Research Article

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Sustainability Practice at Hotels on the Island of Gotland in Sweden – an exploratory study

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate ten hotels on the island of Gotland and their daily, practical work towards sustainability. An exploratory study was conducted at ten hotel establishments on the island of Gotland in Sweden. Ten hotel managers were interviewed about their daily practice and work towards sustainable solutions at their hotels. The results show that there are big differences between these hotels regarding the way in which knowledge about sustainability issues are implemented and shared to the personnel as well to the guests. In addition, there is a clear difference in the way in which sustainability is expressed in practice: the accountability is largely attributable to most of the hotels, but a few convey responsibility. Some of the managers seem to take a more active role in mediation of sustainability issues than is the case with the majority of the hotel managers. Also, anonymity between hotel guests and staff, large number of seasonal workers and insufficiently trained staff can be seen as a hindrance for knowledge exchange over the sustainability issues. Working with sustainability issues can also be seen as a way to win market shares in the hotel business. The study makes contribution to the knowledge of processes of co-creation of sustainable values by exploring how some hotel managers are working towards sustainability on a daily basis. The study can help to share knowledge of possibilities and hindrances in daily work towards sustainable hotels.

Keywords: Co-creation of values; Hotel; Knowledge sharing; Responsibility; Sustainability.

1 Introduction

Tourism is a dynamic global industry, which has grown and changed dramatically over the past 20 years (UNWTO, 2010). The growth of travel has led to the concern shown for the environment and quality acquiring great importance (Antony, Jiju Antony, & Ghosh, 2004; Gray, Matear, & Matheson, 2000; Gustafsson, Nilsson, & Johnson, 2003). Sustainability demands have further been connected to organisations with the term “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) since the 1990s and have more recently entailed a more holistic perspective, including all actors in society. Research has shown both various and changing definitions of sustainability/CSR (Carroll, 1999). CSR has also been argued to entail a win-win situation where CSR initiatives are seen as a vehicle for efficiency and business success, rather than being in conflict with this (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Tourism is one of the largest resource-consuming industries in the world. It is also the fastest growing and important industry in terms of the number of employees and its potential for the social, economic and environmental impacts (Holjevac, 2003).

Over the last decade, the implementation of different standard management systems, covering, among others, sustainability issues, has become apparent (Ayuso, 2007). Moreover, according to voluntary management systems could have the potential to lead companies to a more sustainable development and would help hotels to be more competitive. Within the growing hotel industry, a number of initiatives to implement sustainable strategies have been undertaken on an international scale. Since the announcement of the Declaration of the Hague on Tourism, in 1989, 2003, Publication of the Djerba Declaration on Tourism and Climate Change; 2007, Celebration of the II International Conference on Tourism and Climate Change in Davos, producing the Davos Declaration (Riquel, 2010); a wide range of legislation, for example, protecting the environment has been passed in the light of corporate performance in the field of tourism. Many international and national environmental standards have been created, which can be implemented on their own or

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jointly with other international standards, for example, ISO 14001 and EMAS, EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (Ayuso, 2007).

The tourism industry on the island of Gotland in Sweden has been an important economic factor for more than 150 years (Scholz & Friis, 2013). As a constantly growing industry, tourism has an increasing importance for employment on the island.

The main challenge for tourism development in the future, in the whole world is, however, sustainable development. In the 1990s, an intense debate on how to define sustainable tourism emerged (see e.g. Hind & Mitchell (2004)); however, a generally accepted definition of sustainable tourism (Tao & Wall, 2009) has not yet been agreed upon, even though the concept itself is well known (Garrod & Fyall, 1998). The maximisation of benefits of tourism has also limits. It is not possible to increase tourism exponentially because there is a limit in terms of carrying capacity. Tourism should be kept at a level that allows both social and environmental sustainability rather than merely economic sustainability with maximisation of profit (Swarbrooke, 2002). In the past decades, a new wave of tourism research has emerged that calls for the co-creation of sustainable values and solutions through the direct engagement of local stakeholders and communities (Li & Hunter, 2015).

Hotel business has been expanding on the island of Gotland because of the increasing number of visitors over the past decade. A hotel's sustainability work, in general in Sweden, is controlled by authorities and owners. Laws and directives regulate the work towards sustainability at the hotels. But, how do the hotels work and manage to implement sustainability issues in practice?

This study aims to investigate hotels and their daily, practical work towards sustainability in Sweden, on the island of Gotland. This exploratory study discusses how ten hotel managers on the island of Gotland reflect on the issues of sustainability, what kind of solutions they implement in their establishments and what the potential policy impacts could be. This study focusses on two distinct parts: 1) managers' motivations and choices for sustainable practices at their accommodations and 2) the factors that hinder to realise their sustainability goals.

2 Theoretical Perspectives

The importance of sustainability in the hotel industry has increased over the last decades, and sustainability is expected to be the defining issue for the industry in the

near future (Deloitte, 2010). Sustainable innovation is a critical attribute in modern hotel management, as is widely recognised by experts and hotel managers alike. Hotels have also adapted to the risks associated with litigation and regulation, as well as to the need of sustain profitability and market growth (Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). Sustainable hotels are claimed to be perceived positively by hotel guests, even though researchers have also identified contradiction between what customers state and how they act in reality. Customers seem to be reluctant in choosing sustainable hotels by making their choices depending on other attributes such as price, location or consumer trends (Tilikidou, Delistavrou, & Sapountzis, 2014). There are still barriers to the wider adoption of sustainable development principles by hotel managers. In order to implement sustainable management systems, which is believed to be expensive, there is insufficient information about the outcomes, hotel managers lack knowledge and skills and the market demand is limited (Hsiao, Chuang, Kuo, & Yu, 2014). Sustainability certification has not had a positive effect on hotel bookings and revenues because it has been experienced as a conflict with quality expectations (Hsiao et al., 2014). In the following, some of the important theoretical perspectives on working towards a sustainable organisation are highlighted.

2.1 Accountability – Responsibility

Responsibility is a word and a concept that is increasingly being mentioned in our society, not at least in discussions about sustainability. It is pointed out how important it is, in any organisational context, to develop co-workers into responsible actors. In the scientific sense, the concept of responsibility is first and foremost a philosophical question. Philosophy and responsibility are interconnected on the one hand in the general question of what responsibility possibly is and on the other side of the normative question: what responsibility should be? (Kernell, 2002). According to Wildavsky (1986), responsibility is so integral part of human relationship that in its various meanings and shadings, it serves as a synonym for almost every important political word. Responsibility is one of the major political concepts alongside freedom, equality and solidarity, etc., which are easy to use, but the more precise meaning often remains vague (Wildavsky, 1986). In practice, meeting the talk of responsibility often is an approach that has been called the Sunday concept. This means that everyone uses the word only in rhetorical sense, as referring to responsibilities seems generally acceptable, and it causes no harm. Bovens (1998) points

out, however, that responsibility is a real concept that is even known by everyone.

It is hard to imagine that anyone would deny or ignore their responsibility or deliberately behave irresponsibly. The responsibility is a complicated concept, according to Ingarden (1964, 1983), it commits us to study its different dimensions together. Lucas (1995) claims that, before we can form a clear idea of what the real responsibility includes, we must also consider the circumstances in which we are not responsible.

2.2 Understanding the Assignment and Responsibilities

There is a certain dynamic between individuals, groups and organisations. Broadly speaking, responsibility in any organisational context can be described as a relationship between the commissioner and the actor. Relations of responsibility constitute the arena where both the exaction and the assumption of responsibility can take place. Responsibility/accountability is a crucial question in all organisations working towards sustainability. Issues of accountability consequently have a direct relationship to professional development in organisations. An essential part of the organisation's assignment is to assume responsibility. Different actors can understand both, the assignment and the responsibility, in different ways. This can be described in terms of the understanding of assignment and responsibility. The actors' understanding and interpretation of the assignment is significant for the way in which they assume responsibility for fulfilling what they are commissioned to do. The understanding includes the cognitive and psychological processes and shows in turn how the assumption of responsibility can be shaped (Abrahamsson & Andersen, 2005; Oxenswärdh, 2011).

When the understanding of responsibility describes what happens to the professionals and in turn leads to heightened competence, the concept of responsibility can also be viewed as a pedagogical concept. The understanding of assignment and responsibility can, thus, be regarded as a learning process, which is in turn essential for active assumption of responsibility. This learning process is deemed to be an important part of the organisation staff's competence development and professional development. These processes of understanding can be seen as a part of process of collective learning (Oxenswärdh, 2011, 2018).

The process of understanding one's responsibility is, however, a more unexplored concept – unlike understanding the mission – and it has to do with an operator's own approach in question the nature of the professional

obligation to consider themselves obliged on assignment. To illustrate the difference between the terms, it would be quite possible finding cases where assignments understanding of a co-worker is high, that is, it is a clear picture of the tasks they believe the decision maker expects be implemented. Despite this understanding, responsibility-taking can be low, that is, a number of different – for example, moral/ethical/cultural – causes, may hamper an actor's accountability to really carry out the assignment. One way to express the distinction between mission understanding and the responsibility of understanding is to assume that the former rests on the legal and the latter on legitimate grounds. Concepts of legality and legitimacy disclose relations between justice and morality. Legality focuses on social actions in a formal sense and is sanctioned by the state, for example, by orders and rules of law. Legitimacy is more unspoken value system that has nothing to do with the formal legal system, but instead rests on ethical foundations (Oxenswärdh, 2011). At the core of mission understanding exists seemingly even understanding of responsibility. Responsibility understanding is formed in the core of an actor's competences. Thus, it is further emphasised that actors' responsibilities also include understanding of the approach to change and development.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility

In recent years, there has been a significant discussion in the business, academic and popular press about 'corporate sustainability'. This term is often used in conjunction with, and in some cases, as a synonym for, other terms such as 'sustainable development' and 'CSR'. According to Wilson (2003), the concept of corporate sustainability borrows elements from four more-established concepts: 1) sustainable development, 2) CSR, 3) stakeholder theory and 4) corporate accountability theory. Sustainable development sets out the performance areas that companies should focus on, and also contributes the vision and societal goals that the corporation should work towards, namely environmental protection, social justice and equity and economic development. CSR contributes to ethical arguments, and the stakeholder theory provides business arguments as to why corporations should work towards these goals. Corporate accountability provides the rationale as to why companies should report to society on their performance in these areas. Bergman & Klefsjö (2012) state that CSR is about creating a clear picture internally of how the organisation today affects its stakeholders and other actors and develop routines and

approaches that strive to minimise any negative effect from the organisation's processes and products on these groups and their environment. There is currently no clear definition of what CSR really means, and there are several different approaches. There are indications that there is a correlation between CSR and the company's profitability. Several large companies testify to this positive correlation. At the same time, there are also organisations that primarily exercise social responsibility for other reasons. In the hotel industry, in recent years, such entrepreneurs have been highlighted who would like to emphasise the importance of social engagement, not least in matters of sustainability (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012).

Not all companies currently subscribe to the principles of corporate sustainability, and it is unlikely that all will, at least not voluntarily. However, a significant number of companies have made public commitments to environmental protection, social justice and equity and economic development. Their number continues to grow. This trend will be reinforced if shareholders and other stakeholders support and reward companies that conduct their operations in the spirit of sustainability.

2.4 Leadership and Responsibility

Because the sustainable issues have become critical and not at least competitive issues in the hotels, there had been a need of recognition in the vital role of leadership emphasising the importance of leadership in developing and implementing sustainability strategies as well as in communicating corporate sustainability with internal and external stakeholders (Banerjee, Iyer, & Kashyap, 2003; Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Metcalf & Benn, 2013).

In the leadership literature, responsible leadership has been proposed to improve the company's social or environmental performance (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). Responsible leadership has been defined as "*the art and ability involved in building, cultivating and sustaining trustful relationships to different stakeholders, both inside and outside the corporation, and in coordinating responsible action to achieve a meaningful, commonly shared business vision*" (Maak, 2007: 334).

Therefore, responsible leadership can be defined as the art or ability to mobilise stakeholders inside and outside the organisation to achieve business goals related to environmental sustainability (Maak, 2007).

Responsible leadership is, thus, associated with the ability to engage with internal and external stakeholders. Responsible leaders are expected to consider the consequences of their actions for all stakeholders outside the

organisation, listen to the interests of their claims and engage with them in formulating a strategy (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014; Voegtlin et al., 2012).

Moreover, responsible leaders should be able to convince their employees that sustainability is an organisation's core value and communicate its importance, allowing them to recognise such issues as part of their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations daily practice and to become more engaged in sustainable actions (Banerjee et al., 2003).

There is a new style of entrepreneurship emerging in the tourism sector that aims to develop products that brings together the pillars of sustainability (social/cultural, environmental, and economic), and in so doing, can create a better society. This conceptual and practical framework is well encompassed in the concept of sustainable livelihood, as introduced by Scoones (2009: 5): "*the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base*". Lifestyle entrepreneurs are part of this new trend.

There are numerous definitions of lifestyle entrepreneurs (for a brief literature review of definitions used for lifestyle entrepreneurs, see Gomez-Velasco & Saleilles (2007)). According to Burns (2001), lifestyle entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by their will to undertake an activity they enjoy and provides adequate income. Morrison (2006) complicates the conceptualisation of various forms of entrepreneurship by formulating three main features of entrepreneurship, that is, social, economic and psychological, followed by the description of main entrepreneurial manners. Her results show that in the case of lifestyle entrepreneurs, the main motivation for starting a business are oriented towards non-economic motives (Morrison, 2006). These results are confirmed by other researchers worldwide. Ateljevic & Doorne (2000), for instance, have shown in their research on adventure tourism small enterprises in New Zealand, that economic factors are not the driving forces for those entrepreneurs they studied. For them, lifestyle values were central, making them operate within an ideological fence in which "*their business success might be best measured in terms of a continuing ability to perpetuate their chosen lifestyle*" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000: 380-381). These findings highlight the importance of human capital in the creation of lifestyle businesses such as the hotels in this research.

It is important to highlight that lifestyle entrepreneurship within the booming sharing economy in the tourism industry can be a highly creative and innovative activity

because, as Ateljevic & Doorne (2000) argue, the “*rejection of an overly profit-driven orientation does not necessarily result in financial suicide or development stagnation, but rather provides opportunities to engage with ‘niche’ market consumers*”. Research shows that within the tourism industry, lifestyle entrepreneurs such as bed and breakfast owners can be important stakeholders in the creation of new tourism products as well as in the conservation and promotion of local natural and cultural heritage (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000), making them important platforms for understanding sustainable tourism development.

3 Methodology

Primary data collection for this study took place between January and February 2019 on the island of Gotland in Southern Sweden. Ten qualitative semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2006) – one hour each – were conducted with managers on ten hotels in the city of Visby. Interviews were based on an open-ended questionnaire developed by the author. All interviews were conducted in Swedish. The guide for interviews were composed of four sections, each containing related questions: 1) introduction (owner’s/manager’s age, background, etc.), 2) on the business’s establishment (when and why the owner started working at the hotel, etc.), 3) questions about sustainability (general questions about sustainability and how managers implement sustainable solutions in the accommodations), 4) sustainability and the future (what managers wish to develop in the future in regard to sustainability in their accommodation, sustainability, tourism on the island, etc.).

Hotel managers were chosen from among the variety of hotels concerning the structure and size of their businesses. All ten hotels are situated in the main city of Gotland, Visby; five of them [Managers 1–5] are part of the bigger, international hotel chains; and five others [Managers 6–10] are independent, private-owned facilities. The selected hotels in this study has number of rooms, between 30 and 149. The interviewed hotel managers had responsibility over the issues of sustainability at the hotel. The average age of managers was between 30 and 40 years, most of them had university degree in economics or management and were fluent in at least two languages. Three of the managers originated from the island of Gotland, and seven were from different part of mainland Sweden. The amount of personal in the hotels varied strongly seasonally and could be all from 16 in low season, up to 100 in high season. Furthermore, this is an exploratory

study, with a limited sample, which means that the results cannot be generalised about hotels either on the island of Gotland, in Sweden, or in any other countries. The study includes only hotel managers’ responses. This can be seen as a limitation of the results; for more reliable results, staff statements should also be taken into account.

Analysis

This exploratory study discusses how hotel managers on the island of Gotland reflect on issues of sustainability, what kind of solutions they implement in their establishments and what the potential policy impacts could be. More specifically, this study focusses on two distinct parts: 1) managers’ motivations and choices for sustainable practices at the accommodations and 2) the factors that hinder to realise their sustainability goals. Below, the most salient findings of this research are presented and analysed. The statements have been analysed against the theoretical perspectives taken up in this study and by using the four sustainability aspects: economic, ecological, social and cultural sustainability.

3.1 Hotel Managers’ Motivations and Choices

Hotel managers, interviewed in this study, are pointing out the importance of strategies for sustainability in their hotels but not all have started to work for or have even goals drawn up for this work. They do not talk about value creation, importance of it for themselves or their staff in understanding sustainability goals. Five of the managers are working in the bigger international hotel chains and have both education and engagement on sustainability issues.

They seem to be aware of the global issues of sustainability and express their worries over the planet. But, most of them seem to follow the market logic within their statements by telling that customers now are demanding some sustainable solutions. Still, majority of the managers do not even touch this topic in their statements. It can be understood as lack of knowledge on sustainability issues or that managers took sustainability issues as granted. Managers are clearly connecting the issues of sustainability to their assignment, and not into their personal life.

3.2 Goals and Actions towards Sustainability in Accommodations

Interview statements were further divided into questions on what goals and actions hotel managers have for their

sustainability work. Here, below are some of the statements presented:

- “We want to be the leading hotel within sustainability thinking” [Manager 1].
- “The guests are to put their garbage in a vessel - we then sort in 17 different sections” [Manager 2].
- “Save water, signs on towel use, waste sorting, energy efficient (no heating in the rooms when no guests are present)” [Manager 3].
- “The food is from Gotlandic suppliers, retailers, info boards are placed in the restaurants for the guests about this” [Manager 1].
- “Consumption should go down e.g. sheets should not be changed so often” [Manager 5].
- “Leftover food goes to biofuel. We compost or the municipality does it” [Manager 4].
- “We have signs on sustainability measures in all the rooms, at the pool on the water use and the reuse of the towels” [Manager 8].
- “We hire an eco-labelled laundry. The pool is heated with recycled heat” [Manager 7].
- “More waste sorting, we donate goods that are left behind to aid organizations” [Manager 6].
- “Signing lists are available and applied for the staff in order to check up sustainable measures” [Manager 3].
- “No internal training takes place within environmental issues due to short employment contracts” [Manager 5].
- “We developed our own technology – took away all chemicals – more money remains in the cashier, do not release toxins into the sewer, staff feel better” [Manager 7].
- “We have won several awards for our environmental work” [Manager 9].
- “The people, planet, profit – important to consider” [Manager 10].
- “Two days of introductory course for all staff. In the case of new recruits, we will address issues of sustainability” [Manager 10].
- “Staff meeting every month – once a year we have an environmental meeting” [Manager 7].
- “Save a pike – an environmental campaign for the guests made that the environmental issues aroused” [Manager 3].

3.3 Hotel Managers about the Goals and Actions

The responses from hotel managers testify how the organisational form influences the measures and goals set for sustainability. In larger, profit-driven businesses, the

emphasis seems to lie on the economic premises and regulations. There are few entrepreneurs who go further than this, but there are also some of that kind. In this study, they can be found among the smaller, privately owned options. It is these managers who also engage their staff and train them on sustainability issues in a conscious manner. Larger hotels tend to implement more strategic environmental management practices, while the personal values and beliefs of managers in small hotel operations have been found to be predictors of sustainability adoption (Tzschentke, Kirk, & Lynch, 2008). A significant difference has been observed between chain-owned hotels and independent hotels; the latter relies on managers to introduce sustainability, while the former has more strategic environmental policies and values. In order to control their staff, the hotels use different types of signing lists instead of investing in more education to their personnel, in order to increase their understanding of sustainability issues. This can create a type of instrumentalism, in which responsibility is expressed through the duty and becomes very fragmented (Oxenswärdh, 2011). Information over the sustainability work at some of these ten hotels was communicated by hotels’ homepages and via different info boards, but were not discussed directly with the guests, except in one hotel. However, all managers expressed their willingness to do more in the future for sustainability at their facilities, but they addressed some external obstacles in this work, the topic that will be discussed in the following paragraph.

3.4 Factors Hindering Sustainable Solutions

For all participants, indistinctly, sustainability is a big issue, one they are attempting to solve by living more sustainably, as shown in the above section. Part of the strategy is also to educate themselves and their staff about sustainable strategies and solutions. Still, all of them complain that it is very hard to reach their wished potential. Why is it so? What is slowing them down, according to their point of view?

- “We at the hotel industry on the island are not following the development. Not planting trees, not having ecological and environmentally certified coffee etc.” [Manager 1].
- “The certification body we have been with for several years does not give us feedback. I contacted them and now we have together developed a program for monitoring sustainability work at the hotels in Sweden” [Manager 7].

- *“The poor public transportation system is a hinder for our guests getting around the island”* [Manager 2].
- *“Energy consumption – high in the hotels – how should this be solved?”* [Manager 4]
- *“Lack of ferry capacity during high season”* [Manager 5].
- *“The state’s removal of tax discount for young employees”* [Manager 3].
- *“The guests’ wishes regarding sustainability cannot always be met due to economic reasons”* [Manager 8].
- *“The municipality should inform and educate visitors about sustainability issues”* [Manager 9].
- *“Many of the guests are not acting sustainable, we can’t control everyone what they do!”* [Manager 2]
- *“Joint certification on sustainability at hotels is lacking globally”* [Manager 4].
- *“Communication channels to the guests are missing”* [Manager 6].
- *“You need other actors. Important with an external partner”* [Manager 8].
- *“There is no coordination in the municipality”* [Manager 7].
- *“Being critical is good, but you also have to create solutions!”* [Manager 10].

Lack of communication, clear rules and heavy bureaucracy within Region Gotland is pinpointed by hotel managers as a main hindrance for sustainable goals and actions. Hotel managers talk about the lack of a global and common certification for the hotels. The amount of different certification models makes it difficult for them to choose a suitable model for their own hotels. In addition, they complain about the models used to not offer the desired feedback. The certifications are perceived as a control instrument and provide no advice or support for further development of the operations. This in turn shows that hotel managers do not use these results to evaluate and develop their organisations. (Bergman & Klefsjö, 2012). The hotel managers also testify to the lack of cooperation and lack of network with other actors and hotels on the abroad and mainland, but also on the island. This means, probably, that they feel they do not have the supporting structures they would want and need in their daily work.

Respondents also address aspects that are directly linked to their economic reality. Local traffic on the island is deficient and counteracts sustainability thinking. The ferry traffic between the mainland and the island during the high season is perceived as under-dimensioned. This causes uneven guest influx due to cancellations. Hotel managers also show a dissatisfaction with the abolished

state tax benefits for young employees. All the hotels multiply their staff during the high season (April–September). Most workers come from the mainland, are young and have little or no education in the hotel industry. This seasonal staff structure seems to make it uninteresting for many of hotel managers to train their staff on sustainability issues.

Other areas that managers want Region Gotland to take on greater responsibility and help is with energy conversion. They want to be offered subsidies to reduce their energy costs. Another area that they want help with is to educate visitors in the sustainability thinking. As one of the hotel managers expresses it: “Many of the guests are not acting sustainable, we can’t control everyone what they do!” This statement shows that they really do not have communication channels to the guests. All these statements above show that responsibility is strongly linked to the economic sustainability at the hotels, that is, to accountability. Still, managers note that they cannot fulfil all the wishes of guests, regarding sustainability, due to economic reasons. One of the ten managers seems to take her responsibility by stating that being critical is good, but you also need to find and create solutions.

4 Conclusions

Sustainability is increasingly attracting attention within the global hospitality industry, including marketing variations in the volume and the detail of the data and information expressed by the owners and managers. This exploratory study discusses how some hotel managers in Gotland reflect on issues of sustainability, what kind of solutions they implement in their establishments and what are the potential policy impacts. It is known that collaborative consumption strategies can achieve sustainability in businesses. The sharing economy is based on network effects in which consumers-peers (both managers and guests) not only exchange goods and services (a room in a hotel) but also act upon each other’s knowledge, experiences and social and cultural capital to create a valuable product. An individual’s network of connections is, thus, an essential part of the societal structure. Here, human capital creates a social-relational bridge between consumption and production, making both the guest and the host active makers in creating potentially more sustainable tourist experiences and strategies (Oxenswärdh, 2018).

The hotels in this study show that the external factors are influencing not only the structure of these organisations but also leadership, culture and number of per-

sonnel. The question here is to be put: are these external factors really hindering them in implementing sustainability issues internally, or is there something else that stands in their way? In order to be able to co-create values of sustainability, with both staff members and customers, managers seem to need awareness and understanding of responsibilities as well as skills of dialogue. Furthermore, their need to balance between the four pillars of sustainability in their actions or work towards sustainability.

Beyond organisational structure, the ability to adapt to change is a strong predictor of accommodations' adoption of sustainable innovations (DeCanio, Dibble, & Amir-Atefi, 2000; Higa, Sheng, Hu, & Au, 1997). Research has revealed a number of environmental factors that can block innovation, such as norms of harshly criticising new ideas, political problems within the organisation, an emphasis on the status quo, a conservative and low-risk attitude among top management and excessive time pressure (Amabile, 2012). Organisational support for sustainable work establishes a friendly environment for encouraging information exchange and the communication of

ideas, as well as a reward system for recognising the initiation of creative ideas (Horng, Wang, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2016). Although innovation efforts can fail, organisations must do their best to eliminate obstacles or issues that hamper the implementation of innovation procedures. Maybe the best motivator and a tool for creating cooperation and co-creation for and towards sustainable development, in all kind tourist establishments, is dialogue.

In order to summarise the results in this study, it can be stated that hotels as types of accommodations for visitors are different in many ways. At the same time, there are similarities, not least with the organisation of work towards sustainability. The most important results of this study have been collected in Table 1 and are then further discussed.

Some of the hotel managers can be seen as lifestylers who work for sustainability based on their private beliefs and try to take responsibility for the whole planet. They have come a long way with their sustainability work and are happy to discuss sustainability with their guests. They often have a little amount of personnel and do not need to

Table 1: Comparison over the results of the responses from hotel chain leaders and leaders for the independent hotels

Main findings	Hotel chains	Independent hotels
Number of managers	5	5
Managers' responses numbered	1–5	6–10
Managers' motivations and choices for sustainable practices at the accommodations	Are pointing out the importance of strategies for sustainability in their hotels, but not all have started to work for or have even goals drawn up for this work	Are pointing out the importance of strategies for sustainability in their hotels and have started to work for and have goals drawn up for this work
	Do not talk about value-creation	Talk about importance of value creation
	Express extrinsic motivations	Express intrinsic motivations
The way in which sustainability is expressed in practice	Accountability Follow-up lists, certifications	Responsibility, face-to-face communication
Knowledge exchange over the sustainability issues with the guests	Anonymity, no communication other than through evaluations, none of sustainability efforts	Daily dialogue, communication with personnel
Motivation in working with sustainability	To win market shares	Lifestyle, personal values
Hinders in daily work towards sustainable hotels	Large number of seasonal workers Insufficiently trained staff Lack of network lack of co-operation with the municipality Heavy bureaucracy Top-down management	Large number of seasonal workers Insufficiently trained staff Lack of network lack of co-operation with the municipality
Training personnel in sustainability issues	In some extent	In higher extent

Source: Own elaboration.

follow so many regulations. They feel, however, isolated from like-minded actors and, not least, they want the municipality to take its responsibility and organise and support more education and create network for them in sustainability issues. It can be argued that their motivation for the creation of a sustainable establishment originates from their own lifestyle.

Other hotel managers, entrepreneurs, in turn, seem to have stuck in some type of instrumentalism in their work towards sustainability. It can be argued that they use more extrinsic motivations in their work by being accountable for the implementation of various kinds of follow-up of sustainability work in the form of certification and evaluations and lists.

A bigger part of the sustainability work aims to provide an economic value for the company and almost completely misses the socio-cultural sustainability approaches. Working with sustainability issues seem to be a way to win market shares in the hotel business and in competition between companies.

Most of the hotels in this study lack training for staff on sustainability issues. However, this does not apply to all establishments. Some private hotel entrepreneurs seem to work more like lifestyleers and do put great effort and value on sustainability work by co-creating with their guests, though seasonal character of employments.

5 Limitations and Future Research

As stated in the introductory section, this is an exploratory study with a limited sample. Despite involving a randomly sampling selection method and a qualitative approach, the results of this study cannot be generalised to all hotels on the island of Gotland. A much wider sample is necessary to this purpose. Given the exploratory nature of this research, it was not studied what, for example, personnel at the hotels considered sustainability work was like in these hotels. There is a further need to examine the staff's knowledge and plan and arrange training in and about the sustainability issues at hotels. How can value-creating dialogue be created with the guests about these things and, above all, how can one best work in practice for more sustainable accommodation in hotels.

Bionote

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