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**The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and
Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry?**

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Abstract

This research sets out to examine what value can be created for Irish hotel organisations that implement environmental policies and initiatives. The research focused on both The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin both of whom have achieved the platinum award from The Green Hospitality Award. The motive behind this study is due to the environmental concerns which have led to widespread interest in environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry in the last 15 years. Nicholls & Kang (2012) have stated that the use of natural non-renewable resources is most prevalent in the accommodation industry.

The primary research was carried out on The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin. Unstructured interviews were used to gather industry data from three senior managers at The Garryvoe Hotel while semi-structured interviews were used to gather the necessary data from The Westin Dublin.

A number of key findings have resulted from this study. It is evident that despite previous research suggesting that there are many benefits for hotels to go green, financial savings is where the most value is created for Irish hotel organisations. This research also found that contrary to previous research the idea of being a green hotel will become less important to customers in the future simply because this generation of customers have been brought up thinking environmentally.

One of the key implications of this study is that if Irish hotel organisations are considering implementing environmental policies and initiatives, the main and most significant reason they should do it is to avail of the financial benefits.

1 Research Question, Aims and Objectives

1.1 Introduction

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2012) has stated that the tourism industry can become a leader in a Green Economy. Nicholls & Kang (2012) have stated that the relationship between the tourism industry and the natural environment is highly symbiotic. This is further supported by Rodriguez & Cruz (2007) who have said that the hotel industry's use of environmental policy in its corporate strategy and daily activities is imperative due to the symbiotic nature and relationship with the surrounding natural, economic, social and cultural environment. The tourism industry's dependence on environmental quality is even more important in destinations that rely on natural resources to do business. According to Molina-Azorin, Claver-Cortes, Moliner & Tari (2009) hotel organisations which are located at a destination that relies on its natural resources have an opportunity to significantly increase their environmental commitment level, which in turn may lead to a competitive through the use of a long-term strategy. The need for this type of commitment is highlighted by Hunter & Green (1995) who have recognised that visitors to these types of destinations assess their experience based on the quality of the destinations environment. However according to Nicholls & Kang (2012) the accommodation sector is one of the biggest users of non-renewable resources. Therefore with natural resources quickly diminishing it is important that these destinations preserve the environment that they are a part of. However according to Fotiadis, Vassiliadis & Reklekitis (2013) it is crucial that hotel organisations ensure that they do not become less competitive due to the costs involved in maintaining their environmental commitment. A Green Economy is seen as one of the main ways in which Ireland can continue to steer itself out of economic difficulty (Failte Ireland, 2012). Ireland's tourism offering and the environment go hand in hand. Ireland

relies on its coastlines, landscape and rivers to attract tourists to the island. It is therefore crucial that the emphasis is put on preserving and maintaining these natural resources. The tourism industry itself can play an important role in this by limiting the impact it has on the environment (ITIC, 2012). Chan & Wong (2006) have stated that the hotel industry has an additional stake in protecting the environment, because its business success depends on providing attractive and safe surroundings. According to Kirkpatrick (1990) the move towards green management in hotels began in the 1990's. The idea of environmentalism began to spread worldwide at that time in what was known as the 'green decade' thus came the emergence of the environmentally conscious consumer. According to Nicholls & Kang (2012) the work on environmental practices in the hotel sector began in the European context. Kirk (1998) surveyed 85 hotel managers in Edinburgh, Scotland in relation to hotel characteristics and attitudes towards environmental management. The survey concludes that no relationship was found between hotel characteristics and the existence of an environmental policy with the perceived benefits of operating an environmental policy being improved public relations and a better relationship with the local community. People became increasingly aware about the environmental issues in the world and realised how their purchasing decisions affected the environment. Brandweek (2009) identified that one in ten guests are now actively seeking green policies within the hotel sector. A survey, conducted by Penny (2007) which examined the attitude of hotel managers in the Chinese city of Macau towards green management found that 65% of the respondents believed that sound green management in hotels can contribute to its image and competitiveness. As a result of this green management has now become an important factor in hotel planning both on a strategic and operational level. According to Li and Nginiatedema (2013) empirical evidence in the area of environmental operations and business performance suggests that there is a positive relationship between green operations and business performance. The question therefore is

how does the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry create a positive relationship with organisational performance.

1.2 Research Question

The research question of this dissertation is **The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry?** The study will attempt to identify whether value can be created through cost savings, green marketing and branding, increased employee retention, enhanced consumer perceptions and overall sustainable competitive advantage for organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. All of the primary research will be compared with the current available literature and research.

1.2.1 Rationale

The motive behind this study is due to the environmental concerns which have led to widespread interest in environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry in the last 15 years. The author hopes this study will identify the reasons behind this shift and its potential value to organisations in the Irish hotel industry. However despite the widespread interest in environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry there is a gap between what organisations say they will do and what action they take. According to Doody (2010) many hospitality managers do not understand the value of adopting a green agenda, which leads to a complacent attitude in relation to environmental practices. This is supported by Han, Hsu & Lee (2009) who note that despite many organisations commitment to going green there is still a gap between attitude and action in relation to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. This is further substantiated by Kassinis and Soteriou (2001) who concluded that in practice managers know little about what impact the

implementation of environmental policies and initiatives can have on their organisational performance. This is highlighted in the Crowe Horwath Hotel Industry Survey (2012) which showed that out of the 833 hotels currently operating in the Republic of Ireland only 145 of them have signed up to the Green Hospitality Award. The author of this dissertation believes that the distinct lack of research conducted in this area in an Irish context is one of the main reasons behind the lack of commitment from hotel owners. This research will hopefully provide business owners in the Irish hotel industry with a more comprehensive assessment of the value that can or cannot be created through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives which can then be used as the basis of their future decision making in this area.

1.3 Research Aims

The aim of this study is to pose the question as to what value can be created for organisations in the Irish hotel industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives. Can value be created through:

- Cost savings which can be passed onto customers through lower rates thus creating a cost advantage against competitors
- The opportunity to play their part in sustaining the environment which may improve the company's brand image and marketing potential
- The ability to attract more customers through "Green Marketing"
- The ability to hold onto or attract key human resource personnel
- Market expectations in relation to environmental policies and initiatives which may lead to long-term sustainable competitive advantage

This research will look at all of these factors from a management and owner perspective only. Once the value or lack of value of implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry has been ascertained an overall conclusion about the value of implementing environmental policies and initiatives in Irish Hotel organisations can be arrived at.

1.4 Research Objectives

In order to satisfy the purpose of this research the following objectives have been identified:

- To review all the relevant literature on implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the hospitality industry
- To specifically investigate the business case for implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry i.e. cost savings, green marketing and branding, employee retention and competitive advantage
- To also investigate customers attitudes towards the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry from a management perspective

These objectives will be answered using secondary data by relevant authors in chapter 2 of this dissertation. In this chapter the research is provided with informative research collated from books, journals, articles etc. This research is combined with the primary data obtained for the authors primary research and will answer the research question as set out by the author.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A literature review provides a general idea of what research has been carried out by authors which is relevant to the research objectives. It reviews all the current information on the chosen topic found in journals, books, articles etc. The literature review should present the work of others in a way that leads to the establishment of a coherent and logical picture of the research area. All of these topics are relevant to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry and ultimately provide the basis for future decision making in relation to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. Despite many organisations commitment to implementing environmental policies and initiatives there is still a gap between attitude and action in relation to it (Han *et al.*, 2009). This is despite the value that can be created for organisations in many areas who implement such policies and initiatives. According to the Crowe Horwath hotel industry survey (2012) there are currently 883 hotels operating in the Republic of Ireland. Out of those 883 hotels only 145 hotels have signed up to the Green Hospitality Award (GHA) which is an organisation committed to assisting the hospitality sector in becoming more environmentally responsible (ghaward, 2012). This chapter will contain an overview of topics that are relevant to the dissertation area, such as the history of green hospitality & the green hospitality award and also the specific areas in which value can be created for organisations who implement environmental policies and initiatives.

2.2 The Green Hospitality Award

The Green Hospitality Awards were launched in 2008 as a result of the Greening Irish Hotels Program. The Greening Irish Hotels Program was launched in 2005 and its main aims were to (epa.ie, 2014):

- Encourage hotels around Ireland to implement environmental practices & procedures.
- To identify Best Practice in Irish hotels.
- Identify the barriers to success in greening hotels.

The program itself was funded by the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP) through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There was further funding from the hotels that participated in the program and also from sponsors and suppliers. The program looked at the areas in which hotels in Ireland can reduce their impact on the environment such as (epa.ie, 2014):

- Water
- Waste
- Fuel Switching
- Energy

The program showed the cost savings of introducing Best Practice in Irish hotels. The research found that if all hotels in Ireland implemented Best Practice the cost savings would be (epa.ie):

- Water- €5.4million
- Waste- €14million
- Fuel Switching- €16million
- Energy- €46million

As a direct outcome of this program The Green Hospitality Awards were launched in 2008. Despite being launched in 2008 the Green Hospitality Program actually started in Cork in 2004 as a regional award scheme for hotels but in 2008 it received funding from the EPA under The National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP). It was developed based on other European schemes. The programme provides environmental certification to recognise the efforts made by hospitality businesses to reduce the impact of their business on the environment. There are 4 different award levels to the programme:

1. Eco-Label
2. Award
3. Award/Gold
4. Award/Platinum (For hotel sector only)

The programme is the only Irish programme of its kind to be internationally recognised. The success of the programme is clear to see. Since the programme was set up in 2005, 9% of the hotels in Ireland have been certified up to 2012. When this is compared to the levels of other European countries:

- Austria- 5.37%
- Germany- 3.27%
- UK- 1.05%

one might say that Ireland is a leader in the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in lodging organisations in Europe. With Ireland currently performing well above the rest of Europe in relation to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in hospitality businesses we must ask what is motivating these business owners and managers to implement environmental policies and initiatives in their organisations.

2.3 The Business Case for Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

The author has identified a number of potential ways in which value could be created:

2.3.1 Cost Savings

According to Ali, Mairna, Shireen, Mashal & Mohsen (2008) the economic implications is the most important factor when deciding to implement sustainable practices into an organisation. This is supported by Brebbia and Pineda (2004) who claim that the financial savings that are made by businesses who implement environmental initiatives is one of the main motivating factors for implementing such initiatives. These claims are further enhanced by Graci (2002) who found that cost savings were identified by The Hotel Association of Canada as the driving force behind decisions to implement environmental initiatives in a hotel property. This is again substantiated by Schendler (2001) who argues that organisations have the opportunity to reduce costs through the use of environmental practices. There are many costs involved in the operation of a lodging organisation. The four main costs that are incurred are waste (landfill), water, fuel (oil, coal, gas etc.) and energy (EPA). Lodging organisations that can reduce their costs and improve their efficiency will be more cost effective than their competitors. One of the main problems that owners/management have in relation to implementing green initiatives is the initial capital investment required. Fotiadis *et al.* (2013) found that high perceived investment costs are considered the main constraint in implementing sustainable tourism development initiatives. This is supported by Belton (2012) who has said that the conversion process for going green can require large sunk costs for energy-efficient and water efficient appliances, as well as higher operating costs associated with purchasing environmentally benign cleaning supplies and recycled paper products. This is further substantiated by Reinhart (1999) who asserts that the

implementation of environmental policies and initiatives requires additional costs that need to be met and as a result has a negative impact on an organisations cost base. Similarly Walley and Whitehead (1994) argue that corporate environmental initiatives generate unrecoverable costs for an organisation. However by starting with smaller projects that require less capital investment for example the installation of energy saving light bulbs, greater savings can be made in the future. According to Fotiadis *et al.* (2013) several hotels in Greece have started to implement smaller environmental practices such as using energy saving light bulbs or appliances because of their cost reduction benefits. Similarly The Maritime Hotel in Bantry replaced 240 halogen bulbs (30 watt) with 3 watt LED bulbs which resulted in them reducing their energy consumption by 90% and thus saving €7,128 per annum on energy costs (ghaward.ie). Graci (2002) reports that the installation of low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators has saved the Holiday Inn on King in Toronto \$14,852 Canadian Dollars per year. Graci (2002) also reports that The Fairmount Royal York in Toronto saves \$200,000 Canadian Dollars per year after investing \$25000 Canadian Dollars in an energy conservation program to fix leaks and replace leaky steam traps. Closer to home The Radisson Blu Hotel and Spa in Cork found that the water features in their leisure centre were costing them €24600 per year in energy. To reduce this they installed push button timers that guests will use to activate the features at a cost of €8500 and it is saving them €12300 per annum on energy costs (ghaward.ie). The cost savings are there to see for owners and managers in the Irish Hotel Industry however as Bergin (2008) identified, the major barrier to the implementation of successful environmental initiatives in Irish hotel organisations is a lack of commitment from senior management and owners. Doody (2010) emphasises this point by stating that many hospitality developers, owners and managers do not understand the value of adopting a green agenda, which leads to a complacent attitude in relation to environmental practices. So it is undeniable that the savings that can be made by hotel organisations are

immense however all of the work that has been done to reduce these costs will be for no reason unless organisations can get customers to come through their door. The money that has been saved by the organisations can be used in many different areas one being marketing and branding.

