

## **ITW Working Paper Series**

ISSN: 1662-9019

ITW Working Paper Tourism 001/2015

Luzern, May 2015

### **Identification of common sustainable hotel attributes and corresponding guest perceived personal benefits. Qualitative research results for the project “Intention to book sustainable hotels: application and extension of the Theory of Planned Behaviour”**

#### Authors

Julianna Priskin

Sindhuri Ponnareddy\*

Timo Ohnmacht

#### Contact:

Email: [sindhuri.ponnareddy@hslu.ch](mailto:sindhuri.ponnareddy@hslu.ch)

Tel.: +41 41 228 42 22

Fax: +41 41 228 41 44

Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Hochschule Luzern)

Lucerne School of Business (Wirtschaft), Institute of Tourism (Institut für Tourismuswirtschaft ITW)  
Rösslimatte 48  
6002 Lucerne, Switzerland

#### **Research in collaboration with the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zürich (IPMZ).**

Werner Wirth

Friederike Vinzenz

University of Zürich  
IPMZ – Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research  
Andreasstrasse 15  
8050 Zürich, Switzerland

**Project supported by the Swiss Science Foundation (SNF).**

## **Abstract**

Although more and more hotels adopt sustainable management practices worldwide, understanding how to increase consumer booking intentions in such establishments remains a challenge. This project aims to apply and extend the “Theory of planned behaviour” and design communication messages to persuade hotel guests’ booking intentions. The current report details a qualitative analysis of sustainable hotel management attributes, as well as guest perceived personal benefits resulting from staying in a sustainably managed establishment. The study used 12 common sustainable hotel management attributes to ascertain how experts and hotel guests perceive personal benefits linked to a stay in a sustainable hotel. The main research findings show that perceived personal benefits of staying in a sustainably managed hotel relate mostly to guests and experts linking sustainability to improved hotel quality. This experience can be described by specific words such as better quality service, more authentic experiences, more exposure to information, environmental and social awareness and actions and healthier living. The next project phase will apply the results from this research to empirically test how Swiss, German and US travel markets react to differently formulated marketing and communication messages and how these relate to their sustainable hotel booking intentions.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, tourism, hotel, management, benefits

## **Citation**

Priskin, J., Ponnappureddy S., Ohnmacht, T., Vinzenz, F. and Wirth, W. 2015. *Identification of common sustainable hotel attributes and corresponding guest perceived personal benefits. Qualitative Research Results for the project “Intention to book sustainable hotels: application and extension of the Theory of Planned Behaviour”*. ITW Working Paper Series Tourism 001/2015, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Lucerne.

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1	AIM OF THIS REPORT.....	5
1.2	REPORT OVERVIEW .....	5
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE ANALYSIS TO IDENTIFY COMMON SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES AND THEIR PERSONAL BENEFITS (STEP 1)</b> .....	<b>7</b>
2.1	METHODOLOGY TO IDENTIFY THE MOST COMMON SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES .....	8
2.2	RESULTS OF SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES ANALYSIS.....	8
2.3	IDENTIFYING PERCEIVED PERSONAL BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES .....	9
<b>3</b>	<b>EXPERT VALIDATION OF SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES AND THEIR BENEFITS (STEP 2)</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1	EXPERT INTERVIEW RESULTS .....	11
3.2	EXPERT OPINIONS ABOUT GUEST BENEFITS LINKED TO SUSTAINABLE HOTEL ATTRIBUTES .....	11
3.2.1	<i>Benefits of hotel implementation of sustainable management plan</i> .....	11
3.2.2	<i>Benefits of sustainable supply chain management practices</i> .....	11
3.2.3	<i>Benefits of local employees and their fair and equitable treatment</i> .....	12
3.2.4	<i>Benefits of supporting cultural and natural heritage resources</i> .....	12
3.2.5	<i>Benefits of environmental management</i> .....	12
<b>4</b>	<b>INVESTIGATE HOTEL GUEST PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY RELATED PERSONAL BENEFITS (STEP 3)</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1	GUEST INTERVIEW FINDINGS ABOUT PERSONAL BENEFITS.....	14
4.1.1	<i>Guest perceived benefits of the hotel's sustainable management plan</i> .....	16
4.1.2	<i>Guest perceived benefits of hotel's sustainable supply chain management practices</i> .....	16
4.1.3	<i>Guest perceived benefits of hotel's employee treatments</i> .....	16
4.1.4	<i>Guest perceived benefits of hotel's heritage resource protection practices</i> .....	16
4.1.5	<i>Guest perceived benefits of hotel's environmental management practices</i> .....	16
<b>5</b>	<b>SYNTHESIS OF ALL RESULTS (STEP 4)</b> .....	<b>18</b>
5.1	EXPERTS OPINIONS ABOUT GUEST BENEFITS .....	18
5.2	GUEST OPINIONS ABOUT PERCEIVED BENEFITS.....	19
5.3	COMMONLY PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE HOTEL MANAGEMENT .....	20
5.4	STUDY LIMITATIONS .....	22
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>23</b>
6.1	NEXT RESEARCH PHASE.....	23
<b>7</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>24</b>

<b>8 APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>25</b>
APPENDIX A INTERVIEWED ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES .....	25
APPENDIX B EXPERT INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	27
APPENDIX C GUEST INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	29
APPENDIX D KEYWORDS USED TO DESCRIBE THE BENEFITS BY EXPERTS AND GUESTS.....	31

### List of Figures

<i>Figure 1 Research steps to identify guest perceived sustainable hotel benefits.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 2 Basic frequency distribution of sustainable hotel benefits stated by experts .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Figure 3 Basic frequency distribution of sustainable hotel benefits stated by guests .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Figure 4 Summary of guest perceived benefits from a sustainable hotel stay .....</i>	<i>22</i>

### List of Tables

<i>Table 1 Common sustainable hotel attributes .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Table 2 List of international sustainability experts interviewed .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Table 3 Demographic profile of interviewed hotel guests .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Table 4 Sustainable hotel benefit categorisation.....</i>	<i>21</i>

### Acknowledgement

This document represents the partial results of a cooperative project between the Institute for Tourism at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research at the University of Zürich. The project is financed by a grant awarded by the Swiss National Science Foundation ([www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch)) and by the Institute for Tourism.

The authors wish to extend gratitude to all individuals and their organisations who participated in the interviews and discussions to achieve the results documented in this report. The authors wish to extend a special thanks to Mr. Klaus Eisele, General Manager of the Hotel Ador in Bern Switzerland for permitting the guest interviews.

## 1 Introduction

The contents of this report are set in the context of a two-year multi-phasic project. The aim of the project is to understand guest intentions to book sustainable hotels by applying and extending the “Theory of Planned Behaviour”. The project is interdisciplinary and investigates how to convince broad consumer tourism markets to book into sustainably managed hotels. It also examines how marketing and communication messages could be designed to positively influence intentions to book, especially by sustainability unaware consumer markets. The project will evaluate the roles communications play, particularly those relating to perceptions of personal benefits of booking a sustainably managed hotels as well as anticipated positive emotions of booking and trust in marketing messages. The project will employ both qualitative and quantitative empirical techniques to collect and analyse data to compare consumer markets in Switzerland, Germany and in the USA.

The practical outcome of the research is expected to show the most relevant and effective marketing and communication messages for the hotel and broader tourism sector. Although the supply of sustainably managed hotels continues to increase worldwide, it remains challenging to attract mass consumer markets to book rooms in such establishments. Scientific research addressing this challenge is currently limited, and many questions remain about how sustainable tourism development via consumers can be better achieved. The project’s results will not only contribute to a scientific understanding about how to persuade more people to book into sustainably managed hotels, it will also deliver insights to help the broader tourism sector attract new markets for sustainable tourism products. The project will deliver a concrete understanding about how to design marketing messages about sustainable hotels so that leads consumers to positive anticipated emotions, and therefore positive decisions about booking intentions. The study will also show how to design marketing messages that enhance consumer trust in the sustainability benefit value of hotels.

### 1.1 Aim of this report

The current report is an initial qualitative phase of the project and aims to identify the most common sustainable hotel attributes and their benefits for customers as perceived by both actual hotel guests and experts from hotel certification bodies and industry associations. Results derived from this qualitative research will be used to formulate communication messages for the next quantitative empirical phase of the project involving a message design experiment.

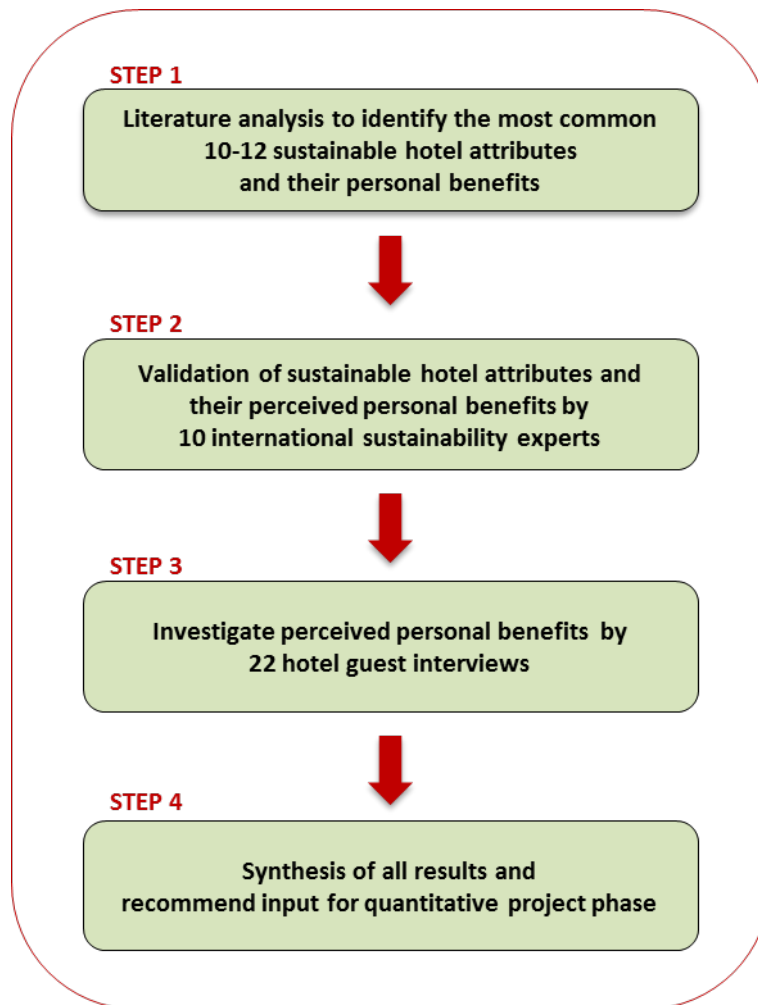
### 1.2 Report Overview

The research phase documented in this report applied an explorative and deductive research approach relying on literature analysis, expert interviews and guest surveys. The aim was to:

1. identify the most common sustainable hotel attributes from attribute criteria suggested by industry bodies,
2. ascertain the benefits of the identified attributes from a “guest perspective” through expert and guest interviews, and
3. identify specific benefit types that are of special importance for guests in order to describe the attributes that guest perceived as valuable concerning sustainable hotels.

The principal work steps for the research are summarised in Figure 1 and detailed in the proceeding sections. In summary, the first step involved a brief literature review about sustainable hotels and their benefits for guests, as well as a comparison of tourism industry suggested sustainable hotel criteria. This step enabled the identification of the 12 most common sustainable hotel attributes, which were then validated by industry experts working in sustainable hotel certifications in step 2. The ten expert interviews also enabled to ascertain the guest benefit of each sustainable hotel attribute from their viewpoints. In step 3 of the project, 22 semi-structured interviews were administered to actual hotel guests staying in a sustainable hotel in order to understand their perceived benefits by staying in such an establishment. In step 4, results about sustainable hotel benefits for guests were collated to provide a basis for a quantitative study into this subject, which will be required for the next empirical project phase.

**Figure 1** Research steps to identify guest perceived sustainable hotel benefits



## **2 Literature analysis to identify common sustainable hotel attributes and their personal benefits (Step 1)**

Specific attributes of a sustainable hotel are required to reflect the multi-dimensional aspects of sustainability that can be divided into economic, social and environmental dimensions (The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992). During the past two decades, internationally, a variety of definitions and concepts emerged to describe a sustainable hotel. Today, the most commonly accepted international framework is linked to the *Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators* (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2013). While there is no single universal definition of a sustainable hotel and its precise attributes, it is widely accepted that compared to a standard hotel, a sustainable hotel is characterised by having low negative environmental impact attributes and positive socio-economic effects. Thus, a sustainable hotel is often synonymously referred to as a “green” or “eco-friendly”. Here, the term sustainable hotel is used specifically to reflect the holistic management approach of a hotel, since the words such as “green” and “eco-friendly” are mostly associated with only the environmental management aspects.

Any hotel may have a series of attributes to precise its sustainability attributes, which could relate to low and efficient natural resource use of energy and water, low solid, liquid and gaseous waste output including greenhouse gas emissions, and positive socio-economic impacts linked to contributions to the local economy as well as fair and equitable treatment of employees. A sustainable hotel may have several or hundreds of attributes to show its sustainability performance. Thus, the notion of a sustainable hotel is rather complex from a management perspective and not all attributes are necessarily visible for hotel guests when implemented through specific management actions. This raises several challenges in the marketing and communication of sustainably managed hotel establishments. For example, if a hotel does not communicate or market its sustainability actions such as using renewable energy for heating or lighting, a guest will never directly know or be able to perceive the direct or indirect benefits of this management effort at a personal level. The number of possible invisible management actions is rather high in any sustainably managed hotel when guests are not directly informed in a customer appropriate manner.

As several researchers suggest, sustainable hotel attributes are important to communicate and market to guests since the perception of additional benefits of staying in a sustainable hotel may lead to more bookings and or possibly to customer loyalty (Millar and Baloglu, 2011). It is also important to investigate particular sustainable hotel attributes, since not all attributes would be perceived as personal benefits by guests (Dolnicar and Grun, 2009, Floyd et al., 1997, Lee and Moscardo, 2005). In practice, literally hundreds of organisations have emerged to validate the sustainable business management efforts of the tourism industry. These organisations most commonly assess a hotel’s specific management approach alongside a wide set of criteria, often numbering hundreds.

Depending on a hotel’s performance, an establishment may obtain certification for its sustainability management. Indeed, sustainable hotel certification systems are diverse and often a guest can only perceive a hotel’s achieved performance via knowing if it is labelled or certified. Research to date has delivered mixed results whether labels are sufficient to communicate to existing guests and potential customers to increase bookings (Prud’homme and Raymond, 2013, Esparona et al., 2014). Most researchers so far suggest that the majority of travellers are not aware of the different certification systems and have a poor understanding what they practically mean (Buckley, 2013). Moreover, due to an inflationary use of certificates and labels in the economy, customers may value them less seriously and may interpret these with less trust or possibly as greenwashing (Self et al., 2010). Thus, sufficient marketing and communication to guests remains a challenge, especially to define a small set of sustainable hotel attributes useful to motivate more consumers to book into sustainably managed accommodation.

## 2.1 Methodology to identify the most common sustainable hotel attributes

The first task in this research was to conduct a literature analysis about internationally suggested sustainable hotel attributes as defined by industry associations and hotel certification bodies. Academic literature was also used to understand the importance of various sustainable hotel attributes. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) was used as the basis for the analysis since it is the most accepted guideline presently. It was developed by an international cohort of sustainability and tourism experts consisting of more than 60 industry body representatives and academics. The GSTC has also seen several versions that included the scrutinising of some 4,500 sustainability criteria. Today, the GSTC represent the three dimensions of sustainability in four broad themes that define 37 specific management criteria. To identify a shortlist of sustainable hotel attributes, the next step of this project involved the cross-checking of individual attributes with 16 tourism bodies that offer sustainability certifications for hotels. Organisations for the analysis were chosen according to several criteria including having an international presence and being specifically present in the target markets of this research (Switzerland, Germany and USA). Additionally, the sustainability reports of ten international hotel chains and hotel associations located in these three target market countries were also considered.

## 2.2 Results of sustainable hotel attributes analysis

Results of the analysis attributes lead to a shortlist of 12 most commonly recurring sustainable hotel management attributes reflecting the three dimensions of sustainability are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 Common sustainable hotel attributes**

Sustainability dimension	GSTC management theme	Specific attribute of a sustainably managed hotel	Attribute
Economic	Sustainable business management	Implementation of a sustainable management plan with a variety of actions within the three dimensions.	1
	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Implementation of sustainable supply chain management policy	2
		Providing local employment opportunities	3
Social	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Partnering with local and regional suppliers	4
		Fair & equitable treatment of all employees	5
	Maximise benefits to cultural heritage conservation	Direct and indirect support of cultural heritage	6
Environmental	Natural resource conservation	Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (energy)	7
		Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (water)	8
	Reducing pollution	Gaseous waste management(CO <sub>2</sub> )	9
		Solid waste management	10
		Liquid waste management	11
	Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems & landscapes	Direct and indirect support of natural heritage resources	12

Although a sustainable hotel may have 100s of management actions that fit the five management themes in Table 1, altogether the attributes relevant to communicate to guests need to be reduced and simplified for guests. For example, the 12 attributes in Table 1 could be reduced to five general items reflecting the broad thematic categories:



1. the hotel has a sustainable management plan
2. the hotel works with local and regional suppliers
3. the hotel employs local people and treats everyone fairly and equitably
4. the hotel manages to reduce all its energy, waste and water use including emissions
5. the hotel supports local natural or cultural heritage attractions.

Additionally, a hotel could simply state the number of specific sustainability actions in the hotel under the broad categories to reflect individual attributes.

