

**ORIENTING BUSINESS GOALS TOWARDS  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR OF  
LEBANON**

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***Abstract:** The objective of this study is to engage Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in tourism and hospitality businesses, although it would be challenging for these firms. Thus, the purpose is to shift from abstract ideas to actions. So, to build a more sustainable hotel stock, tourist firms are increasingly incorporating SDGs into their business planning, community participation, and strategy. In addition, hoteliers appear to be concerned about employee health and environmental accountability.*

***Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tourism, hospitality, business engagement, stakeholders, economic growth.*

**Introduction**

Lebanon used to be a hub for trade between the West and the Arab world. After WWII, the country's tertiary activities benefited from its regional center status as the Lebanese bourgeoisie and its "merchant republic" philosophy became particularly significant to large enterprises (Issawi, 1964; Gates, The historical role of political economy in the development of modern Lebanon., 1989; Gates, Merchant republic of Lebanon: rise of an open economy, 1998). It made Lebanon less attractive to both domestic and foreign investors, who promote the Arab economy globally. However, this research focuses on understanding how the

tourism and hospitality sector contributed to Lebanon's long-term growth. This is demonstrated through the contribution of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainability has been an intriguing and elusive concept since the 1971 UN Environment Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, and it has been a goal for the past 50 years.

Although economic expansion resulting from sustainability applications can help people find jobs and get out of poverty, it can also deplete natural resources, alter traditional civilizations, and put people's lives in danger, adds Ramirez (2012). Similarly, Adelson et al. (2008) claims that because sustainable development isn't defined, it can be exploited by many different parties to pursue their own interests. This was cleared through the publication of the SDGs, which shows the globe that there is a unified aim for sustainable development. The SDGs were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, along with 193 member states. The UN says all states must make political and financial commitments, where global businesses were asked to play a major role in achieving the SDGs. A lot happens which affects the environment and people of the travel and hospitality industry including issues facing the tourism and hospitality industries in achieving SDGs and general ideas on sustainability in the industry. Even in 1971, sustainable development was still a mystery. The Stockholm Environment Conference was quite useful in providing an overview on the concept.

The vagueness of sustainable development allows many groups to utilize it to achieve their interests. A worldwide consensus and a shared vision for long-term progress towards a more sustainable world are intended. Business has many social and environmental impacts and at the same time might be affected by the situation surrounding, like the COVID-19 pandemic which undoubtedly worsened the poverty and inequality. This article, on the other hand, discusses the SDGs and how the tourism and hospitality industries may help meet them.

## **Literature Review**

Since the insurrection began on October 17, 2019, a lot has gone wrong. It is about to become the world's first sovereign debt defaulter due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sherry, 2020). In addition, economic and financial disasters were more complex than global pandemic origins. Economic growth has been put on the back burner by fiscal-monetary policy in the long run and Lebanon's primary and secondary sectors have grown slowly. Manufacturing and agriculture lost many jobs and real wages have been falling for a long time. Agriculture contributed only 4.6 percent to economic growth, compared to industry's 14.4 percent. Lebanon's vulnerability to both internal and external shocks stems from its reliance on international imports for both goods and funds. Adversity reveals his fragile character. Between 2007 and 2010, the economy and society did not create enough high-quality jobs.

Tourism and financial transactions accounted for 14.6% of total FDI. Reinvested earnings and intra-company loans accounted for less than 1% of total FDI. We don't know how greenfield projects are split up by industry. However, the data points to a service-based approach. Lebanese greenfield projects will focus on tourism, hotels, and real estate in 2018. However, there is evidence of a service-oriented focus. According to UNCTAD (2018), the majority of greenfield projects in Lebanon are in real estate, hotels, and tourism. The following is true of FDI's impact on development: Between 2010 and 2018, value-added in real estate, hotels, tourism, and finance doubled (Figure 1).