2.3.2 Green Marketing & Branding

Peattie (1995, p.28) has defined green marketing as ‘the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way’. As society has become more and more concerned about environmental issues, hospitality organisations have had to increase their efforts in order to address the sustainability issues and have also had to modify their approach to business in an attempt to address those concerns (Cornell, 2012). Studies have shown that the interest in environmental related issues in the hospitality sector is increasing all the time. Jose & Lee (2007) have identified that there is increasing demand for corporations not only to follow environmentally conscious principles in their daily operations, but also to publicly report on their social and environmental performance and financial outcomes. Hu, Parsa, and Self (2010) reported that more than 50 percent of consumers are willing to pay 2 to 6 percent more to patronise a green restaurant. Also according to Information Resources Inc. of Chicago, 50 percent of consumers consider at least one of four features in their product purchase choices: eco-friendly packaging, organic status, eco-friendly status, or fair-treatment status. However according to a study carried out by Scully (2013) respondents revealed that even though knowledge of a hotels environmental practices would positively influence their perception, it would not make them pay more for such a hotel. As a result of the increased interest in environmental issues hotel organisations have taken the logical step towards green advertising and promoting a green brand. In a study carried out by Kassaye (2001) he found

that even ten years ago many of America's big organisations, such as McDonalds, Coca Cola & Wal-Mart were doing green marketing of some kind. According to Grant (2008) a green brand is one that offers a significant eco-advantage over their competitors thus appealing to the customers who are willing to make green a high priority. A study that was published by The Cornell University identified people on higher incomes and who have a higher education as the ones that are more concerned and cognizant about the environmental impact of their own behaviour as well as that of the businesses they patronise (www.younghotelier.com). This is therefore an opportunity for hotel organisations that are promoting a green brand to attract very valuable customers. This would seem to be contradicted by a study conducted by Scully (2013) who found that while the educational level of the sample consisted of a high level of respondents with a third level qualification or above only 40 per cent of the people surveyed purchased goods or services from environmentally conscious organisations. However the most important thing for organisations when trying to convey a green brand is how they do it. To simply say that your business is green is not enough. According to The Cornell University Report (2012) that was mentioned above customers are interested in supply chains, specific practices and the green solutions that most affect them (www.younghotelier.com, 2010). According to previous research people do not like organisations no matter how genuine they are, making capital gains by going green. It is seen as profiteering (Green, 2008). Pizman (2009) believes that many hospitality organisations are not interested in going green for ethical reasons but are investing in environmental practices for purely selfish, profitable reasons. If organisations are not careful they will not be able to avoid the apathy and distrust from customers and will end up worse off than if they did nothing (Grant, 2008). Therefore organisations need to base their green marketing ideas on sound environmental values. Pickett, Kangun and Grove (1995) have stated that the creation of a successful green brand would not be possible if emotional and functional benefits of

green hotel products were not properly communicated to consumers. Consequently, a hotel organisation with a sound green image can achieve cost reduction from the use of energy and water, appeal to investors, cultivate guest loyalty and attract and retain highly motivated employees, thereby securing top market share and position (Green Hotelier, 2007). The ability to attract and hold onto key human resource personnel has been identified by Graci (2008) as a key factor when deciding to implement environmental policies and initiatives.

2.3.3 Employee Retention

According to Kusluvan (2010) few would argue with the concept that the human element in the tourism and hospitality sector is critical for service quality, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage and organisational performance. According to Saru (2007) an organisations success depends highly on the satisfaction and labour productivity of their employees and the development of human resources is fundamental in realising the strategic tasks of the organisation. All previous theoretical research would support this statement as it argues that ‘human capital or assets, including employee knowledge, skills, experience, ability, personality, internal and external relationships, attitudes, and behaviours are essential for creating the firm-specific advantages’ (Kusluvan, 2010, p.195). According to Graci & Kuehnel (2008) improved employee retention is one of the greatest benefits of implementing environmental policies and initiatives. This is supported by Schendler (2001) who states that the implementation of environmental practices increases employee satisfaction. Employees, similar to customers are today more aware of the current thinking in society when it comes to sustainable tourism. Promoting an environmental friendly organisation will attract like-minded people who are interested in working in an eco-friendly organisation. According to a survey conducted by Lightspeed Research and published in National Geographic Magazine (2012), 80 percent of U.S. workers believe that it is important to work for a company that

implements environmental practices into the workplace (Green Lodging News, 2012). This is supported by a survey carried out by MonsterTRAK which found that ninety-two percent of college graduates surveyed stated that they would select an environmentally friendly company (www.greenlodgingnews.com). This is further substantiated by a study conducted by Kenexa Research which indicates that working for an organisation where employees positively view environmental efforts has a significant, favourable impact on how they rate their pride in the organisation, overall satisfaction and willingness to recommend it as a place to work. Furthermore, employees with favourable opinions of their organisations environmental activities are more likely to state an intention to stay, relative to those who have unfavourable opinion (www.greenlodgingnews.com, 2010). According to Fotiadis *et al* (2013) that benefits of implementing a long-term sustainable environmental program are greatly affected by the acceptance and adaptation of employees. This is supported by Graci & Kuehnel (2008) who state that without the support of the employees, an environmental program will rarely succeed. Hawkins and Chan (2010) found that workload increases because of environmental policy implementation. However nearly all of the respondents in their study stated that they did not mind doing more, because environmental protection was a worthy goal. According to Andrew Mullen (2012), the facilities manager at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Cork, in a six week period in 2011 when he himself was away, energy consumption only increased by 0.25 percent when compared to the previous year. This highlighted that despite him being away the fact that all of the employees were after buying into or were behind the organisations environmental initiatives meant that energy consumption barely increased at all. It is crucial to engage and consult with employees before starting and during the development and implementation phase of an environmental program. Employees have a better understanding of the areas where savings can occur as they work in areas every day that have the potential to make savings. This idea would seem to be supported by Reid

(2006) who highlighted that 90 percent of the employees at The Fairmont King Royal Toronto were supportive of their environmental program and their suggestions at the beginning were the bedrock on which the original program was based. Therefore employees are more likely to be attracted to employers whose principles and practices are aligned with their attitudes and beliefs. With the turnover rate of employees in the hotel sector being famously high it is important that employers look at ways of retaining their employees thus saving money on training new staff. Graci & Kuehnel (2008) have highlighted that environmental programs have proved to be an effective way of increasing motivation and enthusiasm among staff. The different areas where value can be created for hotel organisations have been discussed but is the value created substantial enough to create a competitive advantage.

2.3.4 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is ‘an advantage over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value, either through lower prices or by providing more benefits that justify higher prices’, (Kotler *et al.*, 2005, p.421). Organisations in the hotel industry can differentiate themselves from other competitors through;

- Physical attribute differentiation – better quality of facilities
- Service differentiation – different / wider range of services than competitors
- Personnel differentiation – staff that exceed expectations of customers
- Location differentiation – unique/ preferential location
- Image differentiation – company / brand image

Implementing environmental initiatives and programs can provide businesses with a competitive advantage provided that they are done voluntarily. According to Lopez-Gramero, Claver-Cortes & Molina-Azorin 2011; Hitchens et al. 2005; Sharma & Vredenburg

1998; Porter & Van Linde 1995 and Azzone & Bertele 1994 environmental proactivity is becoming one of the drivers of competitiveness in hotels. This is supported by Smerecnik & Andersen (2011) who state that sustainability innovations, if they are implemented as part of a long term vision increase an organisations competitive advantage. Environmental policies in lodging organisations can be a part of competitive advantage or rather a lack thereof can be a disadvantage (Davis, 2005; Jones, Comfort & Hillier, 2005). However Jones *et al.* (2005) argue against the theory of environmental policy as a competitive advantage and in the current economic climate, although there are some signs of recovery, the consumer is increasingly price sensitive, with organisations competing heavily for market share by slashing prices, the introduction of environmental policies and initiatives could be the deciding factor for consumers when the price of products from different organisations are the same. Graci & Kuehnel (2008) have stated that in the years ahead implementing these initiatives and programs will become a baseline requirement for all hospitality businesses. Therefore businesses that already have environmental practices built into their business models will have the best opportunity to gain competitive advantage against organisations that are just reacting to the growing sustainability curve (Graci & Keuhnel, 2008). Some in the hospitality industry also view environmental policy as an opportunity to hedge against potential future regulation (Butler, 2008). Organisations also gain a competitive advantage by being recognised for their green efforts. Award's such as The Environmental Leadership Award which was awarded to The Fairmont Royal York Toronto in 2008 helps spread the news of hotels efforts and helps to attract new customers. For example many corporate businesses are under pressure to conduct business in an environmentally friendly manner and therefore may be attracted to hotels that are also doing business in an environmentally friendly way (Graci *et al.*, 2008). In 1997 the Canadian Government announced that it only used domestic hotels that use sound environmental programs (WWF/IBLF, 2002). However

Fotiadis *et al.* (2013) caution that certification programs can generate poor results if they are not combined with proper governmental regulations. According to Graci (2002) environmentally progressive companies such as General Motors are now starting to work with hotels based on their level of environmental commitment. In a survey carried out by Deloitte 34 percent of surveyed business travellers are actively seeking out hotels that are environmentally friendly (Millar, Mayer and Baloglu, 2012). Despite these examples, according to Ji-ming & Hao-bai (2007) research on the relationship between environmental policy and competitive advantage is still scarce. Rodriguez & Cruz (2007) suggest that being socially and environmentally responsible is linked to the quality of the product offered and therefore gives an increased level of competitiveness to the hospitality firm by offering a better quality of product/service. This theory is supported by Millar *et al.* (2012, p.401) in a study on Kamat Hotels India Ltd where a senior manager of one of their main competitors commented

If you promote eco-friendly service as the only competitive advantage you can boast of, you will be serving a handful of customers. There are business travellers, luxury seekers and short term tourists who may not be readily inclined to pay extra bucks for an eco-friendly room.

The question is do managers believe that implementing environmentally friendly practices will provide a competitive opportunity or a threat. Sustainable development of a business and good business go hand in hand. Management commitment to sustainable development holds the key to long-term organisational success and can lead to increased competitive advantage in the future (Lopez-Gamero *et al.*, 2011).

As has been highlighted above there are several business cases for the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry all of which can create some degree of competitive advantage for organisations in the hotel industry. However the ability

of an organisation to create a long-term sustainable competitive advantage will be greatly affected by the attitudes of customers towards such environmental policies and initiatives.