### **2.3 Identifying perceived personal benefits of sustainable hotel attributes**

A brief literature review was also conducted to shed light on what perceived personal benefits of sustainable hotel attributes are. This area of research appeared non-existent to the authors' knowledge at the time of research as no systematic published material discussing this topic was found. For the purposes of this project, a benefit was thus defined as a subjective feeling of compensation or expectation that is associated with the consumption or use of a product or service (Olson and Peter, 1987). This definition when applied in the context of sustainable hotels can be defined as "guests experiencing the additional benefits of staying in a sustainable hotel utilising its product or service attributes". The benefit of a sustainable hotel can be a many things related to the various attributes of the establishment.

For the purposes of this study, a direct benefit is understood as a sustainability attribute of that has an immediate and noticeable effect on customers, such as high service quality due to friendly staff or high quality food served, which can be interpreted as something customers value (Lee, 2009). For example, a hotel may have the sustainability attribute of partnering with local suppliers (Table 1), which guest can experience as locally sourced food that may be healthy, delicious, and organic, as well as many other things. Since guests may experience the personal benefit of eating locally sourced food as something tangible as it directly contributes to their satisfaction.

An indirect personal benefit is understood as a sustainability attribute that has no immediate or noticeable effect for a guest (unless specifically communicated), but serves a higher sustainability aim, such as anthropocentrism doing something good for humanity or by eco-centrism doing something good for the planet (Thompson and Barton, 1994). Doing something good for the planet could include many management actions ranging from reducing natural resource use and eco-efficiency measures and so on. It could be also include financial contributions to charity, participating in cultural or natural heritage conservation projects and so on. An indirect benefit of doing something good for society could be providing local employment opportunities (Table 1). Normally, guests experience standard hotel amenities such as the presence of staff for expected services such as reception, room service. However, the additional knowledge about local employment could mean that guests associate the standard services as "better". This is because local staff know the destination more intimately, could suggest secret, local tips about where to eat and speak with a local dialect, which would further enhance the communication's authenticity. Guests' knowledge that locals are employed could also mean that their stay is also supporting the local economy (assuming fair and equitable employee conditions of course).

This study assumes that direct and indirect benefits might vary depending on the implementation of specific hotel attributes. How each person perceives any sustainable hotel attribute is individual although this study assumed that it may be possible to ascertain benefits that may apply to the majority of guests.

### 3 Expert validation of sustainable hotel attributes and their benefits (Step 2)

To validate the most common sustainable hotel attributes (Table 1) semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten industry experts who were selected according to the following criteria:

- i. representing a relevant certification label organisation in the field of sustainability (covering at least one dimension),
- ii. representing a relevant industry association such as a hotel or lodging association actively engaged with sustainable hotel management, and
- iii. representing organisations geographically present in Switzerland, Germany and USA.

National or regional certification labelling organisation from the target countries were also included to gain a better understanding how sustainable hotel management is translated at the local or regional scale. Therefore organisations such as Ibex Fairstay from Switzerland or STEP from the USA were included (Table 2). Although a total of 17 organisations were contacted that met the selection criteria for the study only ten interviews were administered successfully. Appendix A provides a summary of all organisations contacted and or interviewed. The experts representing the organisations selected for the research were contacted through emails and telephone and invited to participate in a prescheduled semi-structured interview. Interviews were scheduled based on the interest and availability of experts. Once accepted, the interview guide was forwarded to the experts to enable adequate preparation.

**Table 2 List of international sustainability experts interviewed**

No.	Name of the organization	Category	Geographical coverage of organisation	Country where expert was interviewed
1	Sleep Green Hotels	Certification	Freiburg	Germany
2	Green Globe	Certification	Los Angeles	USA
3	Green lodging news	Industry association	Tampa	USA
4	Hotellerie Suisse	Industry association	Berne	Switzerland
5	IBEX fair stay	Certification	Chur	Switzerland
6	German Hotel Association	Industry association	Berlin	Germany
7	International Tourism Partnership	Industry association	London	United Kingdom
8	STEP	Certification	North Carolina	USA
9	Travel Life	Certification	London	United Kingdom
10	Viabono	Industry association	Roesrath	Germany

Essentially, all experts were requested to evaluate the sustainable hotel attributes compiled by the authors and suggest direct and indirect perceived personal benefits for each from a guest perspective. Experts were also invited to recommend additional sustainable hotel attributes to include and so they were enabled to openly express their opinions beyond the interview framework created by the shortlist of 12 attributes (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Interviewees could decide if the preferred English or German for the interview according to convenience. An English copy of interview guide is in Appendix B. All expert interviews were conducted between November 2014 and January 2015 over Skype and through telephone according to interviewee convenience. All experts interviewed worked at least ten years in the field of hotel management linked to sustainability. The software Evaer and MP3 recorder were used to record the Skype interviews and external recording device was used for the telephone interviews. The recorded interviews were on average 30 minutes long and were translated to English where necessary and transcribed using f4 analyse software.

Data collected was analysed based on direct content analysis based on pre-determined themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This analytical approach allows validating a theory or existing concepts. Its limitation relates to experts receiving cues to responses before giving open responses. It is therefore useful for a structural study such as this, where the themes are already defined. Using direct content analysis experts validated the 12 sustainable hotel attributes defined (Table 1) and helped identify variables of interest in relation to perceived direct and indirect sustainable hotel benefits. Interview transcripts were manually coded and analysed (Ary et al., 2013). Initially all the transcripts were highlighted with the pre-determined themes and they were categorized under specific codes. If a particular text was found repeated with another message, it would be placed under the repeated code (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

### **3.1 Expert Interview Results**

The overall results of the expert interviews enabled to validate the shortlist of the sustainable hotel attributes proposed in Table 1. All ten interviewed industry experts generally agreed with the defined attributes and added some useful viewpoints and recommendations. Three out of ten commented that the proposed shortlist (Table 1) was somewhat more focused towards environmental dimensions compared to the other two since this dimension was covered by five attributes. Recommended additional attributes varied widely from child protection-human rights, equal opportunities for employees from developing and developed countries, supporting the local community by offering additional opportunities to uplift the economy apart from supply chain collaborations. Two experts also recommended including a new dimension to Table 1 “Renovation, investment and restoration of buildings and infrastructure”. They also recognised that this dimension would give fewer options to select a sustainable hotel, since most of them would not implement this attribute. Another two experts mentioned that the hotels should provide further information regarding regional transportation and provide incentives for public transportation.

### **3.2 Expert opinions about guest benefits linked to sustainable hotel attributes**

The proceeding sections provide a detailed overview about how experts responded to the shortlist of sustainable hotel attributes according to the benefit type they may present for guests. The results are summarised according to the four dimensions used to categorise the 12 sustainable hotel attributes (Table 1). The numbers in brackets represent the number of experts from the ten interviewed who agreed with a particular benefit aspect. Figure 2 also provides overall results of expert perceptions about benefits of sustainable hotel attributes. Overall, all the experts expressed differing opinions between guest perceived direct and indirect benefits. It was easy to state the direct benefits for social dimensions compared to economic and environmental dimensions perspective. Most of the experts emphasized the concept of communication. One expert stated that there should be clear, transparent communication visible to guests partly to reduce the possibility of greenwashing. Another expert commented that communication is the determining factor.

#### **3.2.1 Benefits of hotel implementation of sustainable management plan**

Six out of ten experts agreed that a hotel implementing sustainable management plan (Attribute Nr. 1, Table 1) would offer consistent level of service, quality and improvement. It was noted that a guest expects certified hotels to offer a better experience and therefore they might enjoy a healthier stay. Five of ten experts stated that all these benefits would be perceived when they are communicated through a hotel’s promotional activities or through their employees. One expert also stated that

*“...guests should be involved or should be given an opportunity to recycle and possibly offset their stay to perceive this attribute as a direct benefit.”*

Eight of ten experts commented that this attribute would be an indirect benefit since the guests will not be able to observe the visible impacts of this action.

#### **3.2.2 Benefits of sustainable supply chain management practices**

The sustainable hotel management attribute of implementation of sustainable supply chain management policy (Attribute Nr. 2) and partnering with local and regional suppliers (Attribute Nr. 4) from Table 1

received similar responses from all experts interviewed. All experts agreed there are many direct benefits to guests due to the combination of these two attributes. Indeed, it is also documented that fresh, local food is perceived as a major benefit tied to authentic taste, product quality and a healthy stay (Kang and Rajagopal, 2014). This benefit is also visible to guests. However, two experts commented that this attribute covers the general local supply chain and could also include furniture, electrical products and many other things. As one expert noted

*“...guests experience not only local, healthier food but also locally made furniture like the work of local artists. The key here is the hotel should make the guests aware of their local commitment”.*

One expert also stated that

*“...guests have to be encouraged to calculate their food miles and incentivise their stay. It would allow guests to participate in the sustainability activities. Consumer involvement would always enhance the experience. It also offers direct benefit to the guests to enjoy healthier stay and make them feel better that they are supporting for a good cause and become more aware to know where their products are originated from. Thus, it supports a quality and healthier stay. Sharing regional knowledge and understanding the local dialect through employees would endure their stay”.*

### **3.2.3 Benefits of local employees and their fair and equitable treatment**

The sustainable hotel management attribute of local employment opportunities (Attribute Nr. 3) and providing fair and equitable treatment of all attributes (Attribute Nr. 5) from Table 1 also received similar responses from all experts, hence results were combined. All experts agreed that these two attributes supplement general hotel services, meaning that happier employees would serve better and hiring local employees would highlight local identity and authentic feeling to guests. As one expert noted,

*“...happier employees offer better service which indeed encourages the guests to stay longer in the same location”.*

Thus, guests benefit directly in two ways by having better service (all ten experts mentioned this) and by experiencing the authenticity of the hotel's location (five of ten experts mentioned this). It was noted that these benefit aspects would also enhance guest satisfaction levels.

