



MICE & Eco-Hotels:

A closer look at the partnership between international events and Eco-Hotels

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MICE & Eco-Hotels: A closer look at the partnership between international events and Eco-Hotels

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xhebit, Singapore's one-stop platform for Sustainable Event Planning, was launched in 2017 with the objective of helping the events industry transition to a circular events ecosystem. We provide an event planning guide, case studies & consulting services to help event organisers make informed decisions. Our services include sustainable event consulting, waste audits and research studies that help further sustainable event planning. xhebit is an initiative developed by EARTHYS Sustainability.

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EARTHYS Sustainability specialises in formulating solutions that support a circular economy. Because behaviour shapes the success of environmental initiatives, we place importance on understanding the interplay between behaviour & sustainability, and how this can be utilised to solve challenges.

Our diverse group of academics and industry specialists bring a wealth of knowledge and deep expertise in areas such as psychology, technology, social impact and data science, amongst others. We believe, the importance of natural resources, however small, need not be compromised or side-lined in the pursuit of growth.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an international event destination with a number of accolades, Singapore is host to many conventions, tradeshows, conferences and summits annually. Singapore's appeal as a Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) destination drew 2 million Business MICE (BTMICE) visitors in 2018. These visitors utilise a variety of services including hotels for their accommodation. While the hotel industry has been singled out as a resource and waste intensive sector, Eco-Hotels are one effective way to mitigate the environmental impacts. Eco-Hotels, with energy and water efficiencies built-in alongside sustainable operations, help lower international visitors' environmental footprint, and by extension, that of the event. Therefore, partnering with Eco-Hotels is a way for international events to reduce its overall environmental impact.

This study looked at how frequently International Events partnered Eco-Hotels, and assessed the attitudes of Event Organisers & International Delegates towards Eco-Hotels.

Key Findings

1. Partnership with Eco-Hotels stands at 37%, but this is incidental rather than a pro-active attempt at sustainability.
2. Hotel sustainability credentials are largely not being requested by Event Organisers nor being actively provided by hotels.
3. Overall, International Delegates are receptive towards Eco-Hotels and some of the results captured in this study reflect those of global eco-tourism trends, which are largely positive. This is an opportunity which is currently not being leveraged by MICE or the hotel industry.

Key Recommendations

1. Simplify the process for Event Organisers to select Eco-Hotels by adopting an industry wide standardised criteria for Eco-Hotels.
2. Capitalise on International Delegates favourable opinion of sustainable accommodation by providing sustainability information on Eco-Hotels.
3. Eco-Hotels to provide competitive hotel rates for partner events.
4. Improve International Delegates sustainability experience during hotel stay.

Information on sustainability within the events ecosystem is highly fragmented – the hotel industry is no exception. Many hotels are going green, however they practice sustainability to varying degrees. The depth to which they are green is not always evident, making it difficult to accurately identify sustainable hotels. The first step to increasing partnership with Eco-Hotels is equipping event organisers with reliable information, which will help them make informed decisions. This study identifies how this gap can be closed using existing tools.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The immense economic potential of the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) industry, collectively termed events, stems from the extensive scale of products and services needed to support a diverse array of events (Fig. 1). The provision of these products and services cascades down the supply chain, in turn benefitting local businesses. In 2018, Singapore Tourism Board recorded S\$3.44 billion in tourism receipts originating from Business MICE (BTMICE) visitors (STB, 2019a). While the economic benefits of this thriving industry are beneficial, they are accompanied by environmental costs.

Environment & Events

Pre-event through to post-event often requires intensive resource use and lead to significant amounts of waste. Examples of resource use & waste take the form of unwanted door gifts, single-use plastic bottled water, food miles, food waste, large numbers of printed collateral, displays, backdrops & banners that are disposed of post-event. Waste audits from 60 conferences held globally revealed that a typical conference attendee produces 1.89kg of waste per day, and a 1000 person 3-day event produces 5670kg of waste (Meetgreen, 2014). Minimal recycling & diversion of waste alongside energy & water consumption add to the overall environmental footprint of any event. It is estimated that a three-day business event in Singapore with 100 delegates results in over 300kg of carbon emissions (STB, 2015), which is equivalent to charging 38,254 smart phones (EPA).