2.4 Customer Attitudes Towards Green Services

Organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry nowadays are becoming more and more focused on the attitudes and feelings of potential customers towards green services. Growing public concern over environmental damage and customers' desire for environmentally oriented products have stimulated hotel operators to green operations (Han *et al.*, 2009; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). Do customers really take into account the environmental policies of organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry? According to the 2008 National Leisure Monitor Survey, 85% of leisure travellers consider themselves to be 'environmentally friendly' consumers (Crocker, 2008). Assael (1984) conceptualised image as the global perception that the public develops on the basis of information gathered and processed over time. Kotler & Gertner (2002) have stated that a company's image strongly influences a consumer's decision making process by offering mental shortcuts when processing purchase data. Despite the fact that the interest in the customers attitudes towards green services is on an upward curve, the green customer remains notoriously difficult to assess. In the study that was conducted by Scully (2013) it found that there was a significant level of environmental awareness among the people that were surveyed. However as mentioned previously he found that only 40 per cent of the people surveyed purchased goods or services from environmentally conscious organisations. This supports the theory put forward by Han *et al.* (2009) who asserts that customer's intention to purchase green services and their actual action often differs. This is further corroborated by Dalton, Lockington & Baldock (2008), who found that studies indicate that customers often will not choose eco-friendly alternatives regardless of price. They will not always be prepared to accept

continuous inconveniences and still want to sustain their existing lifestyle, although they simultaneously want to be ecologically responsible. Scully (2013) found that quality of service, quality of facilities and reputation are the three most important factors for people when choosing a place to stay. This is supported by Ottman (1994) who found that price, along with quality and convenience are still the most important factors in consumer purchase decision making rather than the greenness of the product. Additionally Manaktola & Jauhari (2007) identified in a survey carried out on Indian hotels that despite the increased level of interest and positive attitudes towards 'green practices' only 15 per cent of the respondents would pay extra for green services. Kim & Han (2010) substantiate this theory by suggesting that customers are not always ready to pay for green hotels unless a green hotel provides an adequate level of product quality that is comparable to the quality of a conventional hotel. However according to Schendler (2001) organisations that implement environmental policies and initiatives can significantly improve customer loyalty. It is therefore important that organisations identify the market segments that in fact purchase their green product. In several studies carried out by Kalafatis, Pollard & East, 1999; Shabecoff, 1993; Roberts, 1991 it was found that people who take part in environmentally friendly activities (EFA's) are more likely to purchase green products. However in a more recent study from carried out by Han *et al.* (2009) it was found that people who took part in EFA's were not a strong indicator for purchasing green products more specifically green hotel rooms. In 2008 GFK America released a study, The Green Gauge Report, which highlighted global and American attitudes towards environmental responsibility. The report segmented the population into six different consumer groups based on environmental attitudes and practices. This study would support the previous research that states that there is a gap between consumer's environmental beliefs and actions. The study shows that the highest market segment which was called 'Not me Greens' are people who have strong environmental beliefs and attitudes

but has yet to turn into action except for maybe easier behaviours like recycling. Figure 1 highlights the 6 segmented consumer groups (Green Gauge Report, 2008)

Figure 1: Segmented Consumer Groups

| <i>Segment Name</i> | <i>Percent of the Market</i> | <i>Segment Description</i> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Genuine Greens | 17% | These are the environmental activists. They are the most likely to think and behave green and do not feel there are any barriers to action. |
| Not Me Greens | 21% | This segment has strong attitudes, however, this thinking has yet to turn into action except for certain easier behaviours like recycling. There is a sense among this group that the issue is too large for them to handle. |
| Go-With-The-Flow Greens | 16% | This group can be considered moderate in terms of their environmental behaviours and attitudes. They are more likely to take easy actions such as recycling. They also may be less |
| | | concerned about environmental problems such as global warming. |
| Dream Greens | 13% | While they tend to have limited green behaviour, their environmentally friendly attitudes are stronger than the general population. The biggest barrier to this group behaving more green is lack of information. |
| Business First Greens | 21% | Generally less concerned about environmental issues and problems, their green behaviours are less than those of the total population. This group is also less likely to believe that industry needs to take steps to improve the environment. |
| Mean Greens | 11% | These individuals are cynical and apprehensive about environmentalism. They are more likely to think that the environmental movement is a front for political interest groups. |

Table 5: 2008 Green Gauge Report for Consumer Segments (Adapted from: GFK America, 2009)

However this does not imply that there is not a market for green hotel organisations. In a study which was carried out on the Canadian hotel sector, it showed that one third of the respondents would change from their preferred holiday destination to a destination that promoted sustainable tourism (Graci & Dodds, 2008). Early research shows that the primary

motivating factors for organisations to implement environmental policies and initiatives was to comply with government regulations and save by costs by reducing waste and energy usage. According to Bergin (2008), in recent years Irish Hoteliers along with all other lodging organisations have been hit with high water and waste charges, an annual price increase in energy and the recent introduction of carbon taxes as a result of certain legislation being implemented. However with the growing number of people seeking out green hotel organisations (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007) have said that now, one of the major factors in organisations implementing environmental policies and initiatives is down to customer satisfaction and demand. In a study which was carried out by the International Hotels Environment Initiative and Accor, '90 percent of hotel guests would prefer to stay in a hotel that cares about the environment' (Mensah, 2004). So with green consumers seemingly unwilling or unable to walk to the walk when it comes to purchasing green products and services is there an actual competitive advantage for hotel organisations to implement environmental policies and initiatives.

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review all of the relevant literature in accordance with the research question. It examined the history and purpose of The Green Hospitality Award and continued by identifying the areas in which value can be created for hotel organisations who implement environmental policies and initiatives with the aim of creating a long-term sustainable competitive advantage. The review of the secondary research overwhelmingly suggests that the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in hotels and other hospitality organisations is a no brainer because of the value it can create for the organisation. Significant cost savings (Ali *et al.*, 2008), the ability to attract more affluent consumers through the use of green marketing and branding (Hu *et al.*, 2008), being able to attract and

retain key human resource personnel by aligning their personal beliefs and attitudes towards environmental with those of the organisation (Graci & Kuehnel, 2008) and increasing competitive advantage (Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011) have all been identified as the main benefits to implementing environmental policies and initiatives. The review highlighted that there is a growing concern from both businesses and customers about the environment and about the impact that both businesses and customers have on it. Brandweek (2009) identified that one in ten guests are now actively seeking green policies within the hotel sector. This is further supported by Jose & Lee (2007) who have identified that there is increasing demand for corporations not only to follow environmentally conscious principles in their daily operations, but also to publicly report on their social and environmental performance and financial outcomes. However the chapter also highlighted that despite the clear benefits of implementing environmental policies and initiatives along with the growing concern of businesses and customers towards the environment there is a distinct gap between attitude and action in relation to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives (Scully, 2013; Han *et al.*, 2009). One reason identified for the gap is the initial capital investment required by organisations. Belton (2012) stated that the conversion process for going green can require large sunk costs for energy-efficient and water-efficient appliances, as well as the associated costs involved with purchasing environmentally benign cleaning supplies and recycled paper products. Customers on the other hand are very interested in reducing their impact on the environment but despite this price and quality have been identified as the major criteria for customers when selecting a hotel. Scully (2013) and Ottman (1994) found that price, along with quality and convenience are still the most important factors in consumer purchase decision making rather than the greenness of the product. With this in mind the purpose of the primary research that will be undertaken by the author is to identify what value, if any can be created for organisations that have implemented environmental

policies and initiatives, is there a gap in attitude and action in relation to the implementation of such policies and initiatives and can a long-term sustainable competitive advantage be created by organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives.

3 Research Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to gather and analyse the data and information required in order to answer the research question. The author aims to establish the value that can be created for organisations in Irish Hotel Industry through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. The author will discuss the research instruments that will be used to gather both primary and secondary data and will give his rationale for using these methods. The data analysis method, timescale required and the potential limitations of the research will also be highlighted in this chapter. The research question and objectives will also be outlined again in this chapter. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an ‘empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used’ (Yin, 1984, p.23). Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1984, p.34) defines a case study as

the detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypothesis, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases.

Critics of the case study method (Flyvberg, 2006) and (Campbell and Stanley, 1966) believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings, and that single case study should be relegated to the methodological scrap heap. This is supported by Campbell & Stanley (1966, pp.6-7) who said that

such studies have such a total absence of control as to be of almost no scientific value.... Any appearance of absolute knowledge, or intrinsic knowledge about singular isolated objects, is found to be illusory upon analysis.... It seems well-nigh unethical at the present time to allow, as theses or dissertations in education, case studies of this nature (i.e. involving a single group observed at one time only).

However Perry (1998) supports the role of case study and refers to it as a rigorous, coherent, and one based on a justified philosophical position.

3.2 Research Purpose- Research Question, Research Objectives

The research question of this dissertation is **The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry?** The study will attempt to identify whether value can be created for Organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. All of the primary research will be compared with the current available literature and research. In order to satisfy the purpose of this research the following objectives have been identified:

- To review all the relevant literature on implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the hospitality industry
- To specifically investigate the business case for implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry i.e. cost savings, green marketing and branding, employee retention and competitive advantage
- To also investigate customers attitudes towards the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the hospitality industry from a management perspective

These objectives have been answered using secondary data by relevant authors in chapter 2 of this dissertation. In this chapter the research is provided from informative research collated from books, journals, articles etc. This research has been combined with the primary data obtained from authors primary research and will answer the research question as set out by the author.

3.3 The Research Onion

Figure 2: Layers of Research

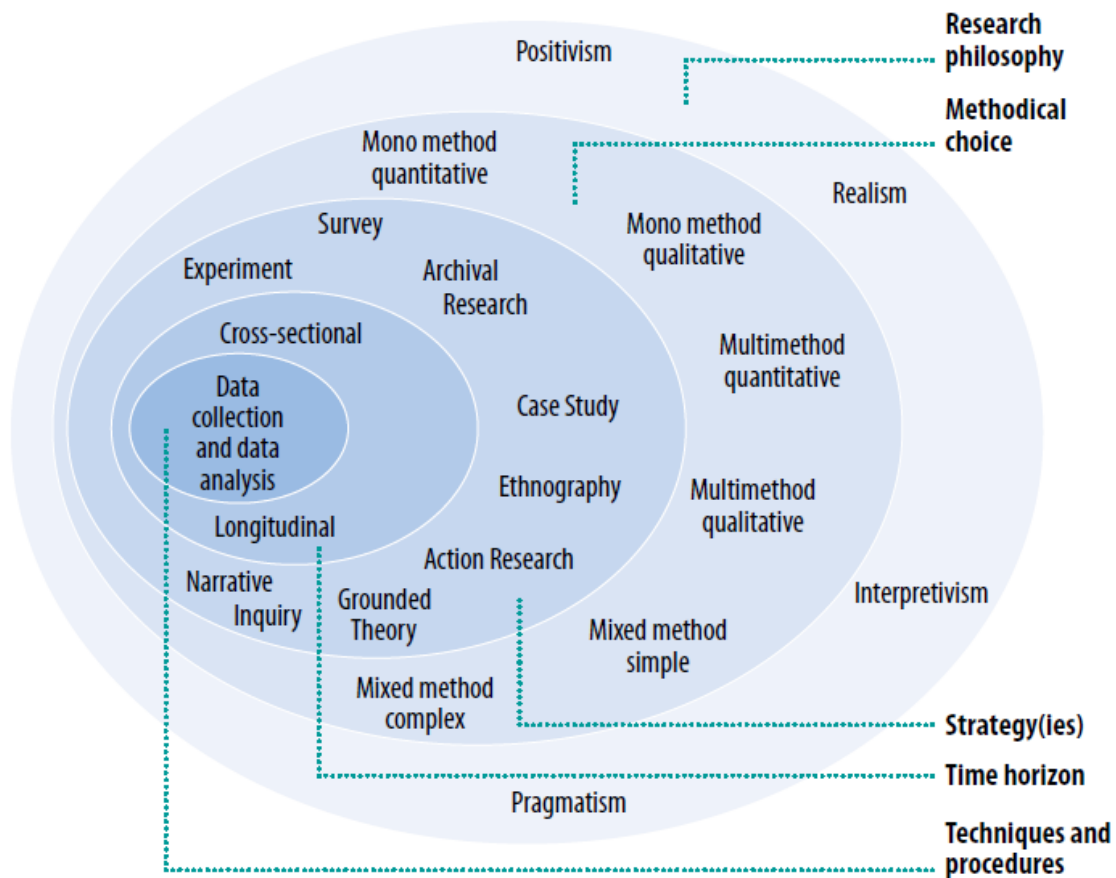


Fig. 1: The research onion

Source: ©Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill (2011), adapted with permission

Figure 2 above highlights the different layers associated with undertaking a piece of research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). According to Saunders and Tosey (2013) pieces of research are designed to answer a specific question or address a specific problem. They further assert that research authors begin by identifying what data and information they require to satisfy their specific research then focus on how they will obtain this data (Fig. 1). Authors need to consider how each technique or procedure chosen will impact on the other and the overall research design. This chapter is concerned with how the author of this dissertation has designed his research and how he justifies the selection of the various

methods and techniques chosen to gather the data and information required to answer the research question.

3.4 Research Approach

The author chose to use an inductive approach to gather and analyse the data required to answer the research question. An inductive approach, according to Strauss and Corbin (2008) allows the author to start to collect data and then explore it to identify which themes and issues are derived. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) because an inductive research approach is associated with the context in which certain events were taking a small research sample is more appropriate than a large number as with the deductive approach. The purpose of this research was to ascertain what value can be created through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry i.e. why do organisations implement such policies and initiatives. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Lowe (2008) maintain that an inductive approach is most suitable when the author is interested in understanding why something is happening, rather than describing what is happening. Yin (2003) asserts that this type of research analysis can be difficult for an inexperienced researcher whereby they go and collect data without examining it to identify the themes and issues that are emanating from it. Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that while there is no clearly defined theoretical framework used in this approach a clear research purpose is required and that deductive elements can be used when seeking a theoretical position which is then tested through the subsequent data collection and analysis. The author of this study developed a baseline theoretical position based on the analysis of the secondary research. This position was tested against the data gathered and analysed from the authors' primary research.

3.5 Research Instruments

3.5.1 Primary Research

A case study is often classified as ‘qualitative by definition’ but quantitative techniques can be used. The hypotheses usually emerge from the study although a careful conceptual framework should be present at the start. The scattering of data like confetti should be avoided (Swetnam & Swetnam, 2009). A qualitative approach was adopted for the purpose of this research. The data was collected at senior management level from both The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin to satisfy the purpose of the research. The qualitative research gathered provided an in depth knowledge of the value that can be obtained for Irish hotel organisations that implement environmental policies and initiatives. The author chose to use two different qualitative methods to gather the required data. The qualitative methods that the author chose were unstructured or in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews. The author chose these methods as he believed they were the most suitable and efficient method of gathering the data required. The interviews were carried out on senior management of The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin. Interview based data collection was chosen as the primary method of collecting data. Fontana and Frey (2005) stated that the interview is a widely used tool to access people’s experiences and inner perceptions, attitudes and feelings. The unstructured or in-depth interview tool was selected for gathering data from The Garryvoe Hotel. This was due to the personal and professional relationship that the author holds with that particular case. The personal and professional relationship that the author holds with that particular organisation allowed the author to extract more relevant and meaningful information from the interviewee’s. The use of the unstructured or in-depth interview assisted the author in maximising the information gathered and processed from the interviewee’s knowledge, opinion and reasons for implementing environmental policies and

initiatives in The Garryvoe Hotel. The aims of this piece of research as set out in chapter 1 were focused on different themes in relation to the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry. Therefore the semi-structured interview tool was chosen to gather the necessary data from The Westin Dublin. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009) semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to cover a list of themes and questions from the particular research area and also allows for these themes and questions to be altered depending on whose being interviewed. In order to satisfy the research question the author reviewed all of the current written and published literature in relation to adopting environmental policies and initiatives both in the International and National hotel industry. The approach used by the author for this piece of research was based on a case study conducted on the Canadian Hotel industry which was aimed at identifying the business case for hotels in Canada to go green.

3.5.2 Secondary Research

This allowed the author to review all current available literature on the issues associated with the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in hotels and other lodging organisations both internationally and nationally. The purpose was to obtain a baseline understanding of current discussion on environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry. The information was collated from books, journals and articles related to tourism and hospitality as well as other business related publications.

3.6 Rationale for Method Choice & Design

Design rationale is the reasoning and argument that leads to the final decision of how the design intent is achieved. Design intent is the expected effect or behavior that the designer intended the design object should achieve to fulfill the required function (Sim & Duffy,

1994). The author of this research selected and designed his research methods in a way that he believed would best achieve his goal of answering the research question.

3.6.1 Primary Research

The author of this dissertation used the personal interview as the primary method for the investigation and gathering of data. With respect to the research question the foremost tool of use was the personal interview. The author believed that the face to face interaction between the author and the interviewee's would generate more empirical data when compared to other research methods. This is supported by Bergin & Stokes (2006, p.35) who state that 'individual depth interviews would appear to be more appropriate for research situations where there is a specific well defined issue to investigate which calls for a detailed understanding of consumer perspectives'. A series of unstructured or in-depth interviews with the owners/managers of The Garryvoe Hotel and a series of semi-structured interviews with the owners/managers of The Westin Dublin were undertaken to assess their knowledge, opinions and reasons behind the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in their respective organisations and to evaluate if their reasoning is consistent with the findings in the literature review from the secondary research. However according to Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008) because of the lack of standardisation in semi-structured and unstructured interviews the reliability of the information gathered is a concern. They assert that the reliability is concerned with whether other researchers would reveal similar information. This reliability notion is disputed by Marshall and Rossman (1999) who state that the information being gathered is not necessarily intended to be repeatable because it is gathered at a specific time and in a situation that is subject to change. They also assert that these qualitative tools are used for research that is complex and dynamic. Therefore the use of

these non-standardised tools allows for flexibility when exploring the complexity of the research area.

During the authors analysis of the secondary research he was clearly able to see how best to gather the information required to answer the research question.

3.6.2 Secondary Research

An initial analysis of the secondary research suggested that there was a lack of research and discussion on the topic of implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry. This is supported in the Crowe Howarth hotel industry survey (2012) which highlights the fact that out of the 883 hotels in Ireland only 145 have signed up to the Green Hospitality Award. Many of the managers and owners in Irish hotel organisations have heard about what the possible benefits of adopting green policies are but many of them just pay it 'lip service'. There is no firm commitment from these organisations when trying to implement green policies. The major barrier to the implementation of successful environmental initiatives in the Irish Hotel industry is a lack of commitment from senior management and owners (Bergin, 2008). The initial analysis of the secondary research on the topic enabled the author to understand that in order for this research to have merits a significant research sample would need to be selected.

3.7 Research Sample

In order for the author to get an overall perspective on the value of implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry a research sample was taken from the list of organisations who have achieved the Platinum award from The Green Hospitality Award. This award is received after an organisation meets the highest environmental standards as set out by The Green Hospitality Award. The two organisations

that were selected for the purpose of this research have both achieved this award and are considered to be the pioneers in the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry. In order for the results of this research to be as generalisable as possible throughout the Irish Hotel Industry the two organisations selected varied in rating, size and location. The Garryvoe Hotel is a 4 Star, 80 bedroom seaside property located in East Cork while The Westin Dublin is a luxurious 5 Star, 179 bedroom property located in the heart of Dublin City and a member of the Starwood Hotel Group. The author believed that the differences in the properties chosen will make the research generalisable across the Irish Hotel Industry. The author interviewed The Managing Director, The General Manager and The Health Club Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel. These interviews took place in the boardroom of The Garryvoe Hotel on the 9th and 10th of July 2014. Similarly the author interviewed the Chief Engineer and two members of The Westin Dublin's Green Team. These interviews took place in a meeting room in The Westin Dublin on the 16th of July 2014. From these interviews the author was able to gather the major quality information required to satisfy the research question.

3.8 Data Analysis

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009, p.480) 'qualitative data refers to all non-numeric data or data that have not been quantified and can be a product of all research strategies'. Dey (1993) points out that while 'number depends on meaning', meaning does not always depend on number. Robson (2002) highlights that qualitative data is characterised by its rich and fulfilling nature which allows an author to explore a research area in as real a manner as possible.

3.8.1 Transcribing Qualitative Data

As has been mentioned previously the personal interview was chosen as the foremost tool to gather the necessary data required to answer the research question. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009) because the interviewer is not only interested in what is said, but in the way it is said transcribing audio-recorded interviews can be very time consuming. They further assert that it can take anything between six to ten hours to transcribe one hour of recording. It is therefore important that interviews are transcribed as soon as possible after they take place. The author of this dissertation conducted six interviews (three from each organisation). The aim of the author was to conduct and transcribe interviews from one organisation before proceeding with the next set of interviews. The author was able to do this because of the time between interviews in both organisations. The author believed this was the most suitable approach given the inductive nature of the study. By using this approach the author was able to identify different themes that were further investigated in the subsequent sets of interviews. This method is supported by Yin (2003) who asserts that the main issue with an inductive approach is that the researcher goes ahead and collects data without analysing it to identify which themes are emerging as the study progresses.

3.8.2 Qualitative Analysis Process

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009) there are three main types of data analysis processes:

- Summarising of meanings;
- Categorisation of meanings;
- Structuring of meanings using narrative.

All of these processes allow the author to comprehend the data that has been gathered, identify key themes or patterns, develop and test theories based on these themes and patterns

and draw and verify conclusions (Kvale 1996; Miles and Huberman 1994). In order to satisfy the research question the author chose to use the categorisation process to analyse the data. Saunders *et al.* (2009) state that categorising data involves both developing categories and then attaching these categories to the appropriate data that has been gathered. Dey (1993) asserts that the identification of the categories is based on the purpose of the research. Strauss and Corbin (2008) further assert that categories can be based on terms that emerge from the data, terms used by participants in the study and from terms used in existing theory and research.

3.9 Timescale

Based on the research question and the fact that most research projects undertaken for academic courses are time constrained, this research was cross-sectional. Cross-sectional studies often employ the survey strategy (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008). However they may also use qualitative methods. Many case studies are based on interviews that take place over a short period of time. The author gathered all of the primary data on the 9th, 10th and 16th of July which allowed sufficient time for the data to be analysed and for the results and recommendations to be completed before the submission date. Before the author started gathering the primary data, he piloted his research methods. This aided the author in identifying any weaknesses in his chosen research methods. This allowed the author to adjust and adapt his research methods. As with any piece of research there was always the possibility of limitations on the author whether it was time limitations or the amount of access that the author was be granted for example.

3.10 Limitations of Research

This is the constraint of access to information and useful data. On the one hand the author will be tracking down the key personnel for interviews to gather the information required to satisfy the research question. However these are busy people so attempting to find the time to conduct these interviews is one possible limitation for the author. Another limitation that maybe encountered is that despite the author being granted full access to information the senior managers/owners of the organisations chosen may still have reservations about disclosing what they might regard as very sensitive material. A further limitation of this research is that while the sample selected is diverse in nature the sample size is relatively small compared with the number of hotel organisations operating in Ireland and this may make it difficult to generalise the research and data that will be gathered. However the author argues that potential sample size is actually relatively small with only seven organisations having achieved the Platinum Award from The Green Hospitality Award. The final limitation of this research is the relation to the relationship that the author holds with the case being studied. The fact that the author has a personal and professional relationship with one of the cases opens up the possibility that this research may be in some way bias. The author believes that by selecting an additional case the theory that the research will be in some way bias will be unfounded. The author intended to overcome all of these potential shortcomings by making best use of the time, resources and opportunities at his disposal.

3.11 Equipment

To arrange the interviews required to gather the necessary data an email was sent to all potential interviewees explaining the background of the author, the research he was undertaking and the purpose for undertaking such a piece of research (Appendix 1). Once an approval to be interviewed was accepted the author based on his comprehensive review of the

available literature developed a set of interview questions. Two copies of these interview questions were brought to each interview, one for the author and the other for the interviewee. A simple recording device was used (with permission) to record each interview, from which then the necessary data was obtained to satisfy the research question.

3.12 Conclusion

This paper has so far covered the critical analysis of the research and literature for the purpose of this study, outlining the research question; **The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry**, as well as the research aims, objectives and rationale. The paper has specifically looked at the business case for implementing environmental policies and initiatives, customer attitudes towards green services and the Irish accreditation body, The Green Hospitality Award. The paper has also highlighted, in depth, the research approach that was taken, the rationale behind the approach including the use of both, semi-structured and unstructured or in-depth interviews, how the data was gathered and analysed, the timescale of the research and its potential limitations.

4 Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the author of this dissertation will present the findings of the research. The objective of the research was to gather the data required in order to answer the question posed by the author in chapter one which was; **“The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry?”** A single method, qualitative approach was used to gather the data required to answer the research question. The author will present in detail the findings from the qualitative research which he believes was best suited to the research at hand.

4.2 Findings of Qualitative Research

The author conducted qualitative research using the medium of both un-structured or in-depth interviews and semi structured interviews. This piece of research is focused on three specific cases and the author received a 100% response rate while using this method of research. The author conducted un-structured interviews with The Managing Director, The General Manager and The Health Club Manager from The Garryvoe Hotel. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two high ranking members of The Westin Dublin’s green team and The Westin Dublin’s Chief Engineer. All respondents were asked a predetermined set of questions. For clarity the author will discuss the six themes that are evident in the research. These themes are as follows:

1. Financial Savings
2. Customer Attitudes Towards Green Services
3. Employee Perceptions

4. Green Marketing and Branding
5. Competitive Advantage
6. Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

4.2.1 Theme One- Financial Savings

Financial savings were highlighted as the main reason behind The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin's decision to implement environmental policies and initiatives in their respective properties. All respondents in this research believe that cost savings as a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives creates the greatest value to organisations in the Irish hotel industry.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel said

Financial savings was one of the reasons we decided to implement all these different environmental policies and initiatives. The cost of energy at the time was very high so we identified that we could reduce our overall energy consumption thus reducing our costs.

For example, in a case study that was done on The Garryvoe Hotel, it showed that as a result of implementing a combined heat & power system the hotel is saving €130000 per year on its energy bill.

Similarly the Chief Engineer at The Westin Dublin asserted that

Financial savings were a huge part of our decision to implement environmental policies and initiatives at the beginning for two reasons; firstly, we started looking at environmental initiatives in 2008 which was the beginning of the economic downturn in this country. Therefore any opportunity to reduce costs had to be availed of. Secondly, Starwood (The Westins parent company) rolled out a new environmental reduction policy around 2009 called 30 20 by 2020 which stood for thirty percent reduction in energy and twenty percent reduction in water by 2020. Therefore the primary focus at that time was on cost reduction'.

The Health Club manager of The Garryvoe Hotel also said that financial savings was the main motivator for the hotel to green and this she said can have extra benefits

Well financial savings are the main positives for a few reasons really. The fact that the hotel is saving money keeps the boss happy so in turn he is happy with the employees, which then creates a degree of certainty about our jobs.

The author posed the General Manager of The Garryvoe hotel the same question, what did he believe was the main motivating factor was for The Garryvoe Hotel to start implementing environmental policies and initiatives and his response was ‘the biggest motivator for us were the cost savings. The cost savings associated with implementing environmental initiatives are extraordinary’

The question of whether by implementing such policies and initiatives they were hedging against potential future regulations was then put to all three cases.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel responded by saying

To a degree yes but it depends on the initiatives you are talking about. In relation to waste most hotels have a handle on it because they have to. Maybe in terms of water we are because we supply our own water.

The Chief Engineer at The Westin Dublin responded in a similar fashion.

Based on what I mentioned in the previous question about changing the gas chillers on the room to comply with future regulation with regard to use of R22 gas you could say we did in that particular instance but in terms of the other initiatives no.

When asked whether customers raised any issues why the hotel went green the response of the Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel was ‘if we can save money by going green then so be it, that’s an encouragement to go green. Philanthropy is a great thing but it’s only really for multi-millionaires’.

4.2.2 Theme Two- Customer Attitudes Towards Green Services

All of the interview respondents in this research were asked about whether customer attitudes had any impact on their decision to implement green initiatives and also are there perceptions

having an impact on the business either positive or negative since the initiatives were introduced.

The researcher asked the Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel does he think customers consider green when choosing a hotel to stay in and his response was

There is simply no evidence to say that at the moment especially in Ireland maybe internationally in places like Central Europe they might give it more of a consideration but in Ireland there is no evidence to say that.

The two members of The Westin Dublin's green team supported this view by asserting that 'no, for the simple reason that it is such a part of everyday life now. Price, quality, location and even Wi-Fi impact more on a customers' decision making process'.

This was further supported by The Garryvoe's Health Club Manager who said that 'I'm not saying that they choose this hotel because it's green, I'm saying that when they are here they embrace what we are doing'. She also mentioned that price is still the major factor for customers when choosing hotels to stay in 'Price is still the major factor for customers when choosing hotels to stay in'.

The General Manager of The Garryvoe also further corroborates the research by stating, 'in terms of choosing the hotel because it's green I don't know. I think that in Ireland and Europe itself the hotel industry is still very price driven'.

The researcher then posed the question as to why customers don't consider green when choosing a hotel to stay in. The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel said

The whole idea of greening hasn't hit home with the Irish as of yet but customers from places like Germany, Switzerland and Austria would have a better knowledge of greening and therefore would have more of a positive attitude towards it when they visit Ireland.

The green team at the Westin Dublin however dispute this statement by asserting that

We have not seen any clear indication that our central European guests make green more of a priority than our Irish or UK guests. Perhaps in countries such as Canada they may make it more of a priority because I know it's a very big issue over there.

When the question was put to the General Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel he tended to support the views of The Westin Dublin. He said 'in the US when I was working on the cruise ships it was normal for people to choose green but in Ireland and Europe it's still in the introductory stage'.

The Garryvoe's Managing Director was then asked whether he thought there was a different attitude towards green during the Celtic Tiger which may suggest that people were willing to pay more for a green hotel his response was, 'No they didn't'.

When the same question was put to The Westin Dublin's green team they responded with

On the contrary in fact. At the time when we began to implement our environmental program "green" was considered the cheap option by consumers so to suggest that people were willing to pay more for green services is way wide of the mark".

4.2.3 Theme Three- Employee Perceptions

The third theme that has been a common thread throughout this research is employee perceptions towards the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel was asked whether he thought that the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives would help attract and help hold onto to key human resources. His reply was 'Doesn't make any real difference'.

In asking The Garryvoe's Health Club Manager whether the hotels environmental policies and initiatives had any impact on her decision to apply for her job her response did little to contradict the view of The Managing Director. She noted 'I wasn't aware that they were doing such work but I don't think it would've affected my decision to apply either way'.

However when the green team at The Westin Dublin were asked whether the organisations green brand helps to attract and hold onto key personnel their response was

Yes I think it does. Our workforce largely comprises of workers in their 20's and early 30's so I think because green is more or less the norm them since they were brought up with it, working for an organisation whose beliefs are aligned with their own definitely helps in that regard.

Further to that all respondents were asked whether they believed other employees enjoyed working for a hotel that has implemented environmental policies and initiatives.

The Garryvoes' General Managers' response was

For me personally being associated with a hotel like this is hugely important so I would say yes for few reasons. Firstly I find that what I am learning here in relation to the environment I am using at home and secondly what we are doing is simply a good thing to do and that's nice to be a part of'. With regard to the other employees I think more and more people are beginning to think the green way but I believe it will take a few more years before everyone comes on board and only then I think will green become a major consideration for people when choosing a place to work.

Similarly The Garryvoe's Health Club Manager responded by saying

Yes I would be more inclined to stay working in a hotel like this for a few reasons, one being that it's nice to be associated with a hotel that has a good reputation with its customers and also the fact that the hotel saves money means I feel a certain sense of security in my job meaning I 'm not constantly looking around for other opportunities just in case I get let go from here''. In terms of the hotels other employees I believe at the moment a job is probably a job but in saying that I believe the staff like being associated with a green hotel'.

This theory was further substantiated by The Westin Dublin who stated

Yes I think they do. We have a lot of people on the ground who are very excited about what we are doing and while they may not come up with the biggest ideas they help us keep the message going throughout the hotel.

The researcher then posed the question, do you think having experience working in a green hotel will be beneficial down the line to both The Health Club Manager and The General Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel.

The Health Club Manager replied

From a hiring perspective a potential employee who has worked in a green hotel previously would have more of an appeal to someone who has not. This is simply because if a potential employee has experience working in a green hotel when they come to work here we won't have to spend any time or money training them because they already know what to do.

The General Manager said

From an employers' perspective because soon all hotels will be forced to implement environmental policies and initiatives hoteliers will be seeking out employees who have previously worked in a green hotel.

All respondents were then asked whether or not all staff were involved at the beginning of the process and are they still active in it now and also how important employee support and input was to the success of the program?

The view from The Westin Dublin was

Again because it is the norm for them they are very supportive of what we are doing. It was mentioned earlier that at the beginning we set about changing the culture within the organisation but that more for us and the slightly older members of staff. Their support is crucial to its success because at the end of the day they are the people that help reduce energy, waste etc. We did have some issues initially in the kitchen but we got a member of the kitchen staff on board and he championed the green policy to the other staff members.

This view was comprehensively supported by all respondents from The Garryvoe Hotel.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe reply was

Most definitely they have been supportive and yes it is crucial that they are supportive in order for these initiatives to succeed. It can't be done without them. You have to engage with them before and during the process. Our employees especially the younger ones are really into it, they really recognise the need for it. Sometimes it can take a while to happen but the fact that they were all so interested in it from the start it became ingrained in them really quickly.

The Garryvoes' Health Club Manager's responded in a similar fashion by noting

Absolutely the staff were heavily involved right from the beginning. They have embraced the idea for the simple reason that they have all grown up with the idea of being green. They do it at home so it's built into them already especially with the

younger staff. I think it was slightly more difficult for the older staff because they are used to doing the same things all the time but despite that they have got completely behind it.

The hotels' General Manager continued by saying 'I think they were and still are really supportive of the program especially the younger staff who came up with lots of ideas where they thought we could save money'.

4.2.4 Theme Four- Green Marketing & Branding

The effects that the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives has on an organisations marketing and branding was the next recurring theme emanating from the research.

The researcher posed the question, does having a green brand make it easier to sell to today's customers, to all respondents.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel responded with 'it does because it's a positive. Anything positive in relation to image and brand makes it easier to sell. It is a positive "add on" to our brand'.

The Health Club manager's response was 'I'm not sure does it make it easier to sell but it's certainly nice to have all the awards, it's a nice "add on" to have'.

The Managing Director was then asked whether more marketing channels are now available to The Garryvoe Hotel because they are now a green hotel and his response was 'the marketing channels that we use are the same as always, being a green hotel hasn't changed where we market our product'.

The green team at The Westin Dublin expanded further by asserting that

It is part of our selling strategy so we do promote ourselves as a green hotel which is well respected by a lot of our corporate clients as mentioned previously. In terms of

our leisure guests we have a green section on our website which they are interested in but because it's not the new thing anymore it doesn't make it any easier.

The author then posed the question, do you think the hotel could do more from a marketing perspective to promote the hotel as a green hotel to both the General Manager & Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel and the green team at The Westin Dublin.

The Garryvoes' General Managers' response was

I think what we do is the right way to do it, we promote that we are a green hotel on our website. We received a very positive review on trip advisor last year referencing the fact that we are a green hotel so clearly people know about it.

The Managing Directors response was

In terms of marketing the idea of being green has not taken off as much as it should have in my opinion and is also not really progressing. Unless I dropped everything and really pushed and pushed it I don't think that it will ever happen. I hope it does but at the moment it's looking unlikely.

The Westin were of a similar opinion to that of The Garryvoes' Managing Director. They asserted that

We could do more but I think now the market has changed from before when green wasn't as common as it is now so I don't believe there are great additional benefits to promoting as a green hotel. Also we believe the idea of being a green hotel is going to become even less important in the future as it becomes even more the norm in society. Being green will simply be associated with the financial aspects that can be gained from it along with it being the ethically right thing to do.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe was then asked by the author whether the hotels green brand and image had any impact on its ability to attract corporate clients. His response was

Yes it does help in the corporate world. We have put the fact that we are a green hotel as part of our corporate standing point. Our large multi-national clients would definitely see it as a benefit to be associated with us.

This was substantiated by The Westin Dublin who found that the association with leading corporate organisations has been one of the main benefits of becoming a green hotel. They note that 'companies such as Google, Dell, Facebook come to us looking for our "Green"

credentials because they as part of their company ethos they will not stay in hotels that are not environmentally conscious and progressive’.

The researcher then asked The Managing Director, overall does having environmental programs in place enhance the brand and image of The Garryvoe Hotel and his response was ‘yes it does in relation to the people who are interested in it but in terms of the normal everyday customer it does to a degree but it doesn’t make them choose the hotel any more than normal’.

4.2.5 Theme Five- Competitive Advantage

All of the interview respondents were asked by the researcher whether the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives has provided there hotel with a competitive advantage over its competitors.

The Managing Director’s response was

It helps, it’s a positive add on to our marketing advantage. If a customer who is into it and is looking at us with a platinum award against another hotel that has nothing it will definitely help but you still need more than just being green, price, quality and service are still the most important.

The General Managers response was

I think that with the whole green agenda being so new it’s hard for hotels to gain a serious competitive advantage except maybe from cost savings perspective and I think that it’s only going to get more difficult in the future. The reason I say this is because in five or ten years I believe that the majority of hotels will be green so a hotels competitive advantage will be based on the usual aspects like product & service quality.

The Health Club manager said

Maybe in the future that fact that we are green now may give us an edge over our competitors. The reason being that all of the programs and initiatives that we have implemented will become standard practice for all hotels, so by being ahead of the pack now and getting the word out there, it may give us an edge in the future.

The Westin Dublin similarly agreed that in some aspects it helps being a platinum award holder but in general the only advantages that can be gained by implementing environmental policies and initiatives are financial. They state that

We think we are well ahead of the game. Our Make Green a Choice program has gone down very well with everyone. In terms of rates we haven't reduced our rates because of it mainly due to the fact we reduced our rates during the economic downturn. Our margins are maybe higher because we have been able to reduce our costs.

4.2.6 Theme Six- Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

The author felt it was vital to ask the interview respondents despite all the positivity surrounding the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives were there or are there any issues with implementing these initiatives.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel, the Chief Engineer and green team at The Westin Dublin were asked whether they thought there was a lack of commitment from other hotel managers & stakeholders to implement environmental policies initiatives in the Irish hotel Industry.

The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel responded by saying 'there is in general but it is getting better, it's starting to gain momentum as managers find out more about it'.

The Westin Dublin responded with two ideas. They stated that

Not within the Starwood Group because the General Managers of all the groups hotels are required to do it as a result of the 30 20 by 2020 program so within Starwood there is utmost commitment to being green. However in the past I would say that the idea of being green was not taken that seriously especially from department heads.

The author then followed up by asking The Garryvoes' Managing Director, what are the reasons behind this lack of commitment and he said

The paperwork is the main issue with it. There is a lot of paperwork involved when trying to climb the ladder in relation to benchmarking, the spread sheets that we need

to fill out, the recording of metering and all that it's a real pain in the ass. It annoys hotel managers because by nature we are not paper people. It also depends on the type of hotel that you are. If you are a big hotel you afford to have someone typing into a computer all day but if you run a small private hotel that just isn't feasible.

This was supported by The Westin Dublin who asserted that

Another issue that we found with the process is the amount of paperwork involved although it is getting better. We could not understand why such an amount of paperwork was required by the GHA especially considering it was an environmental program.

However they disagreed with his assertion that being a larger hotel reduces the negative impact of the amount of paperwork. They assert 'being a larger hotel and being part of a large hotel group doesn't make dealing with the amount of paperwork any easier because we still have to do the same amount of paperwork as every other organisation'.

The General Manager of The Garryvoe was also asked what he thought were the main barriers for hotels when implementing environmental policies and initiatives and his response was

I would say that the perception of the initial outlay is the main barrier. Hoteliers in Ireland see that they have to for example get new bins and train staff which costs money. However what they don't see are the actual figures which show that the return is far greater than the outlay.

The hotels Managing Director also commented on the initial outlay being a barrier for some hoteliers by saying

It is now because the banks won't lend to businesses. We have launched a case study on the hotel with John Mullins, Chairperson of Cork Chamber of Commerce & CEO of Bord Gais to encourage banks to provide capital because the cost benefit analysis of it is worthwhile.

The Westin agreed with the assertion that the capital outlay is an issue and especially for independent stand-alone hotels. They stated

The cost of implementing such an environmental program especially for independent stand-alone hotels is a big issue. For us being part of a large organisation i.e. Starwood is a major boost. The financial backing along with our buying power makes the process a lot easier for property's like ours. An example of the outlay for us

would be when we changed all the emergency exit lights to sensors which cost us €6000. However we only then realised that fittings in the lights would not cater for the new sensors.

The Westin also found that the “cheap” perception of green was a major issue for them at the beginning. They noted that

Initially trying to convince the hotels stakeholders was an issue. The majority of the management team in place at the time were old fashioned thinkers and the thought of negatively affecting the hotels 5 Star reputation was tough to fathom because at the time “Green” was considered cheap. I recall the problems we had trying to change from paper towels to hand dryers in The Mint Bar bathrooms. Before we could implement the change we had to show them how much the paper towels were costing and how much could be saved by switching to hand dryers.

Respondents were then asked what they believed was the best approach to minimise the barriers associated with implementing environmental policies and initiatives.

The Westin Dublin responded by saying

What we have done in this property is make green part of each department heads management appraisal whether it is monthly, quarterly or yearly. But again this cannot be done unless it is supported from senior management. A way to reduce the fear of negatively impacting the guest is involve them in the process. For example many hotels now operate a towel program in an attempt to reduce costs. We have gone a step further and implemented our “Make a Green Choice Program” whereby guests are offered to decline housekeeping completely in return for a €5 voucher for any of the outlets in the hotel or to use as Starpoints which is our preferred guest program or donate the money to charity. In our first year we had a 17 percent uptake and it was especially popular with our corporate guests who don’t really require housekeeping services and can use the points for future hotel stays. There are always one or two people who don’t understand or don’t read the card properly but that happens when everything.

The author then asked whether the workload of managers had increased as a result of the green programs being implemented.

The Garryvoes’ General Managers response was ‘at the beginning yes but not so much anymore’.

The hotels Health Club Managers response was

It has considerably increased since they were implemented. There is a lot of work involved in monitoring and keeping on top of all the paperwork required. The funny thing is that by going green we are forced to use a lot more paper which is kind of ironic when you look at it like that. However it's all relative, despite the extra work the hotel is saving money so it's all worth it.

The author then asked the General Manager of The Garryvoe why his workload had increased at the beginning and his response was 'The main area that all the managers were tasked with at the beginning was the training of staff especially in the smaller areas like separating of waste, switching off of lights & equipment etc.'

This was supported by The Westin Dublin who stated that 'at the beginning one of our main duties was to change the culture within the hotel to a more environmentally aware culture'.

4.3 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to pose the question as to what value can be created for organisations in the Irish hotel industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives. In conclusion the findings of this chapter have identified a number of the research aims set out by the author. The aims were to investigate whether value can be achieved through:

- Cost savings which can be passed onto customers through lower rates thus creating a cost advantage against competitors
- The opportunity to play their part in sustaining the environment which may improve the company's brand image and marketing potential
- The ability to attract more customers through "Green Marketing"
- The ability to hold onto or attract key human resource personnel

- Market expectations in relation to environmental policies and initiatives which may lead to long-term sustainable competitive advantage

In the next chapter the author will discuss the findings of his primary research against the findings from his secondary research from where a series of conclusions and recommendations can be made. The author will also discuss the limitations he encountered during the research and how he was able to overcome them.

5 Discussions, Limitations, Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the author will begin with a discussion on the findings from the primary research compared with the secondary research gathered in chapter two and discuss the limitations that were encountered during the study. In the second part of the chapter the author will conclude the findings of the study and also make a number of recommendations for organisations in the Irish hotel industry with regard to the value that can be created through the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives. The research question that was posed in chapter one was; “*The organisational value of implementing environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry*”. A discussion of the study’s findings will now be conducted.

5.2 Discussion

Throughout the study a number of interesting findings materialised from the research gathered by the author.

In terms of what value can be created for organisations in the hotel industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives the secondary research suggests that value can be obtained through financial savings, enhanced brand & image, customer perceptions in relation to environmental responsibility, favourable employee perceptions and overall competitive advantage. The author will now discuss his findings with respect to the research objectives he outlined in chapter 2.

5.3 The Business Case for Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

5.3.1 Financial Savings

Firstly financial savings were identified in the secondary research as the area in which the greatest value can be created for organisations in the hotel industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives. According to Ali, Mairna, Shireen, Mashal & Mohsen (2008) the economic implications is the most important factor when deciding to implement sustainable practices into an organisation. This is supported by Brebbia and Pineda (2004) who claim that the financial savings that are made by businesses who implement environmental initiatives is one of the main motivating factors for implementing such initiatives. These findings are significant because they corroborate the findings that were gathered from the author's primary research in relation to financial savings. The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel said that financial savings were one of the main reasons we decided to go green. This was supported by the Health Club Manager who said that financial savings were the main positives for going green. These statements were further validated by the General Manager who said that the biggest motivator for Irish hoteliers to go green is the cost savings. Similarly The Westin Dublin's Chief Engineer highlighted because of the economic downturn and pressure from senior management at Starwood, financial savings were the primary focus at the time they implemented their policies and initiatives.

5.3.2 Green Marketing and Branding

The second finding that was identified in the secondary research as a key value creator for hotel organisations was the enhancement of their brand & image from a marketing perspective. The research highlighted that as society has become more and more concerned

about environmental issues, hotels have had to increase their efforts in order to address the sustainability issues and have also had to modify their approach to business in an attempt to address those concerns (Cornell, 2012). Jose & Lee (2007) have identified that there is increasing demand for corporations not only to follow environmentally conscious principles in their daily operations, but also to publicly report on their social and environmental performance and financial outcomes. According to Graci (2002) environmentally progressive companies such as General Motors are now starting to work with hotels based on their level of environmental commitment. The primary research gathered supports both the need for organisations to adopt environmental policies to meet market expectations and also the fact that global organisations need to be seen to be working with environmentally conscious organisations. The general feeling from both The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin was that it's a "*no brainer*" for hotel organisations to implement environmental policies and initiatives because it is what this generation of people have been brought up with, it is not the new thing anymore. What was also evident especially from The Westin Dublin is that global organisations such as Facebook and Google will not work with hotels who are not seen to be environmentally progressive.

The secondary research also provided two theories with regard to the ability of a green organisation to charge more for their services. Hu, Parsa and Self (2010) have stated that more than 50 percent of customers were willing to pay 2 to 6 percent more to patronise a green restaurant. However Scully (2013) disputes this by stating that while knowledge of hotels' environmental practices would positively influence their perception, it would not make them pay more to stay there. The primary research supports the research carried out by Scully (2013). According to The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives is a positive for our brand. The view from The Westin Dublin was even more damning to the idea that customers are willing

to pay more for green services. They asserted that when they began implementing environmental policies and initiatives green was seen as a cheap option so to say that customers were willing to pay more for it is simply wide of the mark.

The idea that green marketing and branding will ever offer significant value to hotel organisations is widely disputed by the authors' primary research. Both The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin concur that because being environmentally responsible is not the new thing anymore it will in fact become less important as the years go on because it will be just the norm in today's and more so tomorrow's marketplace.

5.3.3 Employee Retention

The ability for hotel organisations that implement environmental policies and initiatives to attract and hold onto key human resource (HR) personnel was another area highlighted in the secondary in which value can be created against other hotel organisations who have not implemented such policies and initiatives. The secondary research leads us to believe that like with customers, employees are now becoming more concerned with the environment and are actively seeking out employers that have similar beliefs. According to Graci and Kuehnel (2008) improved employee retention is one of the greatest benefits of going green. This was supported by a survey that was conducted by Lightspeed Research in 2012 which found that 80 percent of U.S. workers believe it is important to work for an organisation that implements environmental practices into the workplace. Similarly a study conducted by leading college recruitment agency MonsterTRAK in 2012 found that 92 percent of U.S. college graduates would select an environmentally friendly organisation to work for. The primary research that was gathered by the author specific to this issue does little to clarify it. Research gathered from The Garryvoe Hotel contradicts any notion that being green has had any impact on their HR recruitment. The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel said that the implementation

of environmental policies and initiatives has had no impact on their ability to hold onto key HR personnel nor did it have any impact on potential employee's decision to apply. This is supported by The Health Club Manager who said the fact that the hotel was implementing green initiatives had no impact on her decision to apply for the position. However The Westin Dublin believe that because their workforce consists mainly of employees who were brought up with being environmentally responsible the fact there beliefs and practices are aligned with those of their employees in definitely helps in their HR department. Additionally both The General Manager and Health Club Manager at The Garryvoe Hotel feel that from a hiring perspective having previously worked in an organisation that has implemented an environmental program will be looked favourably on against someone who has not. They assert that because the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives will be a baseline requirement in the future a person who has worked within that culture will be increasingly appealing.

Another suggestion that emanated from the secondary research was that working for an environmentally hotel creates a positive atmosphere among employees resulting in improved productivity and overall attitude towards the organisation despite the alleged extra work that is put on employees. Fotiadis *et al.* (2013) assert that the acceptance and willingness of employees to adapt to a green culture greatly affects the benefits associated with implementing an environmental program. This is supported by Graci and Kuehnel (2008) who state that an environmental program will rarely succeed without the support of employees. This idea is further supported by Andrew Mullen (2012), the facilities manager at The Radisson Blu Hotel in Cork and head of their environmental program, found that in a six week period in 2011 when he was out of work energy consumption only increased by 0.25 percent compared to the previous year. The primary research decisively supports the findings from the secondary research. All respondents from The Garryvoe Hotel asserted that

all their employees were very quick to embrace the idea of being green, are very proud of the awards they have achieved, are proud to be associated with a hotel like The Garryvoe and are continuing to work very hard to maintain the awards they have achieved. The Managing Director mentioned that employees must be engaged with throughout the process while both The General Manager and Health Club Manager noted that right from the beginning employees were suggesting areas where environmental policies and initiatives could be implemented. Similarly The Westin Dublin believe that their employees are very excited about what they are doing and are crucial to keeping the message alive throughout the hotel. Because they have been brought up with this they are crucial to us in identifying ways in which we can reduce energy and waste.

5.3.4 Competitive Advantage

The ability of environmental policies and initiatives to provide or not provide organisations in the hotel industry with a sustainable competitive advantage was the final theme highlighted in the secondary research. The research took two stances with regard to competitive advantage. Firstly some researchers believe that by implementing environmental policies and initiatives hotels will gain a significant competitive advantage over their competitors while other researchers say that it will only allow hotels to compete rather than have a clear advantage. According to Lopez-Gramero *et al.* (2011); Hitchens *et al.* 2005; Sharma and Vredenburg (1998); Porter & Van Linde (1995) and Azzone and Bertele (1994) environmental proactivity is becoming one of the drivers of competitiveness in hotels. Graci & Kuehnel (2008) have stated that in the years ahead implementing these initiatives and programs will become a baseline requirement for all hospitality businesses. Therefore businesses that already have green practices built into their business models will have the best opportunity to gain competitive advantage rather than the businesses that are just reacting to the growing

sustainability curve (Graci & Keuhnel, 2008). Although agreeing with the statement of green becoming a baseline requirement The General Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel disputes this theory. He believes that because green is quickly becoming the norm in the marketplace in the years ahead when every hotel will have some sort of environmental program in place the major purchasing decision considerations will continue to be price, quality and service. Similarly The Westin Dublin assert that because green will be the norm having an environmental program in place now will make not make much difference in the future only perhaps internally. For example we now know what works and what doesn't while maybe organisations implementing down the line will have to go through that process. Rodriguez and Cruz (2007) support this by stating that any advantage gained from being socially and environmentally aware is linked to the quality of the product offered while Jones *et al.* (2005) similarly argue against the theory of environmental policy as a competitive advantage noting that customers continue to be price sensitive, with companies competing heavily for market share by slashing prices. This view is further enhanced in a study on Kamat Hotels India Ltd where a senior manager of one of their main competitors commented (Millar *et al.*, 2012)

If you promote eco-friendly service as the only competitive advantage you can boast of, you will be serving a handful of customers. There are business travellers, luxury seekers and short term tourists who may not be readily inclined to pay extra bucks for an eco-friendly room.

5.3.5 Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

This piece of research has so far have highlighted the areas in which value or no value can be created for organisations that have implemented environmental policies and initiatives in the hotel industry. However a number of issues with the implementation of such policies and initiatives have also been highlighted in the research. One of the main problems is the owners/management commitment to going green mainly because of the initial investment required. In the secondary research Bergin (2008) identified this as the major barrier to the

implementation of successful environmental policies and initiatives in Irish hotels. This is supported by Belton (2012) who has said that the conversion process for going green can require large sunk costs for energy-efficient and water efficient appliances, as well as higher operating costs associated with purchasing environmentally benign cleaning supplies and recycled paper products. Doody (2010) emphasizes this point by stating that many hospitality developers, owners and managers do not understand the value of adopting a green agenda, which leads to a complacent attitude in relation to environmental practices. The primary research gathered from both The Garryvoe Hotel and The Westin Dublin confirms that the initial investment is indeed a major deterrent for hotel owners and managers. The General Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel believes that the perception of the initial outlay is the main issue for hoteliers when implementing green initiatives. However he did say that most hoteliers do not see the financial saving figures that result from implementing such initiatives. This is substantiated by The Westin Dublin who found that one of their biggest issues at the beginning was trying to convince senior management to invest in environmental policies and initiatives. They similarly found that because management were not aware of the financial savings that could be made they found it more difficult to part with their money. However The Westin Dublin did assert that when senior management became aware of the potential savings that could be made they got right behind it. Additionally The Westin Dublin felt it was to their benefit that they are part of The Starwood Hotel Group because of the extra financial backing they receive is something that independent hotels such as The Garryvoe do not have. Furthermore The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel mentions that the initial outlay is an issue now because the banks are simply not lending.

5.4 Customer Attitudes towards Green Services

The third finding that emanated from the secondary research was the various assessments of customer perceptions towards hotels that have implemented environmental policies and initiatives. Some pieces of research suggest that customers are willing to make green a priority while other authors suggest that there is still a gap between customers say in relation to going green and their actual actions and also that price is still the major consideration for customers when choosing a hotel to stay in. However the authors primary research overwhelmingly contradicts the idea that customers are willing to make green a priority and also fully supports the research that suggests price is still the main decision making factor for customers when choosing a place to stay. The Managing Director, General Manager and Health Club Manager of The Garryvoe Hotel all disagree with the notion that customers stay in their hotel because it is green. The Managing Director asserts that the evidence is simply not there to support such a theory while The General Manager and Health Club Manager state that the hotel industry in Ireland continues to be very price orientated. This is supported by The Westin Dublin support this by highlighting that because being environmentally responsible is quickly becoming the norm green is not a massive consideration for guests. Likewise they assert that price along with quality and location are still and will always be the main considerations for customers when choosing a place to stay. This supports the secondary research carried out by Scully (2013) who found that while there was a significant interest and awareness about environmental issues only 40 percent of people surveyed said they had purchased from an environmentally conscious organisation. Similarly in a study carried out by Graci and Dodd's (2008) on the Canadian hotel industry only one third of respondents said they would change from their preferred holiday destination to one that promoted sustainable tourism. Scully (2013) also found that price, quality of service and facilities and reputation are the most important factors for customers when choosing a place

to stay rather than the greenness of the product. This was supported by Kim and Han (2013) and Dalton *et al.* (2008) who all found that price is the crucial factor when deciding a place to stay. These pieces of research conclusively refutes the research conducted by Crocker (2008), who found that 85 percent of leisure customers surveyed in a National Leisure Monitor Survey considered themselves to be environmentally friendly, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) who stated that customer demand and satisfaction is the driving force behind organisations implementing environmental policies and initiatives and Kotler and Gertner (2002) who suggest that an organisations green image plays a major role in customers decision making process.

What is clear to see is that in today's unstable and ultracompetitive business environment it is understandable that price is the key consideration for customers. However was it different during the Celtic Tiger years? Research that was carried out by The Cornell University suggested that people with higher incomes were the most likely to look at the impact of their purchasing behaviour and the impact of the places they patronize. Evidence from the primary research categorically disproves this. According to The Managing Director the Celtic Tiger had no impact on people's decision to stay in a hotel because it was green. Similarly The Westin Dublin argue that when they began implementing environmental policies and initiatives in 2008 towards the end of the Celtic Tiger green was considered to be cheap.

The primary research also supports the research conducted by Han *et al.* (2009) who states that there is a gap between what customers say in relation to going green and their actual actions. The Managing Director of The Garryvoe Hotel said that whilst everybody loves the idea of becoming environmentally responsible they forget that it can take a bit of work. This is endorsed by the Health Club Manager of The Garryvoe who believes that it's just human nature for there to be a difference in what people say and what they actually do.

The author found that because this piece of research was conducted on two specific cases and during a time when these cases are at their busiest there were a number of limitations that were encountered.

5.5 Limitations

The author encountered a number of limitations throughout the study never the less the author felt that the authenticity or value of the data was not affected. The limitations that the author encountered were:

- **Time Constraints** – This was a significant limitation experienced throughout the study. Because the study took place over the summer, which is a peak time for the Irish hotel industry the author found that he could not arrange his interviews within a short period therefore he had less time than ideal to collate his findings from the research before the deadline. As a result if the author was to do the study again, all interviews would take place within a shorter timeframe to allow the author sufficient time to collate the data.
- **Access to Information** – The author found that because the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives is done by so few organisations in Ireland there was a lack research conducted on the area in this country.
- **Sample** – This study was focused on a specific case and as a result the number of interviews that the author was able to conduct was limited. However because it was a specific case there was nothing the author could do about this.
- **Specific Cases** – The author felt that because this research was based on two specific cases, despite the findings being authentic and of value people may argue that it is hard to paint an overall picture of what value can be created for organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry that implement environmental policies and initiatives. However

because there are so few hotels with the Platinum Award from the GHA the author feels the sample chosen was of sufficient size although if the author were to conduct a similar study he would choose one additional case.

- **Bias Answers-** Because the author has both a professional & personal relationship with one of the cases there was a danger that some of the data might be biased in some way. However the author believes the findings from the other case support the research as authentic and of value.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify what value can be created for organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry that implement environmental policies and initiatives. The overall conclusion from the study is that despite previous research suggesting that value can be created through improved brand image and increased marketing potential, the ability to attract and hold onto key human resource personnel, the ability to attract new profitable customers through green marketing and thus the ability to create a long-term sustainable competitive advantage the only area where significant value is created is through financial savings. The study also concludes that there are several issues associated with the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives both within the organisation and externally with The Green Hospitality Award.

The study conclusively determined that financial savings is the biggest value creator for Irish hotel organisations. Because environmental responsiveness is becoming the norm in Irish society the idea that significant value can be created through marketing and HR is simply not evident. Perhaps if society were not as environmentally conscious and could be influenced by organisations going green then maybe more significant value could be created then. Additionally the idea of implementing environmental policies and initiatives for anything

more than financial savings will become even less viable in the future when all hotels will have environmental programs implemented. Hotels have always and will always compete over price, quality and location. While saying that no significant value can be created other than through financial savings is extremely accurate there are some areas in which hotel organisations can take advantage of being green at present. This study highlighted that global organisations such as Facebook and Google only work with environmentally conscious organisations. Also in an industry notorious for its high labour turnover this study also highlighted that employees enjoy working for hotels that have implemented environmental policies and initiatives. As a result hotels can reduce their labour turnover thus increasing employee satisfaction and therefore customer satisfaction.

This study has also identified the significant issues associated with the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives in the Irish hotel industry both internally and externally. Internally the investment in such policies and initiatives is seen as a major issue with hotel managers and owners. They find hard to part with their money as they are not aware of the financial benefits and are also worried about the impact that such policies and initiatives will have on guest satisfaction. The external issue with the process is associated with the amount of paperwork required by The GHA to gain the necessary accreditation however the study that the amount of paperwork required is reducing.

Finally this study has clearly shown that the question posed by the author **The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry** was comprehensively answered. In conclusion, while financial savings are the only reason why Irish hotel organisations should implement environmental policies and initiatives they create immense value for hotels that implement such policies and initiatives. The financial savings associated with such policies and initiatives were and continue to be the primary focus for both cases in this study.

5.7 Recommendations

The author has realised after conducting this study that the idea of being environmentally responsible is quickly becoming a baseline requirement in the hospitality industry. Following on from this the author has a number of recommendations that may aid Irish hotel organisations in the future:

- The author would recommend that this study be carried out on a larger scale. This study determined that in Ireland financial savings are the greatest and most significant benefit of implementing environmental policies and initiatives. However the author believes the research could be taken to another European country for example Spain or even Canada or The United States to analyse and compare the findings with Ireland. The author asserts that this would further aid organisations in Ireland that have implemented such policies and initiatives and ones that will be required to do likewise in the future.
- Another recommendation that the author has is that the research question posed by the author could be extended. This study only looked the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives from a management perspective. To further validate the findings the study could be conducted whereby all major stakeholders of the organisation are considered. However the author firmly believes that the findings from this research are as deep and comprehensive as any piece of research he found on this topic.
- The author would recommend based on this research that Irish hotel organisations only implement environmental policies and initiatives mainly as a method to reduce costs.
- The author offers a potential second reason to implement environmental policies and initiatives which is to attract more corporate clients. Both the primary and

secondary research has identified that large global organisations such as Google and Facebook will only work with hotels that are seen to be environmentally responsible.

- The author recommends that Irish hotel organisations that have implemented or are considering implementing environmental policies and initiatives do not neglect their primary function as a hotel which is to provide quality service and facilities. This research has shown that being environmentally responsible is only a small part of hotels daily operations.
- The author of this research would finally recommend that The Green Hospitality Award (GHA) analyse the system that is in place for organisations to achieve environmental recognition. This research has found the amount of paperwork associated with gaining accreditation from the GHA is a significant burden to organisations. Furthermore the amount of paperwork required is ironic considering the aim is to become more environmentally responsible.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Email to Potential Interview Respondents

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is John Ahern and I am an MBA degree student at Dublin Business School. As part fulfilment of the requirement for completion of the degree I am required to undertake a dissertation. I have chosen to do my dissertation on **The Organisational Value of Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives in the Irish Hotel Industry?** The research is looking at what value can be created for organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives.

I would greatly appreciate your input and participation in this piece of research by allowing me to interview you at your convenience. I am hoping to have my primary research gathered by the Friday 18th of July 2014 to allow me sufficient time to collate my findings and make my recommendations before my deadline. I have worked in the industry myself for the past number of years and I can appreciate your busy work schedule. In return for your input I would be happy to forward you a completed copy of the research findings.

If you have any questions in connection with this please do not hesitate to contact me by email or by phone. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

John Ahern

087 7715117

johnaahern@outlook.com

7.2 Interview Schedule Managing Director The Garryvoe Hotel

My name is John Ahern and as part fulfilment for the completion of Master of Business Administration I am currently carrying out research in the area of Green Hospitality specifically looking at what value can be obtained by organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry that implement environmental policies and initiatives. I appreciate the time you have given me to conduct this interview which will go a long ways in helping me to answer my research question.

Financial

1. When do you think the move towards green management in hotels began?
2. Where did you first come across green management in hotels?
3. Were financial savings the main decision making factor for you to implement environmental policies and initiatives in this hotel at the beginning and over time has the change in market expectations changed the strategy in relation to implementing further environmental policies and initiatives?
4. Did this hotel start with smaller projects and then progress with the more capital extensive projects?
5. Have existing and potential government regulations encouraged you to implement environmental policies and initiatives in this hotel?
6. By implementing environmental policies and initiatives now, are you hedging against potential future regulation?

Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

7. Is there a lack of commitment from other hotel managers and stakeholders to implement environmental policies and initiatives in your opinion?
8. If yes, what do you think are the reasons for this lack of commitment?

9. Is the initial capital outlay one of the main barriers to implementing such policies and initiatives?
10. Do you think there is a gap between some organisations commitment to going green and attitude and action in relation to going green and has this had an impact on customer perceptions of what The Garryvoe is doing in relation to going green ?
11. Do you believe that the hotel industry has an additional stake in protecting the environment, because its business success depends on it and specifically does The Garryvoes location further its need to protect the environment?

Human Resources

12. How important is the human resource element to the success of tourism and hospitality businesses?
13. Do you believe that the hotels brand image helps to attract and hold on to key human resources?
14. Have the hotels current employees been supportive of the decision to implement environmental policies and initiatives and do you think their support is crucial for the success such policies and initiatives?

Customer Attitudes

15. Do you think customers consider green aspects when choosing a hotel to stay in and do you see a reflection of this in The Garryvoes customer base?
16. Are customers interested in what The Garryvoe has done in relation to going green?
17. Do customers ever raise concerns about why the hotel has gone green? Do they ever question whether it has been done solely for profit making reasons?
18. Is there a gap between what customers say in relation to making green a priority and their actual actions?

19. Is there a difference in Irish customers attitudes towards green services compared to the attitudes of International customers?
20. Do you think that in the Celtic Tiger customers made green more of a priority or have they always been price driven?

Green Marketing and Branding

21. Does having environmental policies and initiatives in place enhance the brand and image of The Garryvoe Hotel?
22. Does having a green brand make it easier to sell to today's customers?
23. Does this hotel promote their green image to the customer?
24. Are there specific marketing channels that this hotel can use as a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives?
25. Are other environmentally progressive companies (not hotels) starting to work with this hotel because of its green image?

Competitive Advantage

26. Has the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives provided this hotel with a competitive advantage over its competitors?
27. Has the investment in such policies and initiatives been a success? Are the savings greater than the investment required in the future?
28. Has the GHA been essential to The Garryvoe during this process or could the programs and initiatives that have implemented been done on your own?

7.3 Interview Schedule General Manager The Garryvoe Hotel

My name is John Ahern and as part fulfilment for the completion of Master of Business Administration I am currently carrying out research in the area of Green Hospitality specifically looking at what value can be obtained by organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry that implement environmental policies and initiatives. I appreciate the time you have given me to conduct this interview which will go a long ways in helping me to answer my research question.

1. When did you first hear about the idea of green management in hotels?
2. What aspect of implementing environmental policies and initiatives do you believe creates the greatest value for hotel organisations?

Human Resources

3. Were you employed by this hotel before, during or after they implemented their environmental policies and initiatives?
4. If before, were you supportive of the idea to implement such policies and initiatives and were you consulted in any way to find out areas in which you thought the hotel could implement some sort of environmental policy or initiative?
5. When you started working in The Garryvoe were there efforts made by the people implementing these policies and initiatives to consult with staff regarding areas in which they thought green initiatives could be implemented?
6. Are you active in the hotels greening program?
7. As a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives has your own personal workload increased and if so in what ways?
8. Would you be more inclined to stay working in hotel that has or is implementing environmental policies and initiatives for a longer period or does it have any affect?

9. Being in a management position do you think that the other employees in the hotel considered green when choosing this hotel to work in?
10. As a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives have more staff been taken on or indeed have staff been let go?
11. Do you think the current employees are supportive of the decision to implement environmental policies and initiatives or are they just going through the motions?
12. Have you seen an increase in employee motivation or productivity since the policies and initiatives were implemented?

Customer Attitudes

13. Are customers aware that this hotel is operating in an environmentally friendly way?
14. Have you seen any impact either positive or negative on your customers since the hotel implemented these changes?

Green Marketing and Branding

15. Do you think the hotel could do more from a marketing perspective to promote this hotel as a green hotel?

Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

16. What are the main barriers for hotels when implementing environmental policies and initiatives?

Competitive Advantage

17. Do you think this hotel has gained a competitive advantage over its competitors after implementing these policies and initiatives?

18. Overall what are the positives & negatives of working for an environmentally friendly hotel?

19. Where do you see the idea of green management going in the future?

7.4 Interview Schedule Health Club Manager The Garryvoe Hotel

My name is John Ahern and as part fulfilment for the completion of Master of Business Administration I am currently carrying out research in the area of Green Hospitality specifically looking at what value can be obtained by organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry that implement environmental policies and initiatives. I appreciate the time you have given me to conduct this interview which will go a long ways in helping me to answer my research question.

Human Resources

1. When did you first hear about the idea of green management in hotels?
2. Were you employed by this hotel before, during or after they implemented their environmental policies and initiatives?
3. If during, were you aware that the hotel was implementing these policies and initiatives before you applied and did this have any impact on your decision to apply for the job?
4. When you started working in The Garryvoe were there efforts made by the people implementing these policies and initiatives to consult with staff regarding areas in which they thought green initiatives could be implemented?
5. Have the employees embraced the idea?
6. Are you active in the hotels greening program?
7. As a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives has your own personal workload increased and if so in what ways?
8. Would you be more inclined to stay working in hotel that has or is implementing environmental policies and initiatives for a longer period or does it have any affect?

9. Being in a management position do you think that the other employees in the hotel considered green when choosing this hotel to work in?
10. As a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives have more staff been taken on or indeed have staff been let go?
11. Do you think the current employees really care that the hotel is green or are they happy just to have a job?
12. Have you seen an increase in employee motivation or productivity since the policies and initiatives were implemented?

Customer Attitudes

13. Are customers aware that this hotel is operating in an environmentally friendly way?
14. Have you seen any impact either positive or negative on your customers since the hotel implemented these changes?
15. Do you think there is a gap between what customers say in relation to going green and their actual actions?

Competitive Advantage

16. Do you think this hotel has gained a competitive advantage over its competitors after implementing these initiatives?
17. What initiatives have The Health Club specifically tried to implement?
18. Overall what are the positives & negatives of working for an environmentally friendly hotel?

7.5 Interview Schedule Green Team/Chief Engineer The Westin

Dublin

My name is John Ahern and as part fulfilment for the completion of Master of Business Administration I am currently carrying out research in the area of Green Hospitality specifically looking at what value can be obtained by organisations in the Irish Hotel Industry who implement environmental policies and initiatives. I appreciate the time you have given me to conduct this interview which will go a long ways in helping me to answer my research question.

1. When do you think the move towards green management in hotel organisations began?
2. Where did you first come across green management in the hospitality industry?

Financial

3. Were financial savings the main decision making factor for The Westin to implement environmental initiative at the beginning and over time has the change in market expectations changed the strategy in relation to implementing further environmental initiatives?
4. Did this property start with smaller projects and then progress with the more capital extensive projects?
5. Have existing and potential government regulations encouraged you to implement environmental initiatives in this property?
6. By implementing environmental policies and initiatives now, are you hedging against potential future regulation and do you believe that the environmental program that this property has pursued and continues to pursue will become a baseline requirement in all hotel properties?

7. Do you believe that it is beneficial to be one of the pioneers in this sector as opposed to implementing these changes because the market demands them in the future?
8. Is it becoming more difficult to continually identify new areas where environmental policies and initiatives can be implemented?

Issues with Implementing Environmental Policies and Initiatives

9. Is there a lack of commitment from other hospitality managers & stakeholders to implement environmental policies and initiatives in your opinion?
10. If yes, what do you think are the reasons for this lack of commitment?
11. Are there ways in your opinion that this lack of commitment can be overcome?
12. Is the initial capital outlay one of the main barriers to implementing environmental policies and initiatives?
13. Do you think there is a gap between some organisations commitment to going green and attitude and action in relation to going green and has this had an impact on customer perceptions of what The Westin is doing in relation to going green?
14. What if any are the negatives associated with the “Greening Program”?
15. Have the GHA been essential during this process or could the policies and initiatives that have implemented been done on your own?

Human Resources

16. How important is the human resource element to the success of tourism and hospitality businesses?
17. Do you believe that this organisations brand image helps to attract and hold on to key human resources?

18. Have the organisations current employees been supportive of the change to green management and do you think their support is crucial for the success of environmental projects?
19. Do you think the current employees really care that the organisation is green or are they happy just to have a job?
20. As a result of the environmental program, have more staff been taken on or indeed have staff been let go?

Customer Attitudes

21. Do you think customers consider green aspects when choosing a place to stay in and do you see a reflection of this in The Westin's customer base?
22. Are customers interested in what The Westin has done in relation to implementing environmental policies and initiatives?
23. Is there a difference in Irish customers attitudes towards green services compared to the attitudes of International customers?
24. Do you think that in the Celtic Tiger customers made green more of a priority or have they always been price driven?

Green Marketing and Branding

25. Does having environmental programs in place enhance the brand & image of The Westin and does it make it easier to sell to today's customers?
26. Are there specific marketing channels that this property can use as a result of implementing environmental policies and initiatives?
27. Do you think the organisation could do more from a marketing perspective to promote themselves as a green organisation?

Competitive Advantage

- 28.** Has the implementation of environmental policies and initiatives provided this property with a competitive advantage over its competitors?
- 29.** Has the investment in these policies and initiatives been a success? Are the savings greater than the investment required in the future?
- 30.** Are other environmentally progressive companies (not hotels) starting to work with this property because of its green image?

7.6 Reflection

In this section the author will provide a self-appraisal regarding his performance throughout the MBA programme culminating in the dissertation process specifically focusing on his knowledge and skills development. He will also highlight how he was able to overcome the problems he encountered during the research process, the added value the entire programme has brought and how plans to apply and sustain the learning he has gained during the programme.

7.6.1 Self-Appraisal

The author believes that over the entire MBA programme especially during the dissertation stage his academic writing skills have significantly improved when compared to his undergraduate degree and even compared to the early stages of the programme. His ability to research more efficiently and present clear and coherent pieces of academic writing improved with each piece of work that was submitted in stages one and two which went a long way to helping him during the dissertation stage.

The authors' communication skills were also enhanced during the programme because of the discursive nature of the modules. The author pays special attention to the business strategy, corporate financial management and performance driven marketing modules all of which were very discursive in nature. The author found the interaction with the lecturers and fellow classmates beneficial both in a communication sense and overall learning about the subject matter.

The author found that he engaged less in modules such as personnel and professional development and international management because of the nature of the lectures. The

content was very theoretical with little need for class interaction. As a result the learning outcomes from those modules were not as substantial as from others

7.6.2 Problem Solving

During the MBA programme more specifically the dissertation stage the author encountered a number of problems. Some of these problems were tackled efficiently by the author however given the opportunity to tackle some of the problems again he may approach them differently.

An example of a problem that the author felt he dealt with well was in relation to organising interviews to gather his primary research. Because the study took place over the summer the author found it difficult to tie interviewees from the hotel industry down to specific dates and times for the interviews because the summer is there peak season. However the author remained patient and accepted that the interviews would take place later than ideal but within sufficient time for the author to complete his research.

An issue that the author would tackle differently if given the opportunity again would be his time management. Although all submission deadlines were met the author put himself under too much pressure to meet those deadlines. Given the opportunity again the author would devise a structured time and action plan with regard to the completion of certain aspects of the research e.g. first two sections of the lit review. This would reduce the pressure on the author and as a result may improve the quality of the writing even further.

7.6.3 Added Value

Overall the author firmly believes that his decision to partake in the MBA programme has created significant added value for him as an individual, value that he aims to utilise in his future career. As has been mentioned previously the authors academic writing skills have

improved significantly as the programme has progressed skills which he was able to utilise to great effect during the dissertation stage. He has gained significantly more knowledge in the fields of marketing, strategy and finance as a result of the modules undertaken during the programme and also his communication when speaking in an academic sense have also improved as a result of the discursive nature of certain modules.

7.6.4 Plans to Apply and Sustain Learning

The author believes that the knowledge and skills he has gained throughout the MBA programme will be extremely beneficial in his future career both employment and academic. In the future the author may undertake either a research masters or even progress to PHD level and he believes the improvement in his academic writing and experience in conducted a significant piece of research along with the extra knowledge and skills that he has developed set him up well if he decides to progress down either route.

Career wise the author aims to become a management consultant in the future. To achieve this goal the author aims to develop his skills in areas such as marketing, strategy and finance before eventually moving onto to be a management consultant. The author intends to use what he has learned during the MBA programme specifically in the fields of marketing, strategy and finance to firstly gain employment in each of these fields and then become a future leader and thinker in each discipline. The author believes the programme has given him a solid foundation of knowledge from where he can progress to create a highly successful career in the global business world.