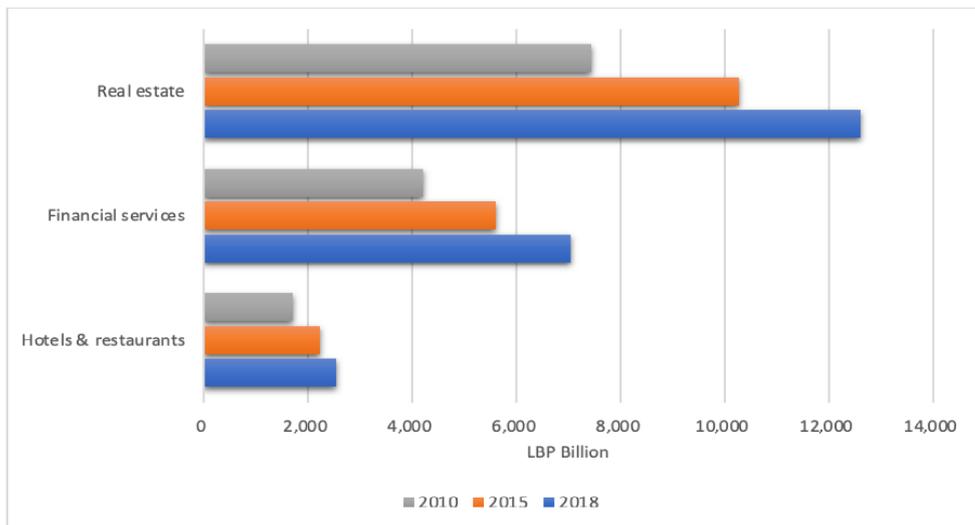


Figure 1: Gross value-added by selected industry (Sherry H. , 2021)

As it is seen in Figure 1, tourism has grown; however, unsustainable tourism and hospitality practices have caused host communities and tourists to fight. Hotel chains that do not adopt more sustainable techniques increase local residents' costs. Challenges in the Travel and Hospitality business make it hard to reach the SDGs. If you run a hotel or a tourist attraction, you have to choose which of the 17 SDGs (and 169 related goals) to focus on including no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice, and strong institutions, and lastly, partnerships for the goals.

People who work for big businesses are getting more and more involved in programs called "stakeholder engagement." A study by Bonilla-Priego et al. (2014)

says that "companies release more management than performance data" and that "reports echo the voice of corporations, not stakeholder needs," which is not true. Concerns about the relationship between the interests of the company and those of its stakeholders may show up here. They also highlight the most important environmental, social, and economic issues. With help from their customers, the world's biggest hotel chains have come up with ways to be more environmentally friendly.

According to Wyndham Worldwide (2011), the success of sustainability projects depends on the people who work on them. According to Marriot (2012), stakeholders are very important when it comes to forming a company's sustainability strategy. As one example, Royal Caribbean Cruises (2015) talked about how they write their sustainability report. From a list of those who were identified, 42 impacts and issues related to economics, the environment, labor rights, human rights, society, and product responsibility were chosen from a list of those. Internal company checks were done to figure out which of these problems and their consequences are the most important for business operations. Passengers, crew members, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were consulted as part of the company's plan to be more environmentally friendly. It is said by Williams and Ponsford (2009) that it is one of the reasons why it hasn't been easier to move from ideas and principles to real-world practice. The sustainability reports of ocean-sailing companies can be looked at.

Rasoolimanesh et al. (2020) noted that while some information has been created about tourism and sustainability in the global north and the global south; however, there is a shortage of recent SDG literature in Lebanon since they have received little attention. It is possible that the tourism and SDG studies are at odds (Njerekai, 2019). With less than a decade left until the SDGs expire, calls have been made to analyze the ground covered (Dube, 2020). As a result, the drive would

enable informed decisions on advancing SDG integration during the decade of SDG action (United Nations, 2020). So, this research work provides an added value. Tourism thrives in some of the world's most remote locations. The tourism and hospitality industries are expected to help individuals achieve the SDGs. Sharpley (2000) and Mabibibi et al. (2021) claim that tourism can help with all 17 SDGs. Tourism, says Saarinen, is generally looked at as an SDG partner. As a result, governments worldwide are working to ensure the tourism industry's long-term viability (Aall, 2014). In order to validate the above statement, the report uses hotels as case studies to analyze the hospitality sectors' progress toward SDG localization by identifying: (1) How has the hotel industry in Lebanon adopted the SDGs? (2) Which SDGs are most frequently applied in Lebanon?

According to Corporate Citizenship (2015), the SDGs have a strong three-party business case. SDGs were found to have previously developed new economic sources through innovative products and services and aligning a commercial strategy along with environmental practices may help organizations better serve customers. To establish relationships in crucial markets, firms might form alliances with governments, NGOs, and other businesses, and according to PwC (2015), SDG achievement may require rethinking corporate strategies. In addition, Jones et al. (2017) oppose that the UN should demand businesses to develop new growth strategies for reducing poverty, inequality, and resource degradation. Since tourism and hospitality are growing economic areas globally, they affect global ecological, social, and economic systems. So, companies are developing corporate sustainability policies to limit their negative environmental, social, and economic impacts. Recently, prominent global corporations have begun declaring their strategic goals.