### **3.2.4 Benefits of supporting cultural and natural heritage resources**

The sustainable hotel management attribute of directly support of cultural or natural heritage resources (Attribute Nr. 6) was perceived by seven experts to act as a direct benefit to guests because it enhances their experiences, for example attending local events or visiting local areas supported by the hotel. Experts also noted that guests would be more attracted to know the history of local heritage if it was communicated to guests more actively. It may increase the probability of guests revisiting the destination and stay in the hotel again. Two experts noted that guests would consciously contribute to local initiatives involving heritage management where the hotel was also involved. One expert commented,

*“Guests would always feel good to participate in social initiative related to diversity to experience the regional beauty.”*

Another expert recommended that supporting heritage resources would be an indirect benefit to guests, because they have to be first informed about the local culture to observe the impact of this management attribute.

### **3.2.5 Benefits of environmental management**

All sustainable hotel management attributes related to the environmental dimensions of sustainability (Attributes 7 to 12, Table 1) were combined for analysing benefit perceptions. Experts generally agreed that overall, environmental management attributes offered guests a social conscience, healthier environment,

Luzern, 11/05/2015 ITW Working Paper Series, Tourism 001/2015

made guests feel better when involved in these activities. Experts expressed generally that they would perceive their own experience as guests to be cleaner and healthier knowing that a hotel had various environmental management actions in place.

Five of ten experts suggested that guest perceived benefits of environmental attributes are rather indirect since guests cannot see the amount of environmental management effort undertaken by a hotel. Two experts had commented that European customers are more conscious towards resources wastage and many are aware of the need to use non-toxic products for cleaning for example. One expert commented that when

*“Guests are willing to participate in recycling programs; they feel better and good for volunteering for these events”.*

#### **4 Investigate hotel guest perceptions of sustainability related personal benefits (Step 3)**

In order to understand the different benefit dimensions of staying in a sustainably managed hotel an explorative, semi-structured interview with open ended questions was administered to hotel guests in a sustainably managed hotel establishment (Appendix C). This method was chosen since it enabled guests the freedom to express their opinions while some questions were designed to give respondents some cues (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). A series of 25 open questions to gauge guests' sustainability awareness and perceived personal benefit perceptions of staying in a sustainably managed hotel were included, as well as general travel and demographic questions. The questions relating to the 12 sustainability attributes in Table 1 served as cues for guests.

For the administration of the survey, a partner Hotel Sorrell Ador situated in the city of Bern, Switzerland was chosen. Since 2011, Sorrell Hotel Ador is consistently involved in sustainability management, following a defined framework recommended by its parent group ZFV. Thus, the hotel has a general management framework addressing the three dimensions of sustainability and works with annually revised action plans to implement its goals and objectives. At the time of the survey, the hotel met eight of the sustainability management attributes defined in Table 1. For example, the hotel conducts regular sustainability audits in covering various management areas such as emission reductions, non-toxic cleaning materials; waste management, recycles 100% of its solid waste, uses renewable energy and serves locally sourced and certified foods amongst many of its other engagements. The hotel also puts notable effort to communicate its sustainability actions on its website at [www.hotelador.ch](http://www.hotelador.ch), as well as in various locations throughout the hotel. To date, Hotel Ador received nine certifications to reflect its various sustainability efforts.

The survey was administered face-to face to guests who stayed in Hotel Ador during December 2014. Guests in the hotel lobby were randomly approached and interviewed based on their participation willingness. Each agreeing guest was briefed about the project prior to the interview, which were conducted either in the hotel lobby or in the hotel's restaurant. On average, each interview required 7 to 12 minutes, conducted either in English or in German based on guests' preferences. All participants received a souvenir from the hotel as a token of participation. In total, 22 guests were successfully interviewed who all stayed at least one night in the hotel. Guest interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and then transcribed and analysed using the f4 software. Keywords used by guests to describe personal benefits of sustainable hotels were listed and analysed for content. Simple frequency of words used also enabled the totalling the times a keyword was used to describe perceived benefits. For basic guest profile analysis Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used. The proceeding section describes the outcomes of the guest interviews.

##### **4.1 Guest interview findings about personal benefits**

Of the total interviewed guests (N=22) age ranged between 17 to 67 years old. Since the interviews were administered over a weekend 14 guests were staying for leisure purposes including visiting friends and relatives, five were business travellers and the remaining three had other purposes (Table 3). The majority of guests interviewed (18 of 22) were unaware of the hotel's certifications reflecting its sustainability engagements. Once informed about the hotel's certifications, 12 of 22 guests added that having known that in advance would be important. Guests noted that if there was information available about the sustainability aspects of a hotel this may act as a positive influencing factor on future bookings. Since the pricing and location were the major influencing factors for their bookings at the hotel this time, guests stated that booking a sustainable hotel could be preferred in future when booking a stay anywhere if all influencing factors were matched.

**Table 3 Demographic profile of interviewed hotel guests**

Profile of the hotel guests		Frequency (N=22)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	11	50.0
	Male	11	50.0
	Total	22	100.0
Age	17-34	6	27.3
	35-51	11	50.0
	52-68	5	22.7
	Total	22	100.0
Origin	Switzerland	8	36.4
	Germany	4	18.2
	Other	10	45.5
	Total	22	100.0
Purpose of your trip	Business	5	22.7
	Leisure travelers	11	50.0
	Visiting/meeting friends or relatives	3	13.6
	Other	3	13.6
	Total	22	100.0
Reason to book the hotel	Recommended by a company	5	22.7
	Tour package	4	18.2
	Location	8	36.4
	Price	4	18.2
	Recommended by family	1	4.5
	Total	22	100.0

When asked about sustainability in more detail, guests had variable levels of understanding and only one was able to mention its three dimensions. For nine guests, the term sustainability related specifically to environmental dimensions and only three guests mentioned anything about the social or economic dimensions. Eight out of 22 stated that they were aware about sustainability as a concept but could not define what sustainability meant to them especially in a hotel context.

Overall, guests were less aware about sustainability's benefits to themselves personally. In total, nine of 22 guests indicated that sustainability brought them no personal benefits. When asked about the personal benefits of sustainability without giving a cue, nine guests also stated altruistic feelings towards society, two guests responded as friendly staff, and one said that daily habit influence them and two guests mentioned something about food. When the guests were asked what kind of feelings they had about a particular benefit as a cue, most responses related to environmental consciousness. Below are the results which describe the benefits for the 12 sustainable hotel attributes obtained from guest interviews.

#### 4.1.1 Guest perceived benefits of the hotel's sustainable management plan

Guests had mixed responses to any benefits they could personally perceive knowing the hotel has a sustainable management plan with various actions (Attribute Nr. 1, Table 1). Guests specifically expressed this via statements such as:

*“In my opinion it's for the whole world and it is important for my family and future”  
(Interviewee 17),*

*“We are creating a better world we are living in” (Interviewee 18)*

*“Because my country doesn't have the sensitivity to follow this, so it feels good”  
(Interviewee 12).*

#### 4.1.2 Guest perceived benefits of hotel's sustainable supply chain management practices

Ten guests responded that better and fresh products were the major personal benefits when a hotel had a sustainable supply chain management with local and regional suppliers (Attributes Nr. 2 and 4, Table 1). In contrast, four guests felt that there were no personal benefits because of this management aspect. Those guests who perceived any arising personal benefits mentioned direct linkages to general hotel quality. Guests also noted that a hotel should generally provide more information about fair trade or organic products they use. Specific comments to illustrate these points were:

*“This hotel can show the local products to guests and give information about local foods”  
(Interviewee 11)*

*“I want to know more about fair trade before I buy a product” (Interviewee 22).*

#### 4.1.3 Guest perceived benefits of hotel's employee treatments

Eight guests expressed that if a hotel provided local employment opportunities and fair and equitable treatment of all employees they would see this as a benefit for society generally rather than personally (Attribute Nr. 3 and 5, Table 1). Only four guests stated that friendly and helping employees were important for their stay, which may be a consequence of this specific management action. A specific comment to illustrate this point was:

*“You will see it when you are served better and good assistance brings many changes”  
(Interviewee 22).*

#### 4.1.4 Guest perceived benefits of hotel's heritage resource protection practices

About the hotel providing direct or indirect support for heritage resource protection (Attribute Nr. 6), interviewed guests were generally neutral, stating neither disadvantages nor unaware of personal benefits. Six of 22 expressed that this management attribute is important but could not express any opinions about it. Only one guest noted that better and local products were personally useful. The only benefit one guest could state included the following statement:

*“When I go out as a tourist it helps for me to visit the local museums and when they give maps for me to visit” (Interviewee 21).*

#### 4.1.5 Guest perceived benefits of hotel's environmental management practices

For all environmental management attributes including energy, water, waste and emissions (Attributes 7 to 12, Table 1) generally guests expressed benefit perceptions about both “altruistic behaviour” and their personal “environmentally responsibility”. Guests gave similar responses to most of the environmental dimensions. For example, guest comments included the following:



Luzern, 11/05/2015 ITW Working Paper Series, Tourism 001/2015

*“When you have conscience and you constantly change the way you use hotels, it benefits me as a citizen not as a customer to save carbon emissions” (Interviewee 22).*

*“I prefer a hotel if the hotel has green energy and renewable energy and I feel it’s the right way and better for my children. It’s a pleasure to stay in such a hotel” (Interviewee 21).*

## 5 Synthesis of all results (Step 4)

The last step in this research involved a synthesis of all results combined from the previous research steps. To synthesise both expert and guest interview results, the words used to describe the benefits by both groups for all the 12 attributes were listed and collated using a simple frequency count. In total, the ten experts provided 78 benefit keywords while the 22 guest contributed another 65 words. Due to the low interview sample size statistical analysis were not conducted to test differences. Since many of the words and expressions used by experts and guests overlapped, the keywords were combined to form 21 “guest benefit types” using a simple qualitative approach. Word associations mentioned as “no advantages”, “unaware” were excluded from the analysis. Appendix D contains a summary of all the words mentioned by both groups and the forthcoming sections details their analysis.

### 5.1 Experts opinions about guest benefits

Experts identified 15 of the 21 benefit types analysed. As Figure 2 shows, the five most important benefit types in order of importance mentioned were:

1. Comfortable and quality stay
2. Friendly & highly motivated staff
3. Authentic experiences (local events & culture)
4. Incentivising (carbon offsetting, offering local guides, providing regional transportation)
5. Better products (superior performance & quality)

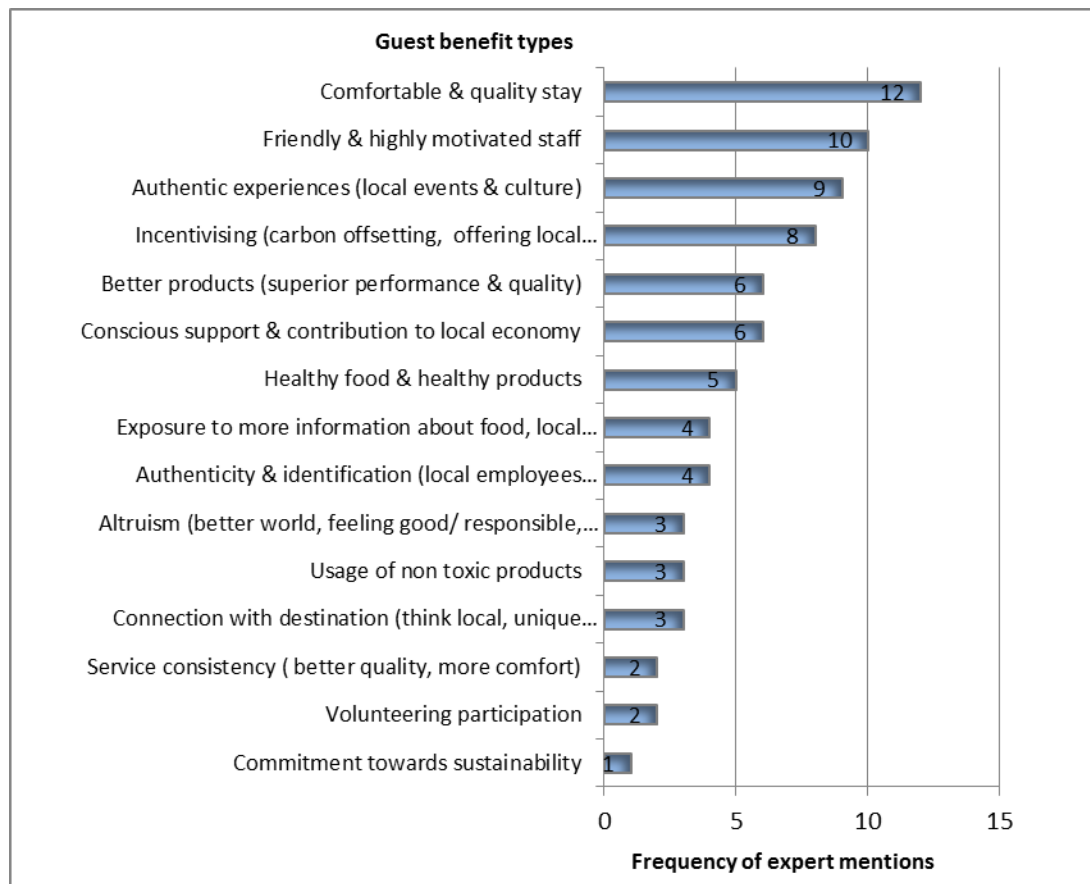
Most of the items in the above list represent direct personal benefits since the guest actually experiences their effect while they stay in the hotel. Altogether it appears that the experts perceived sustainability analogous to quality service (items 1, 2 and 5). This is not surprising since it is also considered to be an advantage in the academic literature (Chen, 2015). Similarly, researchers have previously identified specific benefits of sustainability, which corresponds to the words used by the experts opinions documented here. In a hotel context, these benefits include regional and cultural practices offering comfortable stay if a hotel practiced certain sustainable management (Besculides et al., 2002, Jamal and Camargo, 2013). This relates to item 3 of authentic experiences. Experts believed that the benefits types they identified is likely to contribute to general satisfaction by providing a diversified experience for them, for example offering locally sourced food products and encouraging guests to attend local events (Ashley et al., 2005, Roth, 2010).

Experts also noted other guest benefits such as offering incentives to participate in sustainability activities such as giving guests the option to offset their carbon emissions (item 4). Experts viewed this is a benefit to guests, because the hotel provides them the means to do something in favour of sustainability, i.e. a concrete action.

Overall, all experts suggested that the communication of sustainable hotel attributes played a major role for guests and there should be a story behind every attribute. Hence, the above results could be used as a basis for framing a communication messages in future marketing initiatives.

**Figure 2 Basic frequency distribution of sustainable hotel benefits stated by experts**

(N<sub>experts</sub>=10 word count =78)



## 5.2 Guest opinions about perceived benefits

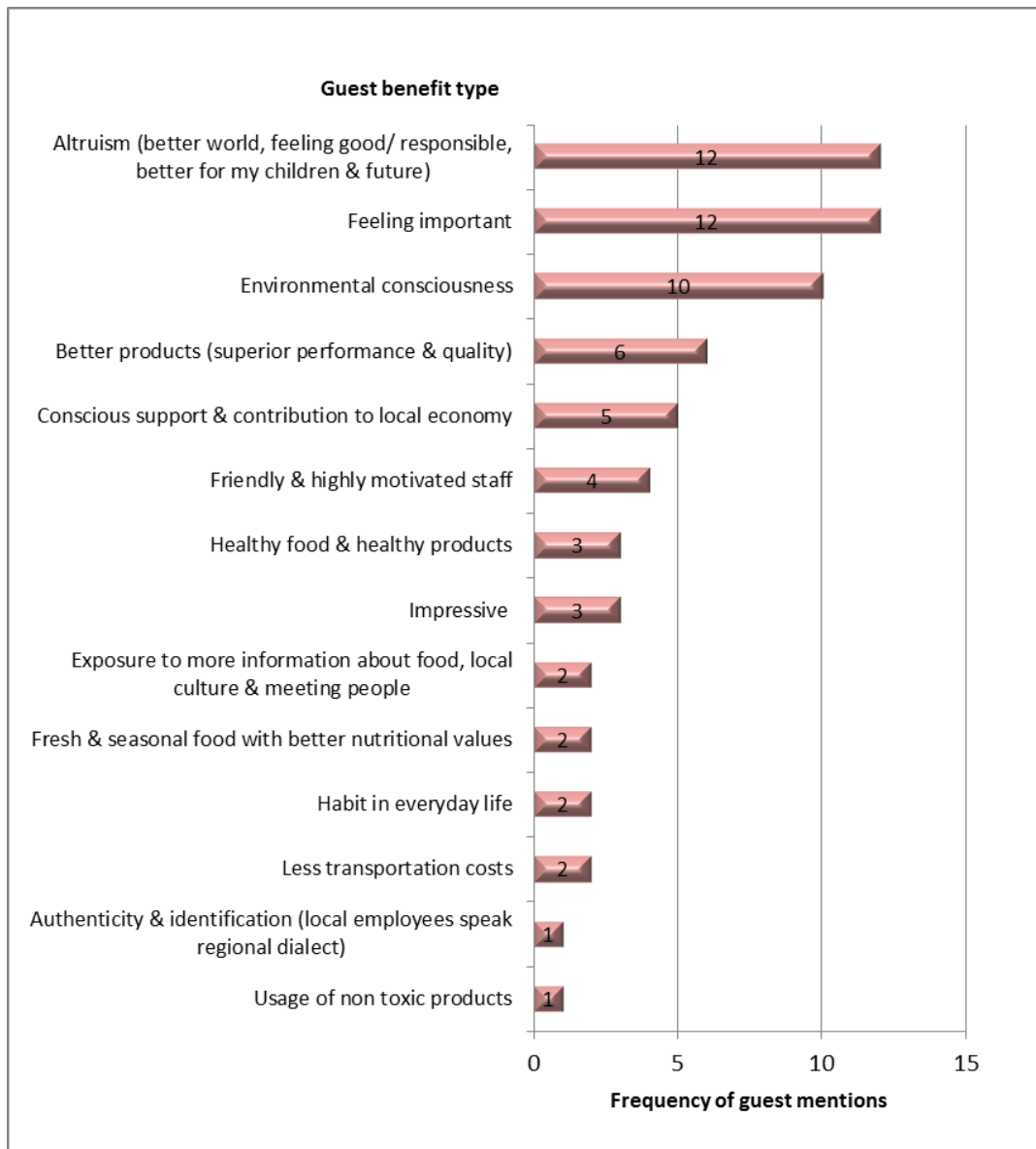
Guests identified 14 of the 21 benefit types analysed. As Figure 3 shows, the five most important benefit types in order of importance mentioned were:

1. Altruism (better world, feeling good/ responsible, better for my children & future)
2. Feeling important
3. Environmental consciousness
4. Better products (superior performance & quality)
5. Conscious support & contribution to local economy

Interestingly, four items in the above list represent indirect personal benefits. Besides item 4, all others are intangible and relate to simply knowing or feeling something about the hotel's sustainability actions. Overall, it appears that the guests perceived sustainability benefits to relate to doing something good for the planet and society, which go beyond the direct benefits of simply sleeping in a better quality hotel room.

**Figure 3 Basic frequency distribution of sustainable hotel benefits stated by guests**

(N<sub>hotel guests</sub>=22 word count = 65)



### 5.3 Commonly perceived benefits of sustainable hotel management

Of the 21 benefits types identified from expert and guest interviews combined, eight were common to both, although not at all in the same order of importance (Figures 2 and 3 and Appendix D). Clearly, both experts and guests associated sustainable hotel management with benefits relating to better product and service quality, doing something good for the planet and society, consciously consuming healthier particularly by eating locally sourced foods, or by the hotel providing non-toxic personal amenity products or using non-toxic cleaning products. For example, the benefit of eating healthy foods at a hotel has direct health benefits for the guest consuming these. But since such products are often produced with lower ecological impacts, society would also broadly benefit from such products. On the other hand, a benefit type such as “conscious support to the local economy” is also something clearly of wider benefit beyond the individual guest, therefore it could be considered as an indirect socio-economic benefit as well. Since the 21 benefit types represented overlapping and oft analogue concepts, the next analysis conducted was to determine which

benefit types were able to be grouped into a common category. This step enabled the grouping of 21 benefit types into five broad benefit categories (Table 4) and included:

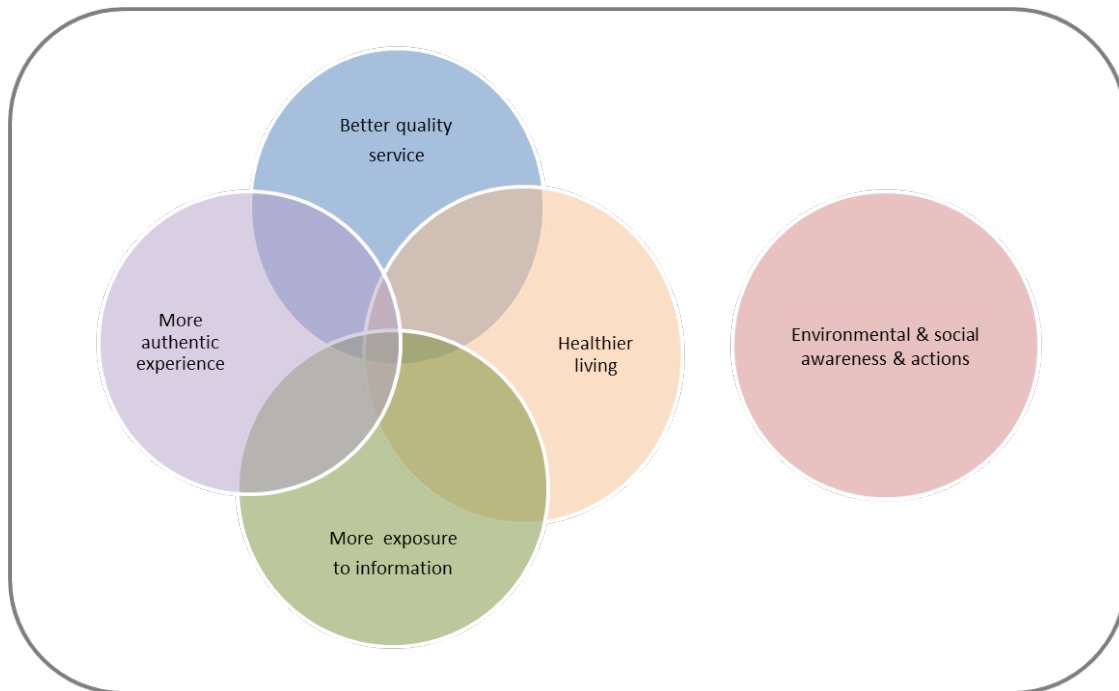
1. Better quality service
2. More authentic experience
3. More exposure to information
4. Environmental and social awareness and actions
5. Healthier living

**Table 4 Sustainable hotel benefit categorisation**

Benefit name	Benefit categories				
	Better quality service	More authentic experience	More exposure to information	Environmental & social awareness & actions	Healthier living
Fresh & seasonal food with better nutritional values	1	1	1		1
Service consistency (better quality, more comfort)	1				
Connection with destination (think local, unique value)	1	1	1		
Usage of non-toxic products	1				1
Exposure to more information about local food, culture & meeting people	1	1	1		1
Healthy food & healthy products	1				1
Better products (superior performance & quality)	1				
Authentic experiences (local events & culture)	1	1	1		
Friendly & highly motivated staff	1				
Comfortable & quality stay	1				
Low transportation costs				1	
Habit in everyday life				1	
Impressive				1	
Feeling important				1	
Commitment towards sustainability				1	
Volunteering participation				1	
Environmental consciousness				1	
Altruism (better world, feeling good/responsible, better for my children & future)				1	
Authenticity & regional identification (local employees speaking regional dialect)		1			1
Conscious support & contribution to local economy				1	
Incentivising (carbon offsetting, offering local guides, providing regional transportation)				1	

As Figure 4 shows, the four of the benefit categories overlap conceptually whilst the category “environmental and social awareness and actions” does not. In essence, the four overlapping categories relate to the hotel product or experience somehow being “better” offering “more value” as a result of sustainable hotel management practices.

**Figure 4 Summary of guest perceived benefits from a sustainable hotel stay**



#### 5.4 Study Limitations

This study was designed to be explorative in order to obtain an insight into perceived guest benefits of sustainably managed hotels. The approach relied mostly on tourism industry experts working in the field of sustainability, as well as interviews with guests who stayed in a sustainably managed hotel. Thus, the 32 individuals provided indeed a valuable insight into personal benefits of sustainable hotel management. It was also clear from the interviews that experts had a rather clear and focussed understanding of sustainability in general and how it relates to hotels specifically, while guests struggled with their own awareness about the topic. Although the guests interviewed were generally in favour of sustainability and had an overall understanding of it, they had clear difficulty articulating the benefits they could experience as a result of a hotel implementing it.

A future research with a larger sample for interviews with experts and guests would be worthwhile to pursue to provide clarity around the subject of perceived personal benefits relating to sustainable hotel experiences in order to validate the findings of this explorative study.

As the guests interviewed in this study did not purposefully choose the sustainable hotel, in another project, it would be helpful to do a pre-selection of guests that are more sustainability aware and have willingly chosen the hotel for its sustainable management.

## 6 Conclusion

This qualitative research involved the definition of common attributes that define a sustainably managed hotel based on analysing secondary documents and criteria set by international and regional sustainable tourism certification organisations. The research involved ten interviews with industry experts working in sustainable tourism representing various sustainable tourism certification bodies and national hotel associations in Switzerland, Germany and the USA. The expert interviews successfully validated the suggested 12 sustainable hotel attributes identified by the authors.

Although a sustainable hotel may have 100s of management actions implemented, the attributes relevant to communicate to guests need to be reduced and simplified since they are not likely to comprehend many technical management aspects and they may not be interested in the detail or information about individual attributes (especially when on holidays). Essentially, a hotel could state the number of specific sustainability actions in the hotel under five broad categories including:

1. the hotel has a sustainable management plan
2. the hotel works with local and regional suppliers
3. the hotel employs local people and treats everyone fairly and equitably
4. the hotel manages to reduce all its energy, waste and water use including emissions
5. the hotel supports local natural or cultural attractions.

The 22 hotel guest interviews also validated the notion that sustainability in hotel management is complex and communication needs to be simplified. Overall, guests perceived the benefits of sustainable hotel management to be indirect in the sense that they associated their stay in a sustainably certified hotel to be an altruistic act that would result in “good actions” for the planet and society. Nonetheless, both guests and experts equated a sustainable hotel stay with better product quality – while better was qualified with various words by different individuals.

Combining the benefits of all the experts and guests interviewed, the most notable personal benefit categories guests may experience from staying in a sustainably managed hotel can be described using the following vocabulary:

1. Better quality service
2. More authentic experience
3. More exposure to information
4. Environmental and social awareness and actions
5. Healthier living

### 6.1 Next Research Phase

The next stage of the project involves an experiment to determine response rates amongst low to high sustainability affine consumers to messages about sustainable hotels. The experiment will be administered to 800 adult travellers from Switzerland, Germany and USA. The outcome of the next research phase is expected to show which messages are best to motivate consumers to book a sustainable hotels. Results are also expected to shed an insight into the roles trust and positive anticipated emotions play in this process.

## 7 References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C. & Walker, D. (2013). *Introduction to research in education*, Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 32-34.
- Ashley, C., Poultney, C., Haysom, G., McNab, D. & Harris, A. (2005). *How to..? Tips and Tools for South African Tourism Companies on Local Procurement, Products and Partnerships*, London, Overseas Development Institute Business Linkages in Tourism, 1-24.
- Besculides, A., Lee, M. E. & McCormick, P. J. (2002). Residents' perceptions of the cultural benefits of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29, 303-319.
- Buckley, R. (2013). Social-benefit certification as a game. *Tourism Management*, 37, 203-209.
- Chen, R. J. C. (2015). Beyond sustainability: From sustainable consumer services to sustainable business. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 22, 223-224.
- Cohen, D. & Crabtree, B. (2006). *Qualitative research guidelines project*, Princeton.
- Dolnicar, S. & Grun, B. (2009). Environmentally friendly behaviour - can heterogeneity among individuals and contexts/environments be harvested for improved sustainable management? *Environment and Behaviour*, 41, 693-714.
- Esparona, M., Gyuris, E. & Stoeckl, N. (2014). Does ECO certification deliver benefits? An empirical investigation of visitors' perceptions of the importance of ECO certification's attributes and of operators' performance. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22, 148-169.
- Floyd, M. F., Jang, H. & Noe, F. P. (1997). The Relationship Between Environmental Concern and Acceptability of Environmental Impacts among Visitors to Two U.S. National Park Settings. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 51, 391-412.
- Global Sustainable Tourism Council. (2013). Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators. *Suggested performance indicators* [Online]. Available: [www.gstcouncil.org](http://www.gstcouncil.org) [Accessed 10 October 2014].
- Hsieh, H.-F. & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, 15, 1277-1288.
- Jamal, T. & Camargo, B. A. (2013). Sustainable tourism, justice and an ethic of care: toward the Just Destination. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22, 11-30.
- Kang, S. & Rajagopal, L. (2014). Perceptions of Benefits and Challenges of Purchasing Local Foods Among Hotel Industry Decision Makers. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 17, 301-322.
- Lee, M.-C. (2009). Factors influencing the adoption of internet banking: An integration of TAM and TPB with perceived risk and perceived benefit. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 8, 130-141.
- Lee, W. H. & Moscardo, G. (2005). Understanding the Impact of Ecotourism Resort Experiences on Tourists' Environmental Attitudes and Behavioural Intentions. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 13, 546-565.
- Millar, M. & Baloglu, S. (2011). Hotel guests' preferences for green guest room attributes. *Cornell University Quarterly*, 53, 302-311.
- Olson, J. C. & Peter, J. (1987). *Consumer Behavior: Marketing Strategy Perspectives*, Homewood, IL: Richard Van D. Irwin, Inc.
- Prud'homme, B. & Raymond, L. (2013). Sustainable development practices in the hospitality industry: An empirical study of their impact on customer satisfaction and intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 14, 116-126.
- Roth, T. (2010). *Green Traveler Survey*, San Francisco, CMI Green Community Marketing, 5-11.
- Self, R. M., Self, D. R. & Bell-Haynes, J. (2010). Marketing tourism in the Galapagos Islands: Ecotourism or greenwashing? *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)*, 9, 111-126.
- The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. (1992). *Agenda 21*, Rio de Janeiro, 14.1 - 14.104.
- Thompson, S. C. G. & Barton, M. A. (1994). Ecocentric and anthropocentric attitudes toward the environment. *Journal of environmental Psychology*, 14, 149-157.



## 8 Appendices

### Appendix A Interviewed organisations and their representatives

S. No	Organisation	Type	Interviewee location	Geog. Coverage	Interview Date
1	Sleep Green hotels	Certification	Freiburg	Germany	11/21/2014
2	Green globe	Certification	Los Angeles	USA	18/11/2014
3	Green Lodging News	Industry assoc.	Tampa	USA	5/1/2015
4	Hotellerie Suisse	Industry assoc.	Berne	Switzerland	25/11/2014
5	Ibex Fairstay	Certification	Chur	Switzerland	11/17/2014
6	German hotel association	Industry assoc.	Berlin	Germany	18/11/2014
7	International Tourism Partnership	Industry assoc.	London	Global	17/11/2014
8	STEP	Certification	Wilmington	USA	12/11/2014
9	Travel Life	Certification	London	Global	13/11/2014
10	Viabono	Industry assoc.	Roesrath	Germany	21/11/2014

Luzern, 11/05/2015 ITW Working Paper Series, Tourism 001/2015

The list below represents organisations that were contacted for an interview but where a complete interview did not take place.

No.	Organisation	Type	Website address	Location contacted	Geog. Coverage	Reason for not participating
1	AH & LA (American Hotel & Lodging association)	Industry assoc.	<a href="https://www.ahla.com/green.aspx">https://www.ahla.com/green.aspx</a>	Washington, DC	USA	Contact not found
2	DEHOGA	Industry assoc.	<a href="http://www.dehoga-bundesverband.de/">http://www.dehoga-bundesverband.de/</a>	Berlin	Germany	Interview cancelled – lack of time
3	EarthCheck	Certification	<a href="http://www.earthcheck.org/">http://www.earthcheck.org/</a>	Brisbane	Global	Interview cancelled – lack of time
4	Ecogreenhotel	Certification	<a href="https://www.ecogreenhotel.com/blog/category/green-hotels/">https://www.ecogreenhotel.com/blog/category/green-hotels/</a>	Knoxville	USA	Not known
5	European Commission – Sustainable tourism	Industry assoc.	<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/sustainable-tourism/index_en.html">http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/sustainable-tourism/index_en.html</a>		Europe	Contact not found
6	Green Key Global	Certification	<a href="http://greenkeyglobal.com/hotels">http://greenkeyglobal.com/hotels</a>	Ottawa	Global	No response
7	Global Sustainable Tourism Council	Industry assoc.	<a href="http://www.gstcouncil.org">http://www.gstcouncil.org</a>	Washington DC	Global	Contact not found

## **Appendix B Expert Interview Guide**

English version. A German version of this survey was used for German speaking experts

Dear Mrs. /Mr. XX

Thank you for accepting to participate in our research project. The interview will be conducted by November the XXth at XX o'clock.

One of the goals of our work is to identify a shortlist of 10 key sustainable hotel management attributes (and from hotel management perspective) that we can later analyse from the "guest perceived benefit perspective". One of the objectives of the research is to understand which management actions guests value the most as "personal direct or indirect benefits" so that we can suggest effective ways to market hotels that are managed according to sustainable management perspective.

As step 1, we compiled a wide range of sustainable tourism & hotel criteria and attributes from leading international organizations that deal with this topic, from hotel certification bodies and from the academic literature. As each organization has a range of themes or categories of attributes, we reduced the long list to a short list of 10 (see Table 1). These attributes were chosen, because these are common to all the organizations dealing with sustainable hotel or tourism management, including certification bodies.

Our questions to you are:

1. Do you agree with the attributes listed in Table 1 as the "most common" sustainable hotel management characteristics (Column 4 &5)?
2. If a key common management attribute or characteristic is missing from our list, which one is it?
3. In your opinion, what is the actual benefit for hotel guests linked to the different sustainable hotel management attributes or characteristics? Please list your comments in the last column of Table 1.
4. Do you have any other comments?