International Events

International events add another layer of environmental impact. International delegates largely arrive via air travel, which has been identified empirically as huge emitters of greenhouse gases (Becken, 2007).

Hotels too exhaust large amounts of natural resources in exchange for guests having a temporary, but comfortable and luxurious stay. The hotel sector has been repeatedly singled out as being extremely energy and water intensive, when compared to other sectors within the tourism industry (Bohdanowicz, 2005). In Singapore, hotels on average use 852 litres of water and 41 kWh of energy per occupied room daily (Greenview & Horwath HTL, 2018). Usage for some hotels can reach as high as 2,271 litres and 83 kWh, respectively. While hotels are an integral part of the MICE ecosystem, their environmental footprint is significant and needs to be considered.

Fortunately, there is a growing movement amongst hotels to green their infrastructure, operations, services and amenities either through their own sustainability programmes (e.g. ACCOR's Planet 21) or through third party certifications such as Earthcheck, Green Key, Building Construction Authority's (BCA) Green Mark. Such hotels with energy and water efficiencies built-in alongside sustainable operations & procurement are termed Eco-Hotels or green hotels.

International Events & Eco-Hotels

As an international events destination, Singapore has earned many accolades: Best Convention Bureau 2018 by CEI Asia Pacific; Best Business MICE City 2018 by TTG Awards. Singapore's appeal as a MICE destination drew 2 million BTMICE visitors in 2018, a 14% increase over 2017 (STB, 2019b). STB has stated Singapore will host more business events in 2019 and expects to draw large numbers of international delegates (STB, 2019a).

Given the large numbers of international delegates arriving for MICE, international events often partner with hotels in order to provide preferential rates.

Partnering Eco-Hotels is one way international events can reduce their overall carbon footprint. These hotels help lower international delegates' environmental footprint, and by extension, that of the event.

This study looks at how frequently International Events partner with Eco-Hotels and assesses the attitudes of Event Organiser and International Delegates towards Eco-Hotels.

Grand HYATT excels in sustainably sourced food. Aside from ASC & MSC certified seafood they offer a slew of plant-based options such as Beyond Burgers (below). Grand HYATT has ASEAN Green Hotel award.



2.0 STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study focuses on three key stakeholders: Eco-Hotels, Event Organisers, and International Delegates. We take a closer look at how frequently international events partner with Eco-Hotels and assess the attitudes of Event Organisers and International Delegates towards Eco-Hotels.

Specific aims are:

1. Identifying the frequency with which International Events partner with Eco-Hotels.
2. Evaluating the receptiveness of Event Organisers in partnering Eco-Hotels.
3. Evaluating the perception and receptiveness of International Delegates towards Eco-Hotels.



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Mandarin Orchard is Green Mark Gold certified and has Meritus Loves the Earth programme. They offer digital newspapers to their guests.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Eco-Hotels

For the purpose of this study we had to identify which hotels qualify as Eco-Hotels. An Eco-Hotel is one that addresses both building infrastructure and business operations, which broadly include: energy, water, waste, education and outreach, and procurement. An added prerequisite is transparency, where certification criteria or programme specifics need to be transparent.

Singapore does not have a standardised criteria for Eco-Hotels. Each hotel has its own sustainability definition, initiatives, and accreditation methods. For this reason, we have defined Eco-Hotels as having either:

1. BCA's Green Mark certification and a sustainability programme (e.g. MBS ECO360) – both collectively address building infrastructure and business operations; OR
2. ASEAN Green Hotel Award

BCA Green Mark hotel list was retrieved from <https://www.bca.gov.sg/>. Hotel websites were researched to establish which hotels had a sustainability programme. As of June 2018, 29 hotels have both Green Mark certification and a sustainability programme. Ten hotels have ASEAN Green Hotel 2016-2018 award (SHA, 2016). In all, 35 hotels were categorised as Eco-Hotels (Appendix A).

International Events

Using event websites, a total of 18 international events and their partner hotels were compiled (Table 1). These events were comprised of conferences, conventions, tradeshow and congresses which took place between April and October 2018.

Event Organisers

Structured interviews¹ via phone and online surveys were carried out with a total of 14 Event Organisers (EOs). For confidentiality purposes, the Event Organiser's names and organisation will not be presented in this study.

