews, and recommend these establishments to others (Lee et al., 2010). This positive feedback loop further incentivizes hotels to adopt sustainable practices to meet customer expectations and environmental goals.

To measure sustainability levels in hotels, Baratta et al., (2018) proposed a comprehensive framework encompassing five key areas: waste management, water usage, energy efficiency, sustainable purchasing practices (including local and environmentally certified products), and the treatment of people, which includes both staff welfare and customer engagement. These dimensions provide a practical tool for evaluating and enhancing the sustainability practices of hotels, offering insights into the areas that require attention and improvement.

In conclusion, adopting sustainable practices in the hotel industry responds to the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly options. It strengthens long-term business performance by fostering customer loyalty and operational efficiency. By leveraging frameworks like the one proposed by Baratta Vargas and Ugolini (2018), hotel managers can systematically address sustainability challenges and move toward a more responsible and profitable future.

### **2.3 Motivation Theories**

To successfully integrate sustainability into their operations, hotel managers must adopt eco-friendly practices and be motivated by various factors. Motivation is critical in shaping how and why businesses embrace sustainable initiatives. While financial incentives, such as cost savings and improved profitability, often serve as immediate drivers, intrinsic motivations, such as personal values, ethical considerations, and a desire to contribute to societal well-being, are equally influential (Jones et al., 2017; Abdou et

al., 2020). Understanding these diverse motivations provides a comprehensive view of the factors influencing decision-making in the hospitality sector. This perspective allows for a deeper exploration of how these internal and external drivers promote sustainability within hotel management.

*Motivation* is "a way of creating a high level of enthusiasm to reach organizational goals, and this situation is accommodated by satisfying individual employees' needs or demands" (Haque et al., 2014). Motivation theories play a critical role in shaping management practices, offering insights into how to inspire employees and managers to act. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most foundational theories. Individuals drive themselves by a series of needs, with each level becoming more urgent as individuals fulfill the previous one. However, while Maslow's framework helps understand personal motivations, it must comprehensively explain what drives hotel managers to adopt sustainable practices. To explore this, more context-specific theories, such as the Incentive Theory and Self-Determination Theory, offer better insights into the external and internal factors influencing managerial decisions. However, while this theory provides an essential framework for understanding personal motivations, it needs to fully explain the factors that drive managers to implement sustainable practices in the hotel industry. In this context, more specific motivational theories, such as the Incentive Theory and Self-Determination Theory, offer deeper insights into the extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing managerial decision-making. Instead, more relevant theories like the Incentive Theory offer a deeper understanding of motivation in this specific setting.

Incentive Theory, first introduced by B.F. Skinner in *The Behavior of Organisms*, posits that external factors, rather than internal desires, drive behavior. Individuals are motivated to act based on two key forces: deprivation and satiation. Deprivation occurs when a person lacks something considered desirable, prompting them to take action to obtain it. For example, hunger motivates an individual to seek food.

Satiation suggests that once an individual satisfies a need, its urgency decreases, and its motivation to pursue that need diminishes. This concept aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which highlights that once an individual can fulfill basic needs, it no longer serves as a primary motivator. Individuals shift their focus to higher-level needs (Herzberg, 1959). As a result, managers may move on to other priorities or initiatives once they have achieved specific sustainable goals within their organization. This fundamental principle of the theory was expanded upon by Herzberg in the 1950s,

who introduced the two-factor incentive theory, identifying "motivators" (such as recognition, achievement, or advancement) and "hygiene factors" (such as salary, working conditions, and company policies). Herzberg's model emphasizes that motivation stems from external incentives—such as positive rewards or negative consequences—rather than solely from internal drives. This perspective highlights the role of tangible outcomes in driving behavior, suggesting that managers respond to rewards and penalties in their decision-making processes. By framing motivation in terms of external factors, Herzberg's theory provides a different lens through which to view the forces that drive hotel managers to implement sustainable practices, aligning with the broader concept of incentive theory (Herzberg, 1959). Incentive Theory can be applied to the hospitality industry to understand what motivates hotel managers to adopt sustainable practices. Positive incentives, such as cost savings from energy-efficient technologies or the potential for increased revenue through an enhanced reputation, serve as rewards that encourage sustainability efforts. Conversely, adverse incentives, like potential fines for non-compliance with environmental regulations or damage to the hotel's reputation from poor sustainability practices, act as deterrents. In both cases, external factors—whether rewards or punishments—are the primary motivators for hotel managers to implement and prioritize sustainable practices (Abdou et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2017).

In addition to external incentives, intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in shaping managerial decision-making. Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key components of intrinsic motivation. This theory posits that individuals who experience autonomy in their actions are more likely to feel intrinsically motivated, leading to a more profound commitment to sustainable practices. When sustainability efforts align with their values and the broader organizational goals, hotel managers are more likely to engage in and remain committed to these initiatives in the long term. Research suggests that intrinsic motivation strengthens managerial commitment to sustainability beyond immediate financial gains, contributing to a more enduring culture of sustainability within the organization (Gössling et al., 2009). This interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations underscores the complexity of decision-making in hospitality, where both internal values and external incentives influence the implementation of sustainability practices.

## Sustainable Practices In Hotels - Integration With Motivation Theories

### Self- Determination Theory

Self-determination theory, articulated by Ryan and Deci (2000), emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation—the internal drive to act according to one's values and goals. This framework is particularly relevant in sustainable practices, as hotel managers are often motivated to align their operations with environmental values, personal beliefs, and societal responsibilities. SDT posits that individuals are motivated by the need to feel competent, autonomous, and connected to others. These core psychological needs are highly relevant when examining why hotel managers adopt sustainable practices.

For instance, in the case of energy efficiency, hotel managers may implement measures like LED lighting or innovative climate control systems not only because of financial incentives but also because they feel competent in managing their property's energy consumption. These actions fulfill their intrinsic need for effectiveness and environmental responsibility, contributing to a stronger sense of autonomy and competence in their decision-making processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gössling et al., 2009).

Similarly, water conservation efforts, such as installing low-flow fixtures or promoting water reuse programs, are often motivated by a desire to preserve essential resources and positively impact the environment. In line with SDT, such decisions stem from an intrinsic motivation to act in ways that align with personal environmental values, ultimately fulfilling the need for relatedness by creating a positive connection with the natural world and hotel guests (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, waste management initiatives like composting or minimizing plastic usage align with the SDT's emphasis on competence and relatedness. Hotel managers who implement these practices often experience a sense of pride in reducing their environmental impact, which strengthens their commitment to sustainable practices (Gössling et al., 2009).

### Incentive Theory

In contrast to SDT's focus on internal motivations, Incentive Theory posits that external rewards drive individuals. The first to propose this idea was B.F. Skinner (1953). Later refined by Herzberg (1959), this theory emphasizes that external incentives shape behavior—positive rewards or negative consequences. In the hotel industry, managers are

often motivated to adopt sustainability practices by the tangible rewards that result from such efforts, such as cost savings and market differentiation.

For example, energy-efficient measures directly contribute to lower utility bills, offering hotels financial incentives to reduce their energy consumption. These savings serve as external rewards, reinforcing the adoption of sustainable technologies as a strategic business decision (Baratta et al., 2018). Similarly, the ability to differentiate in the market by adopting sustainable practices is a significant motivator, as hotels increasingly cater to environmentally conscious customers. In this case, the external incentive is financial and reputational, as hotels with strong sustainability credentials can charge premium prices and attract a dedicated clientele.

Applying government incentives, such as grants or tax benefits for sustainable initiatives, further highlights the external rewards that encourage sustainability efforts in the hospitality industry. These incentives reduce the financial burden of implementing green practices, making them more appealing to hotel managers looking to balance profitability with environmental responsibility (Baratta et al., 2018).

Finally, public relations benefits—such as positive media coverage or improved brand image—are another significant motivator in adopting sustainable practices. Hotels that invest in green initiatives often experience enhanced reputations, which can lead to increased customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. These external incentives underscore the role of reputational capital in driving the adoption of sustainable practices (Herzberg, 1959; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

#### Integration Of SDT And Incentive Theory

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play crucial roles in driving hotel managers' decisions to adopt sustainability practices. Integrating Self-Determination Theory and Incentive Theory allows for a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing sustainability in the hospitality industry. While SDT underscores the importance of personal values, autonomy, and environmental responsibility, Incentive Theory highlights the external rewards and consequences that encourage managers to invest in sustainability practices.

Managers who feel motivated by intrinsic factors (e.g., the desire to contribute to environmental well-being) and extrinsic factors (e.g., financial savings, government incentives, positive public relations) are likelier to commit to long-term sustainable

practices that align with their personal values and organizational goals. This comprehensive approach improves hotel performance and contributes to broader global sustainability goals (Gössling et al., 2009).

By applying both theories to adopting sustainability initiatives in the hospitality sector, researchers and practitioners can better understand the multifaceted motivations that drive hotels to implement eco-friendly practices, ultimately advancing the field toward more sustainable business models.

## **2.4 Research Gap**

The existing literature predominantly emphasizes monetary advantages as the primary motivator for hotels to adopt sustainable practices. Financial incentives, such as cost savings, government subsidies, and increased customer willingness to pay more for eco-friendly services, are well-documented (Baratta et al., 2018; Vargas & Ugolini, 2018). However, the non-monetary drivers of sustainability adoption remain underexplored. Existing research tends to overlook the intrinsic motivations that shape managerial decisions, such as personal environmental values, ethical commitments, and the desire to contribute to societal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gössling et al., 2009). These non-monetary advantages may profoundly impact decision-making significantly when the financial returns of sustainable practices are delayed or uncertain (Abdou et al., 2020).

While financial incentives are important, non-monetary factors such as reputation management, employee satisfaction, and long-term environmental goals often motivate hotel managers to adopt sustainable practices. This research gap is critical because it challenges the prevailing assumption that monetary gains drive the adoption of sustainability. Motivation theory, particularly Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), provides a more nuanced framework to explore how intrinsic factors influence sustainability decisions. This theory suggests that managers motivated by personal values and a desire for social responsibility are likelier to engage in sustainability efforts that align with their personal and organizational goals (Gössling et al., 2009).

Thus, this study explores the role of non-monetary motivations in sustainability decision-making within the hospitality industry. By focusing on these intrinsic drivers, the research aims to fill the gap in the literature and provide a deeper understanding of how values-driven and reputation-oriented motivations contribute to the successful implementation of sustainable hotel practices.

## **2.5 Context: The Amalfi Coast**

The natural environment shapes tourist destinations' attractiveness and overall appeal. This affirmation is particularly evident in the case of the Amalfi Coast, where its stunning landscapes and biodiversity are at the heart of the region's tourism offering. Puig (2018) notes that the hospitality sector is responsible for around 18% of tourism's environmental impact, with the natural environment as a key element of the destination's "product." However, the need for sustainable practices is more pressing than ever to maintain the delicate balance between tourism and environmental preservation.

On the Amalfi Coast, governmental and local stakeholders have long prioritized preserving its natural beauty and cultural heritage. One key organization, ACARBIO, supported by the Campania region, aims to achieve the designation of the Amalfi Coast as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This effort builds upon the region's prior recognition as a World Heritage Site and reflects the ongoing commitment to balancing human development with environmental conservation. By promoting a model that demonstrates a harmonious relationship between humanity and the biosphere, the Amalfi Coast seeks to become a leader in sustainable tourism practices.

According to the Distretto Turistico Costa D'Amalfi, a collaborative platform between governmental and non-governmental organizations, the Amalfi Coast attracts approximately 5 million visitors annually. This large influx of tourists highlights the need for effective strategies to manage tourism's environmental and socio-cultural impact. Sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly infrastructure, waste reduction, and local sourcing of goods, are vital for maintaining the region's ecological integrity while supporting its economy.

The Amalfi Coast's focus on sustainability aligns with global trends in responsible tourism. Research indicates that tourists increasingly seek destinations prioritizing environmental conservation and cultural preservation (Gössling et al., 2009; Hall, 2011). In this context, the Amalfi Coast's efforts to establish itself as a model for sustainable tourism resonate with broader goals in the tourism industry to ensure the long-term viability of natural resources. By emphasizing sustainability as a key value, the region can enhance its competitiveness in a market that is becoming increasingly eco-conscious. Moreover, integrating sustainable practices can generate positive economic returns, as tourists are more likely to return to and recommend destinations that align with their values (Lee et al., 2010).

Thus, the continued promotion of sustainable practices on the Amalfi Coast helps protect its natural environment and strengthens the region's appeal to a growing demographic of eco-conscious travelers. These initiatives exemplify the importance of aligning tourism development with environmental stewardship, a key principle of sustainable tourism.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

In conclusion, balancing environmental and societal responsibility with profitability has become a pivotal benchmark for success in the hospitality industry. Hotels, like other sectors, are increasingly adopting a holistic framework that integrates financial performance with environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic sustainability. As explored in this chapter, the motivations driving managerial commitment to sustainability are multifaceted. Financial incentives, such as cost savings, premium pricing, and competitive differentiation, are complemented by intrinsic motivations rooted in personal values, environmental ethics, and a commitment to community well-being (Gössling et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) emphasizes that intrinsic motivation fosters long-term engagement by aligning personal values with organizational objectives, ensuring genuine commitment to sustainability efforts.

Additionally, Incentive Theory provides a nuanced understanding of how extrinsic factors—such as regulatory compliance, market demands, and reputational gains—drive sustainable practices. For example, Herzberg's two-factor theory demonstrates how motivators like recognition and advancement can inspire sustainability, while hygiene factors like policy enforcement prevent unsustainable behaviors (Herzberg, 1959; Skinner, 1938). These frameworks underscore the interplay of internal and external motivations in fostering sustainability transitions.

This dual focus on intrinsic and extrinsic drivers is particularly relevant in regions like the Amalfi Coast, which exemplifies the delicate balance between tourism growth and environmental conservation. Efforts like ACARBIO's campaign for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve recognition and initiatives by "Distretto Turistico Costa D'Amalfi" highlight the region's proactive approach to harmonizing development with ecological preservation (Puig, 2018; Baratta et al., 2018). These case studies emphasize the necessity of continued research, collaboration, and innovation across the hospitality sector to understand better and leverage these drivers of sustainability.

By applying theories of motivation and leveraging empirical insights, the industry can cultivate a culture of sustainability that goes beyond mere regulatory compliance. Instead, it reflects a genuine responsibility toward the planet and society. As research illustrates, sustainability safeguards natural resources, nurtures community relationships, and enhances brand loyalty and competitive positioning (Lee et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2017). Prioritizing sustainability marks a profound paradigm shift in how businesses perceive their impact, laying the foundation for a fairer, more resilient, and environmentally conscious future. Through this transformation, the hospitality sector is critical to global sustainability goals, fostering ecosystems and communities for generations.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

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### **3.1 Introduction**

As outlined in the previous chapter, the literature provided up until now needs to include the role of non-monetary incentives and motivation related to managers' adoption of sustainable practices within the structures they manage. Innovative research is needed to address these gaps and provide actionable insights, specifically within the theories of Self-Determination and Motivation. This chapter outlines the unique design tailored to investigate the research question and objectives, offering a clear rationale for the chosen methodology and its alignment with the study's aims.

This dissertation's core research question is: How do hotel managers perceive and manage sustainability? A case study in the Amalfi Coast.

Primary research has been conducted through semi-structured interviews to examine further the motivations and perceptions of hotel managers, specifically in the context of the Amalfi Coast. This chapter will discuss the reasoning behind the choice of this methodology.