**Proposed key sustainable hotel management attributes/ characteristics identified from a comprehensive analysis of sustainable hotel criteria**

No	Sustainability dimension	Broad management category	Sustainable Hotel Management Attribute	Common example * there could be many others	Direct/ indirect benefits for guest
1	General management	Sustainable business management	Implementation of a sustainable management plan with a variety of actions in different areas.	Hotel is certified for its sustainability engagement and adheres to quality standards.	
2	Economic	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Implementation of Sustainable supply chain management policy	The hotel supports the local economy by having suppliers from the surrounding.	
3	Economic	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Providing local employment opportunities	The hotel employs local people in all its operations and pays fair wages to everyone.	
4	Social	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Partnership with local and regional suppliers	Breakfast is served using fresh, local (organic/fair trade products)	
5	Social	Maximise social & economic benefits to the local community	Fair & equitable treatment of all employees	Hotel employees are provided equal opportunities (such as training/education).	
6	Social	Maximise benefits to cultural heritage conservation	Direct and indirect support of cultural heritage	The hotel supports local heritage conservation projects and also donates some of its profits and or employee time as charity.	
7	Environmental	Natural resource conservation	Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (Energy)	The hotel measures and minimises energy use and has energy efficient lighting and A+++ appliances (TV, AC, kitchen, laundry)	
8	Environmental	Natural resource conservation	Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (Water)	The hotel measures and minimises water use and has water saving devices.	
9	Environmental	Reducing pollution	CO <sub>2</sub> waste management	The hotel measures and reduces all its greenhouse gas emissions and compensates all its unavoidable emissions and also encourages guests to do the same.	
10	Environmental	Reducing pollution	Solid and liquid waste management	The hotel measures and reduces all its solid waste. For example, it reuses rainwater composts organic waste from kitchen and recycles solid waste everywhere.	
11	Environmental	Reducing pollution	Liquid Waste management	The hotel uses non-toxic, biodegradable cleaning and personal amenity products (which are distributed in dispensers to avoid packaging waste).	
12	Environmental	Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems & landscapes	Direct and indirect support of natural heritage resources	The hotel supports ecological conservation projects and also donates some of its profits or employee time to some organisations.	

## Appendix C Guest Interview Guide

English version. A German version of this survey was used for German speaking guests.

### Introduction

Excuse me. Do you have few minutes for us? We are conducting an international research project and would like to ask you a few questions. It will take around 15 minutes. If you are not available right now, we are delighted to ask you later. This research project is conducted by the University of Zurich and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts and we are mainly interested in your personal opinions about your experiences with hotels. There are no correct or wrong responses and your answers will be anonymized.

Question 1: What are the main reasons to choose this hotel for your stay?

Question 2: Did you know that this hotel is certified for their sustainability concept?  
[FILTER: yes refer to question 3a; no refer to question 3b]

Question 3a: Did this aspect of sustainability, influence your hotel choice or booking decision?

Question 3b: If you had known, would such an aspect ever influence your hotel choice or booking decision?

Question 4: Do you have an idea about what sustainability means?  
[FILTER: yes refer to question 5a; no refer to question 5b]

Question 5a: What comes to your mind when you think about sustainability in the context of the hotel industry?

Question 5b: *Sustainability in the context of the hotel industry means, that the hotel will for example support the local industry, treat their employees in a fair and equitable way as well as save natural heritage resources.*

Question 6: What do you see as personal advantages if you stay in a sustainable hotel like this one?

Question 7: What do you see as personal disadvantages if you stay in a sustainable hotel like this one?

Question 8: What do you feel, knowing that this hotel is certified for sustainability?  
[FILTER: no feelings at all refer to question 10]

Question 9: Would you also have such feelings in a hotel that was not certified for sustainability but similar to this hotel?  
*Now I would like to ask you a little bit more about specific sustainable management actions, implemented by this hotel.*

Question 10: Do you know that the hotel sources many of its products from local suppliers?  
[FILTER: yes refer to question 11/12a; no refer to question 11/12b]

Question 11a: What personal advantages do you receive knowing that the hotel sourcing many of its products (such as food) from local suppliers?

Question 11b: If you had known, do you see any personal advantages knowing that the hotel sourcing

Question 12 a: Do you feel anything by knowing that many of its products (such as food) are from local suppliers?

Question 12b: How do you feel knowing that information?

Luzern, 11/05/2015 ITW Working Paper Series, Tourism 001/2015

Question 13: What personal advantages do you receive from your breakfast consisting of mostly fresh, some organic and fair-trade products?

Question 14: What personal advantages do you receive knowing that the hotel employees are treated equally, given training and educational opportunities?

Question 15: What personal advantages do you receive if you know that the hotel supports the cultural heritage of this region?

Question 15: How do you feel about the fact that the hotel minimizes its energy usage and buys renewable electricity?

Question 16: What personal advantages do you receive from knowing that the hotel reduces measures and monitor its natural resource use?

Question 17: What personal advantages do you receive from knowing that the hotel measures and reduces its carbon emissions and encourage guests to offset theirs?

Question 18: What personal advantages do you receive from knowing that the hotel uses non-toxic environmentally friendly cleaning products including personal amenity products?

*We are almost at the End of my questions. Please take a moment and think about your next hotel stay or booking decision.*

Question 19: What factors would make it easy for you to book a sustainable hotel like this?

Question 20: What factors would make it more difficult for you to book a sustainable hotel like this?  
*In the end, I would like to ask you few social demographics basic information.*

Question 21: What is the purpose of your trip?

- A) Business
- B) Leisure travellers
- C) Visiting friends or relatives
- D) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Question 22: How long are you staying?

Question 23 [*Gender: female / male*]

Question 24: May I ask your age?

Question 25: Where do you live?

- A) Switzerland
- B) Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Closure**

Thank you very much for your participation. You supported with your participation our international research project. If you like to you can take from here.

## Appendix D Keywords used to describe the benefits by experts and guests

No.	Specific attribute of a sustainably managed hotel	Keywords derived from expert interviews	Keywords derived from guest interviews
1	Implementation of a sustainable management plan with a variety of actions in different areas.	communication (5), quality and commitment towards sustainability (3), feel good (3), better experience (2), offsetting (1), consistency (1), healthy stay (1).	support the environment (9), unaware (5), impressive (3), healthy food (2), better world (2), environmental conscious behaviour (1) → daily habit (1), friendly atmosphere (1)
2	Implementation of sustainable supply chain management policy	better product quality (4), healthy stay (4), using local gives regional connection and with destination (3), commitment towards local industries (3), authentic or local experience (2), providing regional transportation (2), providing incentives (2), exposure to the information (1).	better products (6), it is important (3), no advantages (3), good and right products to use (2), fresh products (2), low transportation costs (2), more information (2), no benefit (1).
3	Partnering with local and regional suppliers		
4	Providing local employment opportunities	friendly, highly motivated staff (10) → better customer service and happier stay for guest, meeting locals (3), feel good (2) → local employees, regional dialect and regional identification (2), consistency (2).	supporting other people (5), competent and friendly, helping employees (4), important for future, whole world (3), speaking the local language (1).
5	Fair & equitable treatment of all employees		
6	Direct and indirect support of cultural heritage	local experience, local events, local culture (7), feeling conscious about local region (3), feeling good for the contribution (3), healthier environment (2), nice landscape and beautiful natural places (2).	no advantages (7), it is important (6), unaware (2), better products (1).
7	Direct and indirect support of natural heritage resources		
8	Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (Water)	comfortable (4), healthier stay (3), cost reduction → accommodation expenses (3), usage of non-toxic cleaning products (3), recycling and volunteering participation (1), clean nature (1).	contributing for the whole world (6), good for future (4), managing water (2), makes me responsible (1), better for my children (1), towels (1), health (1).
9	Gaseous waste management		
10	Solid and liquid waste management		
11	Waste management		
12	Reduce, measure & monitor natural resource use (Energy)		

### Ranking of benefit types according to frequency of mentions by experts and guests

Benefit Name	Frequency of Experts (n=10)	Rank Value Experts	Frequency of Guest (n=22)	Rank Value Experts
Less transportation costs	0	11	2	7
Habit in everyday life	0	11	2	7
Fresh & seasonal food with better nutritional values	0	11	2	7
Impressive	0	11	3	6
Feeling important	0	11	12	1
Commitment towards sustainability	1	10	0	9
Volunteering participation	2	9	0	9
Service consistency (better quality, more comfort)	2	9	0	9
Connection with destination (think local, unique value)	3	8	0	9
Usage of non-toxic products	3	8	1	8
Environmental consciousness	0	11	10	2
Altruism (better world, feeling good/ responsible, better for my children & future)	3	8	12	1
Authenticity & identification (local employees speak regional dialect)	4	7	1	8
Exposure to more information about food, local culture & meeting people	4	7	2	7
Healthy food & healthy products	5	6	3	6
Conscious support & contribution to local economy	6	5	5	4
Better products (superior performance & quality)	6	5	6	3
Incentivising (carbon offsetting, offering local guides, providing regional transportation)	8	4	0	9
Authentic experiences (local events & culture)	9	3	0	9
Friendly & highly motivated staff	10	2	4	5
Comfortable & quality stay	12	1	0	9
<b>Total count</b>	<b>78</b>		<b>65</b>	