International Delegates

Structured interviews¹ were conducted with 66 International Delegates (IDs) in person to gather their views on Eco-Hotels and their willingness to select such hotels. The majority of interviewees were made up of delegates from City Solutions 2018 which took place from 9 – 11 July 2018. The breakdown of delegate country of origin, age group and hotel is provided in Appendix B.

¹ A structured interview is a quantitative research method used to ensure each interview is presented with exactly the same questions in the same order.

4.1 KEY FINDINGS

International Events & Eco-Hotels

Eighteen international events were reviewed (Table 1). A total of 128 hotels were partnered with across all 18 events. Of these, the frequency of partnering with Eco-Hotels was 37% (42) – just over a third of partner hotels were Eco-Hotels. Of the 35 Eco-Hotels identified in this study, only 34% (12) were partnered with repeatedly – the remaining majority (23) were not engaged for these 18 events. Only 1 international event, BEX Asia 2018, pro-actively prioritised Green Mark hotels and presented certification information on the booking site (Figure 2).

5 Star Category (Green Mark Status - Platinum)			
Hotel	Star	Verified Reviews TrustYou™	R
GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL	★★★★★	4.3 Very Good ★★★★★ 5,391 reviews	S
PARKROYAL ON PICKERING	★★★★★	4.5 Excellent ★★★★★ 14,360 reviews	S
5 Star Category (Green Mark Status - Gold Plus)			

Figure 2. Screenshot of BEX Asia 2018 partner hotel booking page.

BOX 1. Transparency & Green Programmes

A product or service is deemed sustainable when it carries a Green Label. The label has to be issued by a certification body that is credible and transparent. In Singapore, buildings are certified under Building Construction Authority's (BCA) Green Mark scheme. This means they have met BCA's standards for being energy and water efficient, amongst other sustainability measures. BCA's criteria for assessment is available publicly (transparent), and undergoes regular reviews.

Transparency is important as it tells us how robust the certification criteria is. For example, in order to be certified by Certification X, an organisation has to implement 5 simple sustainability measures. Whereas to be certified green by Certification Y, the organisation would need to implement 20 very substantial requirements. Therefore, transparency provides a clear understanding of the depth and breadth of what an organisation is being certified against, which helps prevent Greenwashing (read about Greenwashing in Box 2).

Table 1. Review of 18 International Events in 2018 and their partner hotels. Out of 128 hotels partnered, 42 were Eco-Hotels which is a 37% adoption rate.

International Event	Event Type	Venue	Date	No. of Eco-Hotels*	Eco-Hotels	Sustainability info on hotel
Food & Hotel Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	April 2018	6 of 15	Holiday Inn Express Clarke Quay, Holiday Inn Express Orchard, Marina Mandarin, Marina Bay Sands, Conrad Centennial, JW Marriott	No
Children Baby Maternity Expo SEA 2018	Tradeshow	Marina Bay Sands	April 2018	1 of 1	Marina Bay Sands	No
AVPN Conference 2018	Conference	Suntec	June 2018	4 of 13	InterContinental, Marina Mandarin, Resorts World Sentosa, Furama City Centre	No
Sustainable Solutions Expo	Convention	Suntec	June 2018	1 of 1	Conrad Centennial	No
Chillax Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	June 2018	1 of 2	Marina Mandarin	No
Singapore Ink Show 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	June 2018	0 of 4	-	-
IFLA World Congress 2018	Congress	Suntec	June 2018	1 of 1	Marina Bay Sands	No
CommunicAsia 2018 Broadcast Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	June 2018	6 of 15	Holiday Inn Express Clarke Quay, Holiday Inn Express Orchard, Marina Mandarin, Marina Bay Sands, JW Marriott, Conrad Centennial	No
World Cities Summit 2018 Clean Enviro Summit 2018 Singapore international Water Week 2018	Summit	Marina Bay Sands	July 2018	4 of 13	JW Marriott, Marina Bay Sands, Marina Mandarin, Furama City Centre	No
Asia Pacific Climate Week 2018	Summit	Resorts World Sentosa	July 2018	3 of 5	Equarius Hotel, Festive Hotel, Hard Rock Hotel	No
World Credit Union Conference Singapore	Conference	Suntec	July 2018	3 of 5	Holiday Inn Express Clark Quay, Conrad Centennial, Marina Bay Sands	No
Specialty and Fine Food Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	July 2018	1 of 11	Marina Mandarin	No
Singapore Gifts and Premiums Fair Office Expo Asia 2018 Printpack + Sign 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	July 2018	0 of 1	-	-
OS+H Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Suntec	Aug 2018	3 of 10	Marina Mandarin, Conrad Centennial, JW Marriott	No
Submarine Networks World 2018	Convention	Suntec	Aug 2018	1 of 3	Marina Mandarin	No
TECHINNOVATION 2018	Tradeshow	Marina Bay Sands	Sep 2018	0 of 5	-	-
BEX Asia 2018	Tradeshow	Marina Bay Sands	Sep 2018	5 of 10	Holiday Inn Express Clarke Quay, Marina Mandarin, Marina Bay Sands, InterContinental, Park Royal on Pickering	Yes
ARMS10	Conference	Suntec	Oct 2018	2 of 12	Holiday Inn Express Clarke Quay, Marina Mandarin	No