In 2007, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill proposed *the research onion*, a framework to guide researchers through creating a solid methodology. This framework visualizes the research process as a multi-layered onion, with each layer representing a key stage in the design of a research project: research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research choices, time horizons, sampling, limitations, and ethics.

In conclusion, this chapter establishes the dissertation's methodological foundation, emphasizing integrating theoretical and practical perspectives. Subsequent chapters will delve into the specifics of the research design, objectives, and underlying philosophy, detailing how they support the investigation of managers' motivations in driving sustainable hotel practices on the Amalfi Coast.

### **3.2 Research Objectives**

The overarching objective of this research is to uncover the most effective sustainable practices employed by hotel managers and to identify commonalities, if any, among the strategies used by different hotels. This comprehensive approach led to three main objectives

at the core of the research and the questions posed to the hotel managers.

A thorough review of the literature identified a conceptual framework and highlighted a research gap aligned with the thesis's aim, which is to discover

*How Hotel Managers Perceive and Manage Sustainability; specifically, it will be a case study on the Amalfi Coast.*

Therefore, the main objectives of the research are:

1. *Firstly, to investigate hotel manager's motivation regarding sustainability practices;*
2. *Secondly, to interpret the perceived benefits of sustainability practices.*
3. *Lastly, to Explore how hotel managers motivate and train staff to practice sustainability.*

The primary research was based on these objectives, and this study explored the motivations driving hotel managers on the Amalfi Coast to adopt sustainable practices. This research has provided a new perspective on how the managers of hotels on the Amalfi Coast perceive their journey to sustainability. The findings, analyzed using thematic analysis, contributed to developing a theory offering a novel perspective on how these managers perceive and navigate their journey toward sustainability.

### **3.3 Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy refers to beliefs and assumptions that underpin knowledge development and guide the research process (Saunders et al., 2009). Research philosophy is the first layer of the onion. When conducting research, researchers inevitably make a series of conscious or unconscious assumptions that shape their understanding of the research question and influence the interpretation of results (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). These assumptions form the foundation of differing research philosophies, which can be distinguished based on variations in their underlying assumptions (Saunders et al., 2009).

Researchers' assumptions are generally categorized into three primary dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

## **Positivism**

*Positivism* is a research philosophy emphasizing the importance of objective reality and the belief that knowledge can be derived from observable and measurable facts. This approach assumes that the social world operates according to laws similar to natural science laws, which can be discovered through empirical observation and testing (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers using a positivist approach typically focus on quantitative data to uncover patterns or causal relationships between variables. The methodology often involves hypothesis testing through experiments, surveys, or statistical analyses to validate or refute theories. Positivism is well-suited for research aiming to generalize findings and establish causal relationships in large populations (Creswell, 2014). Positivism focuses on objective facts and generally employs scientific methods. It is closely associated with quantitative research because it is primarily concerned with measuring the quantity of a given phenomenon and testing preexisting theories (Crewel, 2002; Biggam, 2008). Quantitative research often prefers positivism, relying on measurable data and objective analysis. The word positivism concerns the importance of what is true and given - I.e., posited. Given this nature, this approach yields pure data, leaving out any interpretation.

## **Interpretivism**

*Interpretivism* is a qualitative research philosophy that stresses the importance of understanding the meanings and experiences of individuals in their social and cultural contexts. It argues that reality is subjective and shaped by human experience and, therefore, cannot be understood purely through objective observation (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers adopting an interpretive approach aim to interpret how people make sense of their world, often using in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The focus is on gaining insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of participants rather than seeking to uncover universal laws. This approach is efficient for research exploring complex social phenomena, such as human perceptions and behaviors in specific contexts (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism, on the other hand, emphasizes the subjective understanding of the matter being studied, making it better suited for qualitative research. Unlike positivism, interpretivism seeks to gain a deep, context-rich knowledge of a phenomenon by relying on the experiences of those directly involved. Interpretivism focuses on the life experiences of the individuals, whether they

are the people involved in the research or the researchers themselves; in other words, interpretivism is a philosophy that can be defined as subjective.

### **Critical Realism**

*Critical realism* is a research philosophy combining positivism and interpretivism. It proposes that while reality exists independently of human perception, social, cultural, and historical contexts shape our understanding. According to critical realism, researchers should explore observable phenomena and investigate the underlying structures and mechanisms that influence those phenomena (Bhaskar, 2013). This philosophy supports a more nuanced view of causality, recognizing that material factors and human agency influence social events. Critical realism is particularly useful for research addressing complex issues, such as sustainability, where both external factors (e.g., regulations) and internal beliefs (e.g., managers' perceptions) shape outcomes (Danermark et al., 2002).

### **3.4. Approaches And Rationale**

According to Sanders et al. (2007), the second layer of the onion deals with the research approach. This latter can be either deductive or inductive. Inductive and deductive approaches represent two key methods of reasoning in research, each with distinct processes and applications. The **inductive approach** begins with the collection of data, which is then analyzed to identify patterns or themes, ultimately leading to the development of a new theory. This approach is often used in qualitative research, as it is exploratory and flexible, allowing for new insights without preexisting hypotheses (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014). Conversely, the **deductive approach** starts with an established theory or hypothesis, which is then tested through structured data collection and analysis. Deductive reasoning is typically aligned with quantitative research, as it focuses on confirming or refuting specific hypotheses derived from theoretical frameworks (Saunders et al., 2019). Researchers may also combine these approaches, employing an abductive process where inductive reasoning identifies potential hypotheses that are later tested deductively (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Choosing between these approaches depends on the research question, objectives, and the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

As the key focus of this work is to outline and deeply understand the motivations and practices regarding sustainability for hotel managers, the inductive approach is the most

indicated. Once the responses are collected, the data will be examined for recurring patterns, which will inform the development of a theory based on these emergent themes.

### **3.5. Research Strategies - Qualitative Research**

According to Sauders et al. (2007), the third layer of the onion discusses the research strategy and the description of data collection. Ponto (2015) delineates three primary data collection methods: qualitative, quantitative, or a combination. The disparity between quantitative and qualitative methods is apparent. As per Robson (2002), qualitative methods concentrate on a smaller dataset (typically around 10-15 specific subjects for each research), collecting opinions and ideas through in-depth interviews and delving deeply into the concept. Conversely, quantitative methods are tailored for larger datasets (Zikmund, 2003). Quantitative research condenses interview results into analytical findings, amalgamating numerical values and analytics (Gelo et al., 2008). Gelo (2008) states that while studies have traditionally focused on quantitative research due to its objectivity and measurability, qualitative research has gained increasing significance in recent decades.

This rise in the importance of qualitative research has opened up avenues in the research arena for quantitative research, rooted in a positivist approach. This type of research objectively analyzes factual data using scientific methods to measure and quantify phenomena, establish causal relationships, and test hypotheses.

Conversely, qualitative research, grounded in an interpretive or constructivist paradigm, aims to generate rich, in-depth insights by exploring the meanings and interpretations of social phenomena. It delves into the complexities of human experiences and perspectives using interviews, observations, and open-ended surveys.

Qualitative research is essential for comprehending individuals' motivations, attitudes, and behaviors and exploring social and cultural contexts. It enables researchers to gain profound insights into subjective experiences and diverse perspectives that cannot be fully captured through statistical analysis alone.

### **3.6. Rationale For Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research explores questions that seek to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning and experience of human lives and their social world (Fossey et al., 1998). The choice of a qualitative approach for this research is based on its focus on understanding a phenomenon rather than merely analyzing it through quantifiable data

(Elliot et al., 2005). In-depth semi-structured interviews with managers and individuals responsible for environmental initiatives in Amalfi Coast hotels form the primary data collection method. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of personal motivations, organizational strategies, and external factors influencing sustainable practices. In this case, the interpretive paradigm is the most appropriate, as the research aims to understand hotel managers' motivations, perceptions, and experiences from their perspective. This paradigm emphasizes gaining insights into how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences. Thanh et al. (2015) note that the interpretive paradigm is functional when the research aims to understand answers from the participant's points of view. This research seeks to do just that—understand how hotel managers perceive sustainability, why they are motivated to adopt sustainable practices, and how they view the

Benefits associated with those practices.

The rationale for selecting semi-structured interviews lies in their flexibility and ability to uncover rich, detailed insights. This method balances guided inquiry and open-ended exploration, ensuring the research remains systematic and adaptive to emergent themes (Duric & Topler, 2021). By focusing on hotel managers in the Amalfi Coast, this study leverages a region renowned for its natural beauty and cultural heritage—factors that heighten the significance of sustainable practices (Piscitelli, 2011). The qualitative nature of this research aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, which prioritizes understanding human behavior within specific contexts (Fossey et al., 2002).

### **3.7. Tools And Approaches - The Sample**

This section will delve into the research methods employed, particularly the type of sampling selected for this study. Sampling scans a definite number of people with common characteristics. According to Anienting, 2007, the small number of people is considered because there are insufficient resources and time to cover the whole population. Different kinds of samplings can be considered when doing research, and the nature of the research gives us a choice of which is best to adopt. Sampling is critical to ensure that the research collects representative and relevant data from the hotel managers on the Amalfi Coast. By choosing a qualitative approach, the study prioritizes in-depth insights and personal narratives over large-scale quantitative data, ensuring that the research captures the full complexity of managers' motivations and sustainability

strategies. The sample consists of 10 hotels with different backgrounds and histories located in other towns on the Amalfi Coast.

### **3.7.1 Snowballing Sampling**

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research, particularly when studying hard-to-reach or specialized populations. This method begins with identifying a small number of initial participants who meet the study's criteria, referred to as "seeds." These participants then refer the researcher to other potential participants within their network, creating a "snowball" effect as the sample grows. This approach is especially valuable in studies where participants are not easily accessible through traditional sampling methods, such as marginalized groups, illicit activity participants, or rare professional groups (Goodman, 1961).

A key advantage of snowball sampling is its efficiency in accessing hidden or inaccessible populations. For example, Atkinson and Flint (2001) emphasize that the method allows researchers to leverage existing social networks, reducing the time and resources needed to locate participants. Furthermore, this approach can foster trust between the researcher and participants, as initial referrals often vouch for the researcher's credibility. Trust is particularly crucial when studying for research, as it increases participants' willingness to share honest and detailed information (Noy, 2008).

However, snowball sampling has notable limitations. The reliance on social networks can lead to sampling bias, as participants are likely to refer individuals with similar characteristics or experiences. This bias can limit the diversity and representativeness of the sample, potentially skewing research findings (Heckathorn, 1997). Additionally, the chain-referral process may create ethical challenges, such as breaches of confidentiality if participants are unwillingly identified to others within their network. Researchers must exercise caution and implement robust ethical protocols to address these concerns (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

The use of snowball sampling was adopted for this research: one of the interviewed, as they hold a powerful position, asked formally through a WhatsApp message and a survey whether the people wanted to be contacted to participate in this research.

In practice, snowball sampling is widely used in sociological and anthropological research. For instance, researchers exploring the lived experiences of undocumented immigrants or individuals involved in stigmatized professions, such as sex work, often

rely on this method to build trust and access participants (Waters, 2013). Despite its limitations, snowball sampling remains a powerful tool for generating in-depth insights, particularly when combined with other sampling techniques or when researchers aim to provide rich qualitative data rather than statistically generalizable findings (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004).

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The final layer of the research onion involves selecting the appropriate data analysis technique. This study used thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes within qualitative data effectively (Braun et al., 2016). This method enables the researcher to systematically analyze data by coding patterns, irrespective of whether these themes reflect majority opinions (Scharp & Sanders, 2018). The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, which involves reviewing the collected data, coding it into categories, generating initial themes, refining and defining these themes, and finally identifying illustrative examples from the data (Scharp & Sanders, 2018).

As this research adopted an inductive approach, the themes emerged directly from the collected data rather than being predetermined. Although the initial prompt questions were loosely grounded in the literature, the themes developed were primarily shaped by the participants' responses. This approach suits the study's aim, as thematic analysis offers deep insights into participants' perspectives and the underlying factors influencing specific phenomena (Braun et al., 2016).

### **3.9 Limitations**

Qualitative research, while valuable for exploring complex social phenomena and gaining deep insights into individual experiences, has several limitations. One key limitation is its **subjectivity**, as the researcher's interpretations can influence the analysis, leading to potential bias in theme identification or data interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the **generalizability** of qualitative findings is often limited because the focus is typically on small, non-representative samples that provide context-specific insights rather than broad applicability (Bryman, 2016). Another challenge is the **time-intensive nature** of data collection and analysis, such as conducting interviews or coding data, which can be resource-heavy and less feasible for large-scale studies (Tracy, 2019). Furthermore, ensuring **rigor and transparency** in qualitative research requires careful documentation and justification of methodological decisions, which can be complex and

nuanced (Nowell et al., 2017). Despite these limitations, qualitative methods remain indispensable for understanding the rich, detailed contexts of human behavior and social interactions.

### **3.10 Research Ethics**

This research was conducted with the ethical approval of the Technological University of Dublin. The confirmation of ethical approval is in the appendixes.

All the respondents were previously informed of the purpose of the interview and that their anonymity and data confidentiality would be respected. All respondents gave consent for their data to be used in the study; their verbal consent was recorded and stored, and I provided them with a consent form—find the blank consent form in the appendixes.

### **3.11 Conclusions**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the methodological framework underpinning this research, guided by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill's (2007) research onion model. It began by detailing the research objectives and philosophy, emphasizing the importance of an interpretivist approach to explore how hotel managers perceive and manage sustainability in the context of the Amalfi Coast. The inductive approach was justified as the most suitable for uncovering emerging themes from qualitative data, aligning with the study's exploratory nature.

This study has used semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insights into managers' motivations, perceptions, and strategies for promoting sustainability within their organizations. The rationale for adopting thematic analysis was elaborated, highlighting its strength in identifying patterns and themes within rich qualitative data. Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed, ensuring transparency and the integrity of the research process.

While acknowledging qualitative research's limitations, such as its subjectivity and limited generalizability, the chapter emphasized its value in providing context-rich understanding and nuanced insights. This methodology lays a solid foundation for analyzing the findings, which will contribute to addressing the identified research gaps and offer a fresh perspective on sustainable practices within the hospitality sector. The next chapter will delve into the results and discuss the implications of these findings in detail.

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## **Chapter Four: Findings**

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#### **4.1 Introduction**

This section outlines the interviews conducted with various stakeholders from hotels and tour operators in the Amalfi Coast region. The interviews focused on four key themes: Sustainability Management and Motivation, Sustainable Practices and Respect for the Territory, Employees' Motivation, and Customer Retention. Sustainability and motivation theories have been extensively discussed in the literature review, pointing out practical examples on how motivation can be influential on the decision-making of the managers. The development of this chapter is divided in four themes, as to respond to the three objectives; the first one deals with sustainability management; the questions dedicated to this theme were the most specific and dealt with the generalities of the managers and how they started the journey to sustainability.

The second and third section are part of the second objective, which was to understand the perceived benefits managers gain from applying sustainable practices; by asking about the most common sustainable practices that they have and about customer retention, it was clear which of the practices they were prouder of and how they perceived them to be full of benefits.

The fourth section deals mostly with employee's motivation, which is interesting because there's the possibility to see the real difference between small and more structured hotels on how they deal with training and employees motivation.

#### **Profile Of The Respondents**

The ten respondents below are all hotel workers and managers on the Amalfi Coast. Most respondents hold management positions, and others hold sustainability management positions. The context of the Amalfi Coast is known for its small family-owned hotels, so most of the respondents have high positions in the direction of the hotel.

	ROLE	
RESPONDENT 1	HOTEL MANAGER	FAMILY-OWNED
RESPONDENT 2	HOTEL MANAGER	FAMILY-OWNED
RESPONDENT 3	SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER	5 STAR HOTEL
RESPONDENT 4	HOTEL MANAGER	LUXURY HOTEL
RESPONDENT 5	HOTEL MANAGER	LUXURY HOTEL
RESPONDENT 6	SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPER	5 STAR HOTEL
RESPONDENT 7	HOTEL MANAGER	FAMILY-OWNED
RESPONDENT 8	HOTEL MANAGER	FAMILY-OWNED
RESPONDENT 9	HOTEL MANAGER	SMALL HOTEL
RESPONDENT 10	SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER	5 STAR HOTEL

#### **4.2 Theme 1 - Sustainability Management**

For the first part of the interview, the respondents were asked about their Journey towards sustainability. The question was aimed to partially respond to the first objective: motivation to become sustainable. Sustainability initiatives in the region's hospitality and tourism sector demonstrate varying degrees of commitment and evolution, primarily influenced by managerial decisions.

Respondent 1 said sustainability practices have been a priority since he and his wife took over the business.

*"Since 2002/2003, long before sustainability was considered an issue by most, we were already working towards it."*

Respondent 3 responded similarly, stating that she and her business partner.

*[we] started the business with the idea of making it sustainable; what brought me and my cofounder together was the willingness to create something new and innovative in the Amalfi Coast*

Respondents 6, 7, 8, and 9 echoed these answers, clarifying that their Journey started because of their strong beliefs in sustainable practices.

On the other hand, respondents 2 and 5 had a different intake on the specific topic, but at the same time, they gave two completely different answers;

As for respondent 2,

*[we] decided it was time for a change when the suppliers forced us to lead the issue. Before that, we never considered sustainability practices.*

It stated that their decision came from an external force that was not planned and almost forced the hotel to take action.

As for Respondent 5,

*the Belmond group decided that every hotel under their ownership needed to implement sustainable practices.*

Introducing a dedicated **Sustainability Supervisor** role in 2021 marks a significant step toward structured sustainability management for them. This move reflects the chain's goal of annually maintaining and renewing its Check" certification.

Once again, it is a motivation that differs significantly from that of smaller and family-owned hotels.

When asked about how sustainable they would define their hotel, all the respondents had similar answers;

Respondent 1 stated

*6, as we are highly attentive to the subject, our future goals are very ambitious. We are continuously working to identify ways to reduce the use of certain materials and recycle them as sustainably as possible. Additionally, we are focused on involving small businesses in our practices.*

When given a scale from 1 to 10, most respondents stated their organization to be a 6, except for Respondent 3 and Respondent 8, who ironically gave a similar answer.

Respondent 3 said

*We encourage public transportation and offer a service from the airport to the hotel; when customers decide to follow our itineraries, we provide them with tickets for public transportation.*

Along the same line, Respondent 8 said

*We have an ongoing partnership with eco boats, offered by a tour operator that is very attentive to these issues; we offer travelers from the north of Italy the possibility of buying tickets directly for Amalfi from Rome or Milan by train and Ferry.*

Amalfi is located deep on the Amalfi Coast, and it is always convenient to take the Ferry rather than the bus to reach it.

A common theme among the interviewed subjects is the difficulty in achieving 100% sustainability due to structural and service expectations. Five-star hotels face unique challenges balancing luxury standards (e.g., offering continental breakfasts) with sustainable operations.

#### KEY FINDINGS OF THEME ONE

Several respondents (1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9) demonstrated a proactive approach to sustainability, often driven by personal values or a shared vision. Other respondents (2 and 5) showcased a contrasting journey, with sustainability decisions stemming from external pressures rather than intrinsic motivations.

Most respondents rated their sustainability level as **6**, reflecting a solid awareness and ongoing effort but also acknowledging room for improvement. Across all respondents, achieving 100% sustainability remains challenging due to structural and service expectations, particularly in luxury establishments.

### **4.3 Theme 2: Customer Retention And Revenues**

Across the interviews, respondents shared similar perspectives regarding the impact of sustainability on customer loyalty and market positioning. While sustainability was recognized as an essential factor, it was often described as part of a broader strategy rather than the sole driver of customer retention. For example, Respondent 1 emphasized that

sustainability efforts, such as water-saving initiatives like flow restrictors, do not directly influence pricing but pay off through reduced resource consumption.

*"We would never think to make our customers pay more for something that we chose for ourselves; of course, some practices cost more, but we try our best to reduce other consumptions so that the costs are less, even if the revenue is not more."*

The answers were along these lines for all the interviewed,

respondent 5 stated

*"We try our best, being a 5-star hotel, to meet the standards while being as sustainable as possible. We recently bought low-flow showerheads; we already had them in place but found a better version at a convenient price. We had to make this investment, but that will be repaid by reducing our consumption."*

Regarding customer retention, the questions were centered on whether customers were returning to their hotels and whether they thought it had anything to do with sustainability.

When asked whether customers returned to their establishments precisely due to their focus on sustainability and whether they received referrals from previous clients, the responses from all 10 participants were remarkably consistent. Across the board, respondents expressed that while they did have a loyal customer base and a steady flow of referral clients, sustainability was not the primary reason for either. For instance, Respondent 1 mentioned that return visits and referrals were influenced more by the overall quality of service, location, and customer experience than by sustainable practices. Similarly, Respondent 2 highlighted that factors such as their unique positioning and amenities, like offering electric car rentals and charging stations, played a role in attracting and retaining customers.

Respondent 7 was very clear on this topic, noting that their unique market positioning is more attributable to their differentiation strategy and appeal to a niche audience than sustainability alone.

*"Our customers should refrain from coming back for our sustainability efforts. We are a 5-star hotel in Positano, so people come back and refer us. Our service, in general, and the way we treat customers keep retention high."*

Respondent 6, similarly stated:

*We offer niche services for people who like active travel and hiking or exploring nature; we do have referrals, but it is primarily because of these services that we offer, not for our sustainability care.*

Respondent 6 also highlighted their promotion of sustainable mobility, such as electric car rentals and complimentary charging stations, as a critical differentiator. Such examples illustrate that while sustainability adds value, its influence on loyalty is intertwined with other aspects of the guest experience and brand identity.

All respondents echoed this sentiment, underlining that while sustainability is a valued component of their operations, it has yet to be a decisive factor in customer retention or referral patterns.

Respondent 10 also had a slightly different intake on this, saying that, in his specific situation, it was not possible to answer this question since

*we do not promote our sustainability efforts that much; we just recently started with these practices and are still learning; we are preparing some posters to promote what we are doing for the next peak season, but for now, we do not have much feedback on that."*

#### KEY FINDINGS OF THEME TWO

While all respondents value sustainability, it is seen as a component of a larger business strategy rather than the primary driver of customer loyalty. For instance, sustainable practices like water-saving measures are part of cost management but do not directly influence pricing.

All respondents agreed that sustainability efforts did not primarily drive customer retention and referrals. Instead, factors such as the quality of service, location, and unique offerings (e.g., electric car rentals and hiking services) played a more significant role.

Sustainability was acknowledged as necessary but not a decisive factor in customer loyalty. Respondents noted that sustainability adds value to their operations but does not directly influence customer decisions regarding return visits or recommendations.

Some respondents mentioned that they have only recently started focusing on sustainability and are still promoting these efforts to customers. Thus, feedback regarding the impact of sustainability on customer behavior could have been improved.

#### 4.4 Theme 3 - Sustainable Practices And Respect For The Territory

It is essential to state that the Amalfi Coast is a tricky territory because its natural structure is a vital component of its identity, heritage, and economic prosperity. Renowned for its dramatic cliffs, pristine waters, and lush Mediterranean vegetation, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is a visual masterpiece and a delicate ecosystem supporting local communities' livelihoods. Preservation is crucial to maintaining the region's appeal as a global tourism destination, which underpins much of its economy. Moreover, the coast's steep terrain and historical agricultural terraces prevent soil erosion and landslides, safeguarding both the environment and human settlements. Respecting and protecting this unique landscape ensures the long-term sustainability of its cultural and natural assets, allowing future generations to enjoy its unparalleled beauty and biodiversity while fostering a harmonious relationship between tourism and the environment.

The second part of the interview emphasizes the specific practices each hotel implements in its sustainability journey. What is particularly intriguing about this segment is that none of the respondents mentioned the elimination of plastic; instead, they all advanced the conversation about their practices further ahead, as if eliminating plastic was already silently included. Following this, the theme of respecting the territory emerged after conducting several interviews and observing its recurring presence in the discussions.

As for the practices,

Respondent 1 stated

*everything for us revolves around sustainability, from the suppliers we choose to the structure itself, finishing with the customers. We choose almost all of our products from suppliers close to us and use sustainable materials.*

The manager went on to say that they have demanded their fish supplier stop using plastic and instead use polystyrene so that they can give them back the containers and reuse them.

On the other hand, respondent 6 said they could not find sustainable suppliers.

*[we] tried implementing water in cans because [we] thought they were more sustainable, but the customers did not appreciate the switch; at the same time, we could not find any suppliers for brick water.*

Respondent 5 took the conversation to another level, discussing renewable energy and their vegetable garden inside the structure.

Respondent 5 is responsible for sustainability in the hotel she works in. The hotel is a 5-star member of the Belmond group, so, as stated before, its main problem is keeping efficiency levels very high and maintaining standards as a luxury hotel. They either take leftovers for the staff to eat or make typical biscuits.

Respondent 6, on the other hand, talked about their sustainable cleaning:

*Rooms are cleaned with ozonated water, without detergents or chemical products (all rooms and common areas are cleaned this way), which was a recent decision. Water is treated and disposed of back into the sewer system. This approach extends to cleaning agents and tools like brushes and sponges, ensuring that even cleaning instruments align with sustainable practices.*

Another initiative regards air conditioning. Having to deal with a lot of international customers, air conditioning has been a common concern for all the respondents; for example,

Respondent 7, the manager of a 5-star hotel in Positano, stated that their main issue is

*They [the guests] would have the air conditioning running so much that they would ask us for more blankets, but they would not turn it off.*

Respondent 6 takes a different approach to air conditioning; *we do not have air conditioning. The rooms are cooled using naturally chilled water from their waterfall. There are no motors involved in the cooling process.*

This has always been their process, starting with their father; this practice aims to preserve the environment around them and use the waterfall.

Respondent 7, on preserving the territory, said that their hotel was born sustainably in the 1960s, and the structure was seamlessly integrated into the rock, preserving the natural landscape without altering it. Instead of white plaster, sand was used, promoting the growth of greenery. Pathways on the terraces were marked with discreet indicators,

avoiding artificial lighting, ensuring complete harmony with nature—long before the concept of sustainability even existed.

#### KEY FINDINGS OF THEME THREE

Many respondents emphasized that sustainability is an intrinsic part of their operational philosophy, influencing everything from supplier selection to customer engagement.

Respondents highlighted efforts to reduce waste, such as reusing packaging materials and seeking alternatives to single-use plastics. However, challenges still need to be addressed, including customer acceptance of new solutions like canned or brick water and the availability of sustainable suppliers.

Some businesses prioritize sourcing products locally to reduce environmental impact and support the regional economy. This also fosters stronger connections with the community while promoting sustainability.

Several innovative practices were mentioned, such as cleaning with ozonated water instead of chemical detergents and using sustainable tools, showcasing a commitment to reducing harmful environmental impacts.

Respect for the landscape was evident in architectural choices, such as integrating structures into the natural terrain and using materials that blend seamlessly with the environment. Subtle design elements, like natural pathways and limited artificial lighting, further emphasize a harmonious relationship with the surroundings.

A common challenge is managing customer demands, especially in luxury settings, while maintaining sustainable practices. Efforts to meet these expectations while preserving the environment reflect the complexity of operating in a globally recognized tourism destination.

#### **4.5 Theme Four- Employees' Motivation**

All establishments highlighted the importance of employee engagement in achieving sustainability goals, with varied levels of training and integration.

These two last sections were the ones where the questions had the most similar answers,

Respondent 4 stated that

*we have a lot of young seasonal workers, as well as our all-year workers, which means that firstly, they are interested in what we do for sustainability, but also that every time we do new hiring, we hold a course on sustainability and our practices in particular."*

Respondents 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 echoed this response, slightly modifying their answers or adding, like respondent 1 saying that.

*With a small, young workforce of around 34 people, training has been practical, and employees have shown enthusiasm for sustainable practices. The team's small size fosters a strong sense of community and shared responsibility.*

The team's small size fosters a strong sense of community and shared responsibility.

Respondent 10 said they are very attentive to the employees' training; specifically, they

*take a course every time we introduce something new, and everyone in the hotel has to participate. At first, the employees saw it as something they HAD TO do, but now, it is almost a pleasure.*

Respondent 9 took this a step forward, saying that one of their employees had the idea to

*host sustainability events in our hotel. So, we are hosting conferences now for the District and private events.*

The District is an association Respondent 1 is president of, and it is a community of hospitality providers on the Amalfi coast- restaurants, hotels, tour operators, and service providers.

The interviewed managers are all from small hotels, so the number of employees varies from 30 to 50, according to season; on the other hand, the question, when given to more extensive and more structured hotels like to respondent 5, the answer was different:

*We have a "Green Team," a group formed by two people—one of them has to be the manager—of every team. We meet every month to discuss what every department is doing regarding sustainability. Moreover, people from corporate come a few times a year to ensure we are doing things correctly.*

They explained that the Belmond Group has set some goals for them, and they have to respect their monitored standards. Regarding motivation, that came up.

*At first, not everyone wanted to participate, but this year, we had so many people interested in being part of the Green Team that we had to extend the number of participants to three for each department.*

On the other hand, Respondent 6 had a different intake on the topic; the interview was talking about how, especially for the introduction of the ozonized water to clean, employees were quite skeptical;

*Once they had tried it for a while, they said they would never be able to go back to anything else: the rooms had a new light, and the floors appeared way brighter than before.*

Regarding training, staff members undergo training when hired and whenever new practices, such as ozonated water cleaning, are implemented. Despite some initial resistance, the staff adapted quickly.

Sustainability training extends to all staff and collaborators, ensuring alignment with the company's ethos.

#### KEY FINDINGS OF THEME FOUR

Across all establishments, employee engagement is seen as essential for implementing and maintaining sustainability practices effectively.

Most hotels train employees during onboarding or when introducing new sustainability measures. Sustainability courses help familiarize staff with eco-friendly practices, making them more invested in the hotel's goals.

Over time, sustainability training shifts from a mandatory task to a source of pride and personal growth among staff.

Smaller teams (30–50 people) benefit from a sense of community and shared responsibility, which enhances motivation and participation in sustainability goals.

These findings highlight that employee motivation, training, and involvement are critical for embedding sustainability into hotel operations, regardless of the establishment's size.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

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## 5.1 Introduction

**Research Question:** How do hotel managers perceive and manage sustainability? A case study in the Amalfi Coast.

This chapter discusses the research findings described in the previous chapter. It reviews the three research objectives of the study and sets the results in the context of the existing literature. To answer the research question of "How do hotel managers perceive the role of sustainability in hospitality on the Amalfi Coast?" the study explores (1) the hotel managers' motivation regarding sustainable practices, (2) the perceived benefits of becoming sustainable, and (3) employee motivation and training to sustainability.

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed significant gaps in research related to non-monetary motivations for hotel managers adopting sustainable practices, particularly in the context of the Amalfi Coast. While much of the existing literature focuses on monetary incentives, little attention has been given to intrinsic drivers, such as respect for the environment and local heritage.

No prior research has specifically explored the motivations for adopting sustainable practices in the Amalfi Coast, particularly in relation to preserving and honoring the region's unique characteristics. Discussions in the literature have largely centered on financial benefits, neglecting the non-monetary factors that may play a significant role in this context. These gaps shaped the research objectives for this study.

Focusing on the Amalfi Coast, this research addressed these gaps through ten semi-structured interviews with hotel managers. The study aimed to explore their motivations for engaging with sustainability initiatives, the perceived benefits of adopting such practices, and the role of employee training in fostering a culture of sustainability. The findings revealed several key themes, including the Journey toward sustainability, the perceived benefits of sustainable practices, and the role of employee motivation.

Although geographically focused on the Amalfi Coast, this study provides a fresh perspective on the role of sustainability in the region's hospitality sector, and the processes hotel managers undertake to integrate sustainable practices. The findings suggest that many managers are primarily driven by personal beliefs and a strong commitment to preserving the environment. This sets them apart from the profit-driven narratives commonly found in the literature.

## **5.2 Objective 1: Explore The Hotel Manager's Motivation Regarding Sustainability Practices. The Journey To Sustainability**

The primary research objective was to uncover the motivations driving hotel managers and their establishments to embrace sustainable practices. Semi-structured interviews deeply explored the participants' journeys toward sustainability, revealing insights into intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

Ryan and Deci (2000) highlighted intrinsic motivations as critical decision-making drivers. These motivations stem from personal values, beliefs, and societal responsibilities inherently influencing individuals' actions. This specific topic came up significantly in a few interviews. For example, installing low-flow fixtures is often motivated by a desire to make a positive environmental impact. This action satisfies the intrinsic need for relatedness by fostering a meaningful connection with the natural world and hotel guests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the Amalfi Coast, residents actively embrace environmental stewardship. Many respondents have spent their entire lives in this region, often inheriting their hotels from family, which has fostered a profound respect for their properties and the surrounding environment. This strong sense of connection to the land drives their commitment to sustainability. Numerous respondents highlighted their efforts to preserve the soil and landscape, demonstrating a deep-seated dedication to protecting the natural beauty of the Amalfi Coast while ensuring that their actions do not harm its fragile ecosystem.

Conversely, Incentive Theory posits that external rewards play a pivotal role in influencing behavior. B.F. Skinner (1953) and Herzberg (1959) emphasized that tangible benefits such as government incentives, tax breaks, or cost savings are significant motivators for adopting sustainable practices. For instance, grants or tax benefits reduce the financial burden of implementing eco-friendly measures, while public relations benefits, like enhanced reputation or positive media coverage, reinforce such initiatives (Baratta et al., 2018). When interviewing hotel managers from luxury chains on the Amalfi Coast, they frequently highlighted the role of corporate funds and incentives. However, they clarified that these were not the sole drivers of their sustainability efforts. Instead, they used these incentives as a launching point, initiating their Journey toward adopting sustainable practices and building on them with a more profound commitment to environmental stewardship. The coexistence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators offers a nuanced understanding of sustainability adoption. While intrinsic motivations (e.g., environmental responsibility and personal values) emphasize

internal fulfillment, extrinsic motivators (e.g., financial gains and market differentiation) provide tangible rewards. The literature review supports a combined framework, demonstrating that intrinsic values and external incentives are not mutually exclusive but synergistic in fostering a long-term commitment to sustainability (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gössling et al., 2009). The interviews underscored that while most participants recognized the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, the degree of emphasis varied. Some respondents prioritized intrinsic beliefs, such as environmental stewardship and alignment with personal values, over external rewards. Others leaned toward financial incentives or reputational gains as their primary drivers. This diversity reflects the multifaceted nature of motivation and the complex dynamics underlying sustainable decision-making in the hospitality sector.

An integrated approach combining intrinsic and extrinsic motivations aligns individual managerial decisions with broader organizational goals and global sustainability targets. By leveraging intrinsic values and external rewards, hotels can enhance their commitment to sustainability and contribute meaningfully to environmental and societal well-being (Baratta et al., 2018; Gössling et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

### **5.3 Objective 2: Explore The Perceived Benefits Of Sustainability Practices.**

The second objective examined hotel managers' perceived benefits from implementing sustainable practices. While extensive literature highlights the advantages companies gain from adopting sustainability, various factors have only driven hotel managers to embrace these practices in recent years.

One key driver is the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly options, as travelers increasingly favor hotels committed to energy efficiency and environmental responsibility. Abdou et al. (2020) emphasize that eco-conscious guests are likelier to choose, return to, and recommend properties that align with their environmental values, making sustainability a powerful tool for attracting and retaining customers. Although this is true, none of the respondents recognized this as a reason customers returned to their facilities. It is true that being the respondents from the Amalfi Coast and luxurious hotels, a series of factors could influence the decision to return, and sustainability might play a role in it, but it is not the main reason.

Sustainable practices also lead to significant cost savings. For example, adopting energy-efficient lighting, water conservation systems, and waste reduction initiatives reduces

utility bills and enhances resource management, contributing to financial and environmental goals (Graci & Dodds, 2008). This dual benefit makes sustainability an increasingly attractive investment for hotel managers. This benefit arose in more than one interview; whether the respondents made their air conditioning from a waterfall or applied water flow regulators was a hot topic. Additionally, the savings from these initiatives help the hotel keep the prices in their range and control spending.

Beyond financial gains, sustainability enhances a hotel's reputation and brand image. Properties with strong green initiatives often receive positive media coverage and achieve a competitive edge in the marketplace, differentiating themselves from less eco-conscious competitors (Baratta et al., 2018). This reputational advantage allows hotels to attract premium clientele willing to pay for eco-friendly experiences, further boosting profitability.

Government incentives also play a crucial role in encouraging sustainability. Grants, tax benefits, and subsidies for green initiatives help offset the initial costs of implementing sustainable practices, making the transition more financially feasible (Chan & Wong, 2006). These external rewards provide managers the resources to align their business strategies with long-term environmental goals.

Finally, sustainability aligns with global and local environmental objectives, allowing hotels to contribute meaningfully to environmental preservation and the longevity of the tourism industry. On the Amalfi Coast, where natural beauty is a defining feature, hotel managers also see sustainability as a way to honor cultural values and strengthen their connection to the community and its environment (Gössling et al., 2009). This cultural alignment deepens their sense of purpose and reinforces their commitment to sustainability.

Together, these perceived benefits—from financial savings and consumer loyalty to enhanced reputation and alignment with cultural and environmental goals—create a compelling case for hotel managers to prioritize sustainable practices. As Ryan and Deci (2000) argue, intrinsic motivations, such as a sense of environmental responsibility, and extrinsic rewards, such as cost savings and market differentiation, drive meaningful and long-lasting sustainability efforts in the hospitality sector.

### **5.4 Objective 3: Explore How Hotel Managers Motivate And Train Staff To Practice Sustainability.**

Motivation is pivotal in organizational success, directly influencing individual performance and overall productivity. Numerous motivation theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959), and Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), offer valuable insights into engaging employees effectively. These frameworks are particularly relevant in the hospitality industry, where the workforce is often seasonal, presenting unique challenges for hotel managers. As noted in most interviews, managers frequently struggle to align employees' perspectives and values with those of the organization. Employees need to be motivated, mainly when talking about sustainability, because, being primarily seasonal workers, they need help to readjust to new practices every year. Maslow's theory highlights that meeting basic needs—such as safety and belonging—provides a foundation for achieving higher-level aspirations like self-actualization. This framework explains why many hotel managers consciously or subconsciously implement annual training programs for new and returning staff. These programs aim to foster a sense of community and shared purpose. Some managers take a more dynamic approach, organizing training sessions whenever operational changes occur, whether minor adjustments or significant shifts in practices. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory complements Maslow's framework by distinguishing between factors that drive job satisfaction and those that cause dissatisfaction. Intrinsic motivators, such as achievement and recognition, were particularly evident in interviews with managers of more structured hotels. These hotels often have dedicated teams or "sustainability committees," which act as a recognized union to address environmental and social issues. These groups meet monthly, ensuring that every employee's voice is heard and their contributions are valued. This approach fosters a culture of inclusion and recognition, critical components of Herzberg's motivators. Conversely, dissatisfaction often stemmed from extrinsic factors such as substandard working conditions or inadequate compensation, which some respondents acknowledged as persistent challenges.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) builds on these ideas by emphasizing that employees are motivated when they perceive a clear link between their efforts, performance, and rewards. In this context, hotels that successfully align their sustainability goals with tangible rewards for employees—whether through recognition, advancement opportunities, or incentives—see greater engagement and productivity.

These theories collectively underscore the importance of aligning organizational objectives with employees' individual needs and motivations. By creating a work environment that supports both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers, hotels can not only enhance employee satisfaction but also ensure long-term organizational success.

## **5.5 Conclusions**

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted motivations behind the adoption of sustainability practices by hotel managers on the Amalfi Coast. While financial incentives and government support play an important role, intrinsic motivations—such as a deep respect for the environment and local heritage—are equally, if not more, important in driving sustainability efforts. The perceived benefits of sustainability practices extend beyond financial gains, including enhanced reputation, cultural alignment, and long-term environmental preservation. Moreover, effective employee motivation and training are key to ensuring the successful implementation of sustainability initiatives. The research highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers in shaping sustainability practices and provides a nuanced understanding of how these dynamics play out in the unique context of the Amalfi Coast's hospitality sector.

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## **Chapter Six: Conclusions**

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## **6.1 Introduction**

To date, no research had looked at the non- monetary advantages that hotel managers perceive when becoming sustainable. The current literature focused more on monetary benefits like cost-saving and accessing funds. This study investigated **hotel manager’s motivation regarding sustainability practices, the perceived benefits of sustainability practices and explored how hotel managers motivate their staff. By answering to these objectives and achieving solutions, the study has achieved the aim of finding out**

*How do hotel managers perceive and manage sustainability*

By achieving this objective, this piece of work has given a valuable contribution to the extant research on sustainable practices in the Amalfi Coast’s hotels.

## **6.2 Overall Conclusions**

The first objective was to explore hotel manager’s motivation regarding sustainability practices. All of the respondents out of ten said that they consider themselves to be part of a journey to become sustainable. It does not really matter where they are in the development of their journey, what really matters is why they started. In most cases, especially family-owned hotels or smaller ones, the journey started because of the strong sustainability care that the managers had. This has taken the research back to self-determination theory, articulated by Ryan and Deci (2000), that emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation—the internal drive to act according to one's values and goals. Another strong actor in the decision to become sustainable is the respect for the territory; every single interviewed decided to give their own take on this, everyone had different approaches and methodologies when talking about respecting the environment, but everyone wanted to be involved.

The second objective was to explore the perceived benefits of sustainability practices; in this part of the research, Hotel managers recognize several key benefits from adopting sustainability practices, both financial and non-financial. Growing demand from eco-

conscious travelers is one driver, as more guests prefer hotels with energy-efficient and environmentally responsible operations (Abdou et al., 2020). Sustainability also offers cost savings through energy-efficient systems and waste reduction, helping hotels manage expenses while keeping prices competitive (Graci & Dodds, 2008). In addition, implementing green initiatives boosts a hotel's reputation, attracting eco-aware clients and providing a competitive edge (Baratta et al., 2018). Government incentives like grants and tax benefits also make green investments more financially viable (Chan & Wong, 2006). Finally, sustainability practices align with local and global environmental goals, particularly important in regions like the Amalfi Coast, where natural beauty and cultural preservation are key. These benefits create a compelling case for hotel managers to invest in sustainability.

### **6.3 Strengths Of The Study**

This research expanded existing literature on motivation theories, applied on sustainability, by exploring cultural influences enriching the literature on managerial behavior and intrinsic motivation in the hospitality sector. Moreover, it offers a more localized framework for studying sustainability adoption in specific cultural contexts, like the Amalfi Coast.

### **6.4 Recommendations For Further Study**

The study highlighted several potential future research opportunities. Firstly, conducting future research can be valuable on the specific practices that make hotels sustainable. Secondly, it could be important to focus on specific regions; for example, given the unique cultural context of the Amalfi Coast, further research could explore how local cultural values and traditions influence hotel managers' motivations to adopt sustainable practices. How do the social and cultural expectations of the region impact managerial decision-making? For example, the Amalfi Coast's strong connection to its heritage and natural environment may lead to intrinsic motivations that are not immediately apparent in more commercially focused regions. Investigating this could provide valuable insights into how cultural factors shape sustainability practices.

Moreover, while sustainability is often linked to short-term financial benefits (e.g., cost savings from energy efficiency), there is a need for more longitudinal studies that track the long-term impacts of sustainability on hotel performance. This could include financial

outcomes, brand reputation, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty over several years. Research in this area would provide valuable data to reinforce the business case for sustainability in the hospitality industry. Additionally, this research could be integrated with more specific investigation which specific motivational strategies (e.g., rewards, recognition, training) are most effective in fostering sustainable behaviors among staff could help to create tailored strategies for managers in different types of hotels (luxury vs. budget).

Lastly, it could be interesting to implement the role of technology in promoting sustainability: technology is a crucial driver of sustainability in hospitality management. Further studies could focus on how the adoption of new technologies (e.g., smart building systems, waste reduction technologies, renewable energy sources) impacts the motivation of hotel managers to implement sustainable practices. A study on the potential of digital tools and innovations to streamline sustainable operations could offer actionable insights for the hospitality industry.

## **6.5 Recommendations For Practitioners**

Hotel managers can use insights from this study to tailor sustainability initiatives that resonate more with their local workforce's cultural values. A better understanding of these cultural influences can help enhance the effectiveness of sustainability training programs and motivate staff more effectively. They can benefit from understanding the long-term returns of their sustainability investments, making them more informed on the possible practices they can use, where to start if they are confused. Additionally, it could give them an example of how their resources can be used sustainably, particularly for the practitioners of the Amalfi Coast, the region of interest. Lastly, Hotel managers can use the insights from this study to better navigate the regulatory landscape, taking advantage of government incentives and subsidies. They can also better align their sustainability practices with local and international sustainability standards, positioning their hotels as industry leaders in eco-friendly practices.

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## APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH CLEARANCE

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mar 03/12/2024 16:13  
👍 1 ❤️ 1

Questo messaggio è in Inglese Traduci in Italiano Non tradurre mai da Inglese

Dear Martina,

We are pleased to notify you that you have received clearance for your recent research application.

Please print and include this email in the appendix of your dissertation.

Best of luck with your research.

Best Regards,  
Ruth

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APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

**CONSENT FORM**

<b>Researcher's Name:</b>	MARTINA RENDINA
<b>Exploring Hotel Managers' Sustainability Decision-Making: A Case Study on the Amalfi Coast</b>	
<b>ALL RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS ARE REQUIRED TO COMPILE THIS FORM</b>	
<p>1. Have you been informed about the purpose of this study? YES/NO</p> <p>2. Have you had an opportunity to accept this study? YES/NO</p> <p>3. Do you agree to have results published anonymously? YES/NO</p> <p>4. Have you been informed that this consent form shall be kept in the confidence of the researcher? YES/NO</p> <p>5. Do you agree to the interview being recorded? YES/NO</p>	
Signed _____	Date _____
Name in Block Letters _____	
Signature of Researcher _____	Date _____