According to Jones et al. (2015), the hotel industry is becoming more eco-conscious. Jones et al. (2014) also examined how large global hotel chains report

on their commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Thus, the tourism and hospitality business can help achieve the SDGs, where tourism can contribute directly or indirectly to all of these goals, the UNWTO (2015) says. In reference to the UNWTO and the Pacific Asia Travel Association, global tourism must now aim to achieve the SDGs. It claims that while tourism and hospitality assist in reaching the SDGs, they create new business opportunities.

Sustainable development or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may be the winner in the end, but it's not certain. Companies that make a lot of money from tourism and hospitality may have to make new plans to be more environmentally friendly, or they may have to map their plans to the SDGs. In general, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) says that tourism can help each of the 17 SDGs in some way. If the SDGs become more important, some big tourism players may not change their business practices, even though they've been working on them for a decade. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (2015), there wasn't a consistent way to do things while some businesses were coming up with their own ways. Governments around the world have different priorities for the SDGs, which makes it hard for multinational companies to come up with global corporate sustainability strategies. Several multinational companies say they meet the G4 principles when it comes to getting independent assurance from outsiders, but their approach looks limited or limited to a small set of sustainability issues and goals.

For instance, the UNWTO suggested practices that tourism can achieve the SDGs through catching certain market opportunities. To achieve Goal 1, the UNWTO (2015) claims tourism is "well-positioned to boost economic growth and development at all levels while creating jobs." "Tourism can enhance agricultural productivity by promoting the production, consumption, and sale of local produce in tourist destinations," the UNWTO noted. The UNWTO also says "Tourism

contributes to and is affected by climate change, so it is in the sector's best interest to lead global response.”

Jones et al. (2014) found that the level of independent verification of the sustainability information provided by the world's biggest hotel chains was very low. Royal Caribbean Cruises didn't give specifics about the external assurance process they said they hired. Carnival Corporation, on the other hand, gave specifics about an external assurance process that only looked at greenhouse gas emissions and didn't look at other sustainability issues that the company thought was important (Cruises, 2015). Sustainability reporting is currently voluntary, and assurance statements are not currently regulated. This means that the lack of more full independent external assurance of the reporting process is not a big deal. Independent assurance is needed to make sure the process is valid, honest, and useful, but it isn't there. Sustainability reports will need to be checked by someone else in the future if businesses want to show and measure their commitment to the SDGs in public.

### **SDGs in the Hotel Industry**

Examples of SDG 1 in the hotel industry include a dynamic model of computable general balance of microsimulation used by Njoya and Seetaram (2018) in Kenya and in Zimbabwe. Liang and Bao performed a survey of Chinese business owners. Using Dynamic Panel Data in Malaysia, Oviedo-Garca et al. (2019) discovered that Jordanian researchers used surveys and US researchers used focus groups. For SDG1 in Fiji, 161 persons were interviewed and observed. But long-term efforts are required for lasting outcomes. As for the hospitality industry's role in SDG 2, 820 million people are currently hungry and this situation is on the rise. Food isn't scarce because the world produces enough to feed everyone; however, many people can't afford to buy or grow their own. So, it is essential to pay attention to such notion. Additionally, food safety is important in that industry, where the

FAO defines two forms of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure has gone without it for a long time. Because of mild food insecurity, some people must compromise on food quality or quantity.

With food waste being a serious concern, hoteliers have taken a variety of measures to address the problem. Boulden (2017) states that cooks waste up to 20 percent of food that may be saved since they are trained to employ cost-effective methods (Perroni, 2017). High-quality operations, according to Wirtz and Zeithaml (2018), increase profitability for firms. Many advantages can be found in the kitchens of international hotels, including cheaper prices and increased profitability. True customer engagement is needed to achieve the purpose of education (Hebrok & Boks, 2017; Taler & Sunstein, 2008). For example, a sign on the breakfast buffet encouraging hotel guests to return for further servings reduced the amount of food left on their plates and hence food waste (Kallbekken & Saelen, 2013). Hotels around the world are urging their visitors to serve themselves many times at buffets in an effort to reduce food wastage. Transportation, storage, and preparation of food more efficiently would reduce waste disposal costs (Papargyropoulou, Lozano, Steinberger, Wright, & Ujang, 2014).

As for SDG 3, which focuses on good health and well-being, the industry is capable of making a change. For instance, by boosting the occupational health of Latino immigrant workers, the hotel business can contribute to SDG 3 (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, Lemke, Hsieh, & Karwowski, 2017). Good regularization and avoiding regulatory failures may reduce reports of bullying among workers, thereby enhancing their well-being, according to Bohle et al. (2017). Ariza-Montes cites a high incidence of bullying as a reason for implementing SDG 3's suggested methods. According to Shani (2016), employees in the hospitality industry are encouraged to use and abuse addictive substances, which can be attributed to the high demand and high standards of hotel services. Hotel guests' health and well-

being depends in large part on a policy of responsible alcohol usage, which is a hotly debated topic (Borchgrevink, 2017). No matter how much alcohol they consume, should hotel guests be allowed to do so, even if doing so puts their own health at risk? Having a no-smoking policy in hotels is a great idea. Smoking prohibitions are important because, according to Kaplan et al. (2019), there is severe air pollution outside of hotels, as determined by PM 2.5. If an alternate product or service can be found to replace the average gain, Gravely et al. (2018) advocates doing so.

In terms of achieving a high standard of education, it's a win-win situation for the hospitality business, especially when new personnel are taught to match the industry's specialized needs. Worker mobilization has a role in both local and global tourist prosperity by offering financial incentives for professional development. This support comprises developing a relationship between the trainee and the company's values and principles. In order to give high-quality training with a long-term emphasis, educational efforts at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels must be creative. It's necessary to expose children and teenagers to both positive and harmful parts of the hospitality sector. By emphasizing the need of protecting natural resources for present and future generations, it also contributes in the accomplishment of several of the Sustainable Development Goals. Local community-based programs or even large-scale business collaborations may be employed to undertake these efforts (Christie, Fernandes, Messeri, & Twining-Ward, 2013). Environmental education's impact on visitors' intentions has been researched by Yeh, Ma, and Huan (2016), who all employed similar approaches. According to the panelists, it's crucial to educate guests about green practices in the hospitality and industrial industries. Learning and education are vital components of a hotel's activities, and they can improve the hotel's appeal to both adults and children, as well as influence customer satisfaction (Khoo-Lattimore & Jihyun

Yang, 2018; Boo & Busser, 2018). Masadeh et al. (2019) report significant gender hurdles in the hotel business. There are programs that take advantage of the hotel industry's diversity.

As for the 5th SDG that could be achieved by the hospitality sector, it works on gender equality. According to Dashper (2019), a mentoring program at hotels in the UK can help women overcome gendered barriers. Walters (2018), who reviewed 53 academic conferences, found that women are underrepresented in two essential roles: keynote speakers and honorary committee members. Segovia-Perez et al. (2019) discover evidence of payment segregation. Pritchard (2018) asserts that "feminine" and "masculine" robots are developed for distinct reasons. Using robots in the workplace promotes equality and dispels gender stereotypes. In a 2019 study, male authors were more likely than female authors to collaborate on gender equality topics. As a result, gender equality research management must include equality (Chafloque-Cespedes, et al., 2020). The World Bank reports that 55% of Airbnb hosts and 64% of Homestay.com hosts are women in 2018. Santero-Sanchez et al. (2015) developed a work quality index to assess the safety of gender equality. Vettori (2017) and Kouzmal and El-latif (2018) advise rural women in the hotel business. Women in the hotel business could benefit from greater wages, training, and working conditions.

SDG 6 stands for the necessity of having clean water and sanitation, and it is dependent on the support of the business community to be achieved. Many in the tourism industry have been concerned about water-related stress for a long time now. Visitors drank 9.274 million m<sup>3</sup> of fresh water in the year 2000. Tourism writers stress the importance of water, particularly in areas where there are few sources of fresh water. Hotel water management best practices, performance criteria, and KPIs have been provided to us by these individuals (Styles, Schoenberger, & Galvez-Martos, 2015). For example, a 100-room hotel and a 60-

plot camp were examined to see if they could employ the most efficient methods to conserve water and energy. According to this theory, hotels that want to stand out from the crowd should learn how to conserve water and repurpose guest towels.

According to new research, hotels are now enforcing water use and towel re-use policies. Business owners can save money by using a mass tourism destination's large customer base to their advantage. Study participants who thought about the environment, were concerned about it, and were aware of it were more likely to be environmentally friendly than those who didn't. Many people make environmentally beneficial choices because they believe they are morally correct. New techniques to save water are more likely to come from hotel owners who reside in areas where water is expensive. According to the study, 33 people and 76 policy areas were discovered between 2001 and 2015. They make policy decisions based on the responsibilities of stakeholders and their resources, as well as their interests and values. As a general rule, large hotels consume less water than smaller and medium-sized hotels. They found this out in a study done by Dzakiria and Ahmad (2017). According to Rico et al. (2019), hotels with four-and five-star ratings lowered their water use the most.

SDG 7 is influenced by hotel guests. According to Sardianou and Kostakis (2019), there are three primary reasons why hotels do not utilize renewable energy sources. They're all linked by the subject of money. These restrictions may or may not be in effect, depending on the hotel's profitability and energy consumption. In their research, Oluseyi et al. (2016) discovered a link between the quantity of energy utilized in each room and the emission of CO<sub>2</sub>. The Nigerian hotel business has established a system to monitor its carbon footprint. Electricity use per room per year is limited to 40,278 MW/h. When it came to creating a more energy-efficient environment, the hotel workers in Italy went above and beyond in 2017. If economically viable energy-saving initiatives are implemented, the primary source

of energy will save 1.6 TWh (13%) of its energy by 2030. It is possible for hotels to reduce their energy consumption while also ensuring that their buildings and modernization plans are ecologically friendly and that they use less energy with the help of the Building Energy Efficiency Retrofit. When a project is successfully completed, much of the credit goes to the project manager. This covers how well the team leader is able to work and how well the organization is set up. There is significant consideration given to the team's technical knowledge and how accurate the measurements are (Xu, Chan, Visscher, Zhang, & Wu, 2015).

A model developed by Fan and Xia (2018) can assist decision-makers. Energy Performance Certificates are mandated by some government and show you how to pick the ideal building for your needs. In order to reduce your reliance on fossil fuels, you should consider installing a photovoltaic array on your roof. They show how efficient the model is. The payback time is 70 months and the EPC rating is A. In addition to the savings, the model's efficiency is demonstrated by the fact that it saves 761.6 MWh of energy. Some methods for reducing the energy use of the building include: reducing the amount of energy the building uses, fixing any holes in the air conditioning system, getting rid of old appliances, and implementing a green building project is a means to improve the energy efficiency of a home or business.

The hospitality industry makes a lot of money and contributes significantly to the overall economy by increasing the economic activity and a providing well-paid job opportunities, which in turn lead to an overall economic growth. Thus, SDG 8 is being affected by this, where hospitality workers can get more out of programs designed to make their jobs easier if they identify the aspects of their occupations that have the greatest impact on their well-being. According to Schneider and Treisch (2019), people value flexibility in the workplace, and they're right. People say that in order to work in high-end establishments like hotels,

restaurants, and even airlines, young people are given training on how to do their jobs. Even better, young people are increasingly aware of the importance of protecting those close to them and their ancestral country. Zhang, Torres, and Jahromi (2019) examined the working environment and health issues that people faced in their workplaces. As part of their quest for programs that were accessible, they also considered their health. People in the hotel industry struggled to be happy because of the high demands on their time, physical health, and mental well-being. They suggested that the hospitality industry may aid in weight loss and healthy eating, as well as the cessation of tobacco use. Asking a lot of questions about the hotel industry can give you a good idea of where it is now and where it is headed in the future. Baum (2018) did this for a reason. National issues are frequently discussed, but not nearly as often as they should be.

The 9th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) discusses innovation, industry, and infrastructure. In a highly competitive industry like the hotel industry, innovative ideas are critical. In order to ensure that innovation processes and the outcomes that flow from them operate properly, people in companies, networks, and systems work closely together. Property and location, marketing, strategic development, and technology were all considered to be widespread innovations in the hotel business. Due to the industry's rapid expansion, hotel guests are increasingly able to request customized products and services. It is also apparent that, regardless of new market needs, developing innovative activities based on the triple bottom line dimensions (social, environmental, and economic elements of sustainability) will always be important (Ozturkoglu, Sari, & Saygili, 2019). In addition, successful new service creation relies on certain factors, which include a focus on customers and markets, internal process organization, and access to a large network of people outside your company. Thus, the users of new services and ideas should be involved in their creation. Li, Wood, and Thomas (2017) are interested

in how people interact with one another and with the innovation. Referring to the literature, crowdsourcing is considered to be an important initiative to include the users in the creation of innovations and the achievement of the SDGs (Balaji, Jiang, & Jha, 2019; Garrigos-Simon, Narangajavana, Sanz-Blas, & Sanchez-Garcia, 2017; Grezes, Schegg, & Perruchoud, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

The hospitality and tourism sector contributes to the SDGs in a variety of ways, as demonstrated by international organizations as well as corporate initiatives. This article can help lead training and research within the field that's also focused on the SDGs, particularly with current work that could be imitated and enhanced. Also, ecotourism is still increasing, and understanding supply and demand is essential for planning SDG-focused activities and is appreciated by clients. The information accessible from the major hotel chains may be used as a guide for long-term management. Technological tools are becoming more widely employed, and they will assist foresee the demands of the sustainable hotel offer, allowing clients to get the service they want while also contributing to the SDGs.

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