*Refers to the number of Eco-Hotels out of the total partner hotel list.

4.2 KEY FINDINGS

Event Organisers

Criteria for choosing partner hotels

When choosing partner hotels, sustainability was not mentioned as a criteria amongst all 14 EOs interviewed. However, it was mentioned that depending on the nature of the event or requirements of event or client, Eco-Hotels may be specifically selected as a partner hotel. Some of the criteria highlighted include location, room rates, ranking (4-5 stars), reputation, level of service, and existing relationship with hotel.

Providing sustainability information on partner hotels

Six EOs stated that sustainability information is usually not provided on partner hotel lists. EOs place emphasis on room rates and location, as they perceive this to be most important to delegates. Five EOs stated that any information on sustainability has to be provided by the hotels themselves. Three EOs stated that providing sustainability information would have to depend on event host requirements. Marina Bay Sands was the only hotel highlighted as providing a sustainability report to EOs.

Likelihood of providing sustainability information in future

One EO stated that they would not consider providing sustainability information on hotels just yet, while 4 EOs stated they will consider providing such information. The other 10 EOs stated that the provision of sustainability information would depend largely on:

1. Demand from international delegates
2. Event requirements
3. Hotels providing sustainability information

4.3 KEY FINDINGS

International Delegates

Perception of Eco-Hotel luxury & comfort

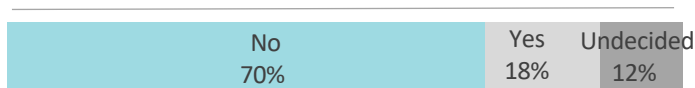


Figure 3. Survey question – Do you think Eco-Hotels are less luxurious & comfortable?

70% (46) of IDs do not think sustainable hotels are less luxurious and comfortable. These delegates do not see sustainability as an obstacle to the quality of facilities a hotel can offer. In fact, delegates interviewed were of the opinion that Eco-Hotels often do better in terms of luxury and comfort.

Likelihood of booking an Eco-Hotel

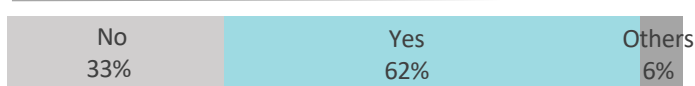


Figure 4. Survey question – Would info on sustainability encourage you to book an Eco-Hotel?

62% (41) of delegates stated that information provided on hotel sustainability would encourage them to book it. When asked what were the primary determining factors for choosing hotels, IDs revealed it to be price, proximity to event venue, and convenience. However, if given a choice between two hotels that were similar in price and location, delegates would choose the more sustainable one.

Interest in knowing hotel sustainability information



Figure 5. Survey question – Would you have liked hotel sustainability info on partner hotel listing?

While 50% (33) of IDs would have liked information on hotel sustainability, some mentioned that they do not check the partner hotel list provided by EOs because the partner hotel rates are not competitive. Instead, they opt for hotel booking websites that can offer them the best rates and comparisons between hotels.

Perception of sustainability at current hotel of stay

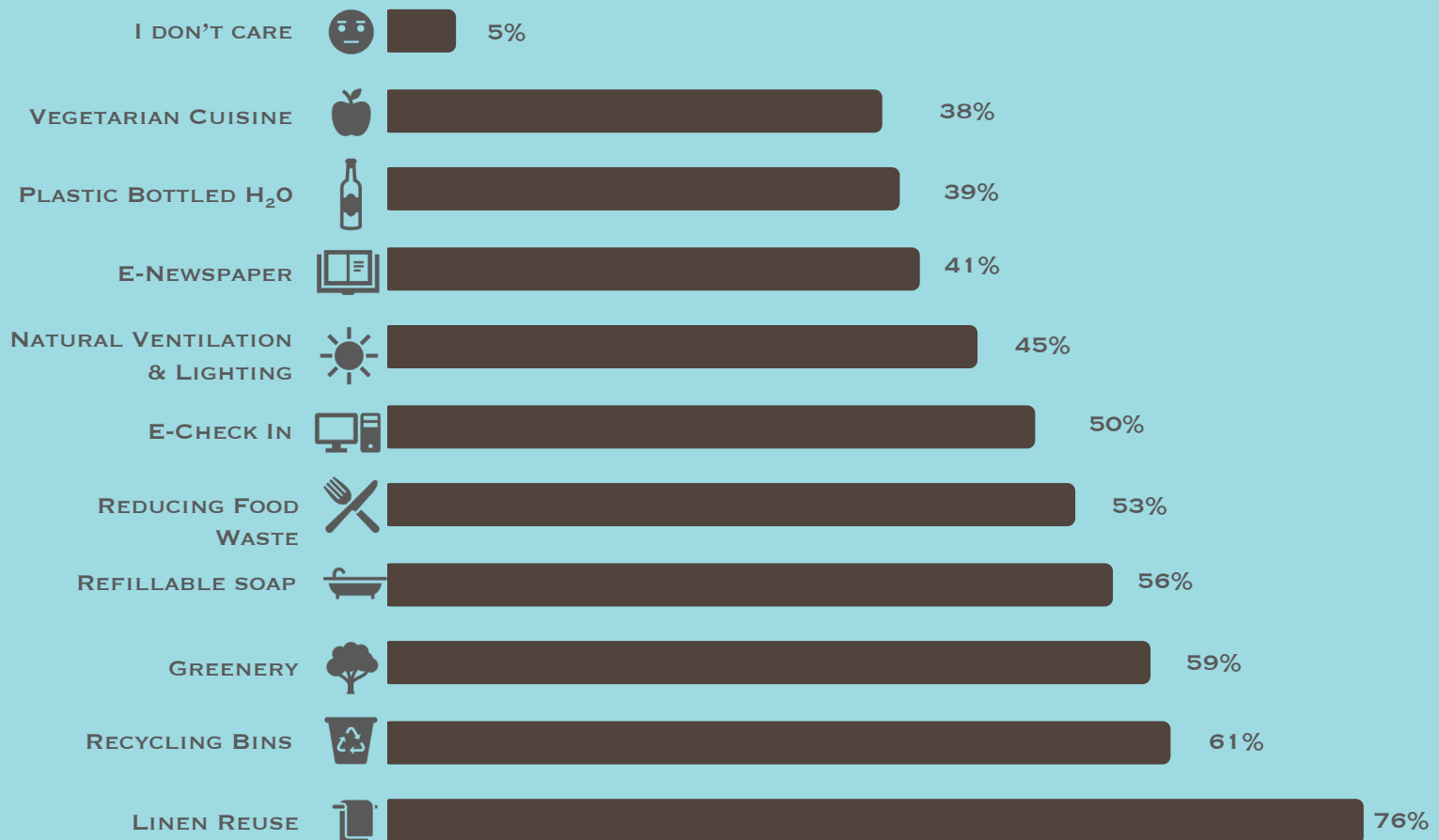


Figure 6. Survey question – On a scale of 1 to 5, [1 – Not Sustainable & 5 – Very Sustainable], how do you rate the sustainability of your current hotel? N=58.

Overall, 86% of IDs rated their hotels to be of average or less than average in terms of sustainability. Specifically, 45% (26) of IDs gave a rating of 1 & 2, as they did not think their hotels to be particularly sustainable. A minority 14% considered their hotels adequately sustainable. No IDs rated their hotel a 5 – Very Sustainable. Refer to Appendix B for the spread of hotels occupied by respondents.

Preferred sustainability features in an Eco-Hotel

Figure 7. Ranking of delegates preference for green features in a hotel. Total number of response = 66.



