

Beyond the towel – sustainability measure in hotels

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Stenden



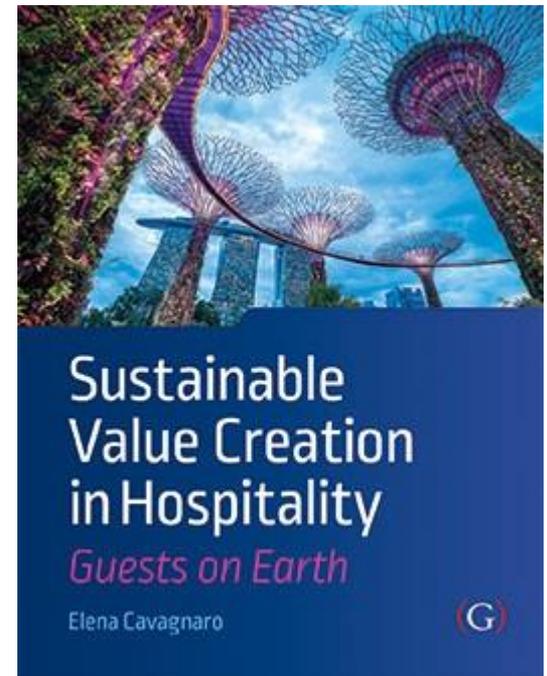
Agenda

- › Introducing myself & my research
- › Beyond the towel:
 - › What do other researchers say
 - › GMs
 - › Suppliers
 - › Guests
- › Beyond the towel?
 - › Getting communication right
 - › Beyond communication: engaging with the guest & existing knowledge

Elena Cavagnaro



Elena Cavagnaro and George Curiel



Guests on Earth



Guests on Earth: the research

- › Aim: to design a 3P approach dedicated to hotels that enhances guests' satisfaction
- › Activities:
 - › Literature review
 - › Interviews with GMs (n=13)
 - › Focus group with suppliers (n=8)
 - › Interview with guests (n=41)

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What do other researchers say: hosts

- › Engagement with sustainability is often the result of regulatory pressure (Brownell, 2010)
- › Action is often ad hoc or inspired by certification schemes (King, Funk and Wilkins, 2011)
- › Vast majority of initiatives focus on eco-efficiency (Jones et al., 2014)
- › Social initiatives are usually limited to philanthropy and do not address issues such as working conditions (Melissen, 2013)
- › Concern for guests' experience (Barber, 2014)

Some quotes: sustainability

- > Involves an environmental, social and economic dimension
- > *Is here to stay*
- > *Accurate planning is needed*
- > *Technology will help us*

Some quotes: barriers

- > Money. Money. Always money. All things revolve around one thing, money. Things will happen if and when it's affordable, things will not happen if and when they are considered to be too expensive. And that will continue to be the struggle...*

Some quotes: about guests

- > In my private life, I have visited a hotel in ..., where a lot of eco-efficiency measures have been integrated into daily operations... very visible... In the rooms you find explanations of how these measures are used and why. ... and it is all based on creating a situation that resembles a homely situation, so that guests can easily apply and rely on their own values in what is still a strange environment.*
- > I don't want to sound too 'black or white', but this is never going to be a hit. Sustainability will only be instigated by employers. A user or guest will never instigate sustainability, because they already get annoyed when an energy-saving lamp takes five seconds to start [lighting the room].*

GMs: summing up

- > ROI is still key for a lot of initiatives
 - > Reliance on technology & suppliers
 - > Focus is still mostly on water/energy
 - > Even though almost all relate to PPP as definition
 - > Community development is an exception, but happens
- > GUESTS SHOULD NOT BE BOTHERED!!!**

Suppliers: main findings

- › Have integrated sustainability in their business strategy and processes far more than hoteliers
- › Recognize that sustainability implies 0-waste; collaboration and respect (i.a. staff)
- › Role: innovation & relieving of hoteliers' care
- › Recognize the paramount importance of comfort and luxury for guest: design 4 sustainability = design 4 comfort
- › Yet: guests should be informed and engaged – they deserve and require (GY) it

What do other researchers say: guests

- › Preferred sustainable measures by guests
 - › eco-efficiency measures such as recycling and energy & water saving measures (Millar and Baloglu, 2011)
 - › local products (Berezan et al., 2013)
 - › cleanliness and air quality (Abrams, 2012)
 - › green certification (Berezan et al., 2014)
- › Guests rate lower measures that
 - › imply an effort
 - › directly affect them such as towel reuse policy (Berezan et al., 2013)

Some quotes: sustainability

- › *Sustainability [...] is taking care that in the future everything is still beautiful*
- › *This [sustainability] is the future of the planet*
- › *Also ensures that the generations after us can live plentifully*

Some quotes: sustainability

- › *There are many misunderstandings about sustainability. Most people think it is only about energy. But it is much more.*
- › *What hotels are doing now is not sustainability, is eco-efficiency. They are not serious about it.*

Some quotes: expected measures

- › The following measures were regularly mentioned:
 - › energy and water saving;
 - › sustainable towel and linen policies;
 - › recycling;
 - › (food) waste reduction and handling;
 - › offering organic, local and seasonal food;
 - › and producing or sourcing sustainable energy.



Some quotes: expected measures

- > *Sustainability is about green energy, solar panels, wind, wind turbines, recycling, reuse of things [...] and eating. [...] I mean organic and [...] responsible meat, chocolate and all the other things you find in a hotel.*
- > *Sustainability has to do with the origin of the products for example, you know. I would definitely prefer that people are serving what grows where they are [located] and not importing things that cost whatever, you know what I mean?*
- > *More vegetables than meat, fruit and so on.*

Some quotes: WtP

- › *Sustainability is also tough business. There is money to be earned.*
- › *As long as what hotels do is about eco-efficiency, why should they ask us to pay more for sustainability?*

Some quotes: comfort

- > 'You will never be as comfortable as at home' vs 'I am here to be pampered'
- > 'I' vs 'others':
 - > *No, I wouldn't mind, but essentially people who go to a hotel want to be spoilt [...] I actually, when I brush my teeth I switch my water off, instead of letting the water run, and small things like that.*

Some quotes: comfort

A false dilemma:

- › *You know, it is almost funny that a lot of people think that sustainability comes at the expense of comfort. And yet this is not by definition the case. If a hotel has solar panels then people can use as much warm water as they wish. It costs nothing, it does not pollute, of course it [the solar panel's materials] has to be reused, and there is more and more attention for this, isn't it?*

Who is responsible?

- › *So, if the hotel only goes half way, then the guest only goes maybe, not even half the way. So it has to be a balance between what the hotel is doing to help the guest do as well.*
- › *Unfortunately what happens is, they give you a tiny towel, that is quickly wet, you don't want to have that for three days running. If you go to <Name Chain>, you get a tiny towel and the same with sustainability. In the end it is nonsense, because you throw the towel on the floor, you want a new one.*

Guests: summing up

- › A large majority expects to experience sustainability in hotels
 - › Rooms; food; waste; energy -> influenced by **hotel communication** & own habits
- › A vast majority wishes to contribute, and a sensible minority is prepared to accept less comfort (i.e. waiting when buffet is refilled)
- › Sustainability in hotel is now eco-efficiency; this is not 'fully sustainable'
- › No willingness to pay more for eco-efficiency

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Save Our Planet

Dear Guest,
Every day millions of gallons of water are used to wash towels that have only been used once.

You Make The Difference:

- A towel hanging up means “I will use again.”
- A towel on the floor means “Please exchange.”

**Thank You For Helping Us Conserve
The Earth's Vital Resources.**



Some quotes: communication

> Thus they, [guests], should always have a choice, it should not be so that it is imposed on you

VS

> And I think, yeah, okay, that is nice, but maybe a sustainable hotel [...] they should be really upfront about it. Yes, we are not gonna change the towels, like, you know, they can also act the other way around.

If you do, choose the best option

- › Which message in your opinion is the most effective and why?
 - › Reuse your towels: help the hotel to save energy
 - › Reuse your towels: partner with us to help the environment
 - › Almost 75% of guests reuse their towels
 - › 75% of the guests who stayed in this room reuse their towels

Message to guest	Towel reuse
Help the hotel save energy	16%
Partner with us to help the environment	31
Almost 75% of guests reuse towels	44
75% of the guests who stayed in this room reuse towels	49

Sources: Study by Noah J. Goldstein, Vidas Griskevicius, Robert B. Cialdini of Arizona State University; AOL

Some quotes: communication

- > *Yes, I find it so, erm, I think if you stand for something then you should also dare to show that, erm, I think that is a good set*
- > *Maybe this is sustainable and I don't know it because it looks like a normal chair, but then it would be nice for me to know, oh this is possible, you know*
- > *Like companies have like green labels, but the green labels, what does it mean to them? How can you prove it?*



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Some quotes: communication

- > *It is nice if there is some [information] provided. However, to have a, a complete brochure or something like that about [sustainable measures such as local food], would be inappropriate for people coming to a hotel*
- > *This was a good statement: "I am not afraid of dark"*



A word from your towel

I've really enjoyed drying you. Even if you were a little bit dirty. So if you want another date with me, hang me up*. But if you're over me and want a fresher towel then drop me on the floor.

I'll just move on.

***(It's also good for the planet in case you were curious.)**



Some quotes: communication

- > *It is nice if there is some [information] provided. However, to have a, a complete brochure or something like that about [sustainable measures such as local food], would be inappropriate for people coming to a hotel*
- > *This was a good statement: "I am not afraid of dark"*
- > *I think you can also, erm, communicate a lot with pictures, you know.*

Concluding

- › GMs' view on their guests is limited
- › Guests have an articulated understanding of sustainability & this informs their expectations
- › Guests may forego some comfort but still expect to be pampered – yet pampering is not by definition antagonist to sustainability
- › Get your communication right and, most importantly: proceed from communication to engagement
- › **Maak gebruik van de kennis bij Hotelscholen!**

If you wish to know more



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CELTH project

Fully Sustainable Hotel Experience

Final report

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Special Issue Article

Is the hotel industry prepared to face the challenge of sustainable development?

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The host-guest relationship is the key to sustainable hospitality: Lessons learned from a Dutch case study

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