Linen & Towel Reuse

75% (50) of delegates stated that they would like to see hotels with a linen and/or towel reuse programme. Linen-reuse is a widely adopted practice in hotels (Brunns-Smith et al., 2015) with 68% of hotels in Singapore providing this option (Greenview & Horwath HTL, 2019). Five delegates who were staying in 5 & 4-star rated hotels with linen reuse programmes stated that despite opting for linen reuse, service staff would still change their linen regularly.

Greenery

Greenery was the third highest rated feature for Eco-Hotels, with more than half the surveyed delegates 59.0% (39) having a preference for hotels with greenery.

Recycling Bins

60.6% (40) of IDs expect to see recycling bins in an Eco-Hotel, a clear indication that provision of recycling bins is widely accepted by interviewees. While 81% of hotels here provide recycling bins in common areas, only a meagre 23% provide recycling bins in hotel rooms (Greenview & Horwath HTL, 2019).

Single-use Plastic Bottled Water

Provision of single-use plastic bottled water is a common practice in hotels. 50% (33) of IDs stated they would accept alternatives to bottled water if hotels provided it. The other half of the respondents stated bottled water is more convenient and that they can be assured of the water quality.

5.0 INTERVIEW

Eric Ricaurte of Greenview

How are events the biggest missed opportunity right now when it comes to sustainability?

ER: From the hotel's standpoint, travellers are generally segmented into 3 groups: business, leisure and group travel, which is mostly for events. Corporate business travellers are actually the biggest driver because they have their own sustainability agenda, and they want to push it through the supply chain.

But group travel [events] is worth the biggest impact in scale. For example, a corporate business books a 100,000 nights for the entire year, across several countries. But hotels don't get much scale [revenue] because revenue goes to different hotels. An Event Organiser brings a number of people to one hotel or one city in one instance, and has leverage power at that moment, more leverage than leisure or business travellers, to get something to change.

That's why events is the biggest missed opportunity, because out of the three [leisure, business and events], MICE events is the least aware, interested, or sophisticated.

In terms of amenities, e.g. not providing individually packaged toiletries, do you find luxury hotels prefer to give individually packaged options as opposed to bulk?

ER: Historically, yes. Luxury hotels often partner up with luxury brands, retail brands or designers. But now that everyone is scrambling for single use plastics, it doesn't matter, luxury hotels have to go figure it out too.

Why don't hotels actively showcase sustainability information on the front page of their website?

ER: Depends. One, hotels may be a little scared of telling anything, because it might be sensitive, so they might be afraid to say something and get criticised for it. Two, whoever is doing the website may not be communicating with whoever's putting up content on sustainability. If I'm an engineer or in housekeeping, I'm not going to talk to the person who's in charge of updating the website. Or, if it's a corporate website, it might be standardised, they might be hesitant to put something to change it - there may be brand standards. Final one is guests are not asking for it in that way.

Different hotels are doing different things, and it is not standardised. So what is the best way for Event Organisers to showcase sustainability information to delegates?

ER: Easiest way is to assess the hotels according to a common criteria (10 things you want the hotel to accomplish). You then make sure the hotels who are in your list, give you the information to what they are doing. Event Organisers then communicate the information, whether through a poster board, or email blast to their attendees that the partner hotels have linen reuse, energy efficient fittings....so on.

If delegates go through a booking platform or travel agencies, is there any way for Event Organisers to influence bookings?

ER: Definitely, Event Organisers have the biggest interaction with the guests - they can survey them. They can do a survey, get a good sample among their attendees and find out where they stayed and how they booked, and use this information to engage with attendees.

Biggest thing would be to work with the DMO/CBB*. If you want to attract more events to your city, you should have sustainable practices that you are offering for your city, and all the hotels will do this – the CBB will provide that information as a selling point.

Event Organisers too could go to the CBB and say as a prerequisite for coming into your city, we want to be able to have this information, so you should go out to your hotels and make sure you get it for us.

*CBB = Convention Business Bureau; DMO = Destination Marketing Organisation

Last thoughts on getting events to provide sustainability information to international delegates.

ER: Corporate companies have great sustainability programmes, but the person running the event for the company never really talks to the sustainability person in the company. They don't really have much interaction. You have niche events like Greenbuild, or Wind Power conference –

these clients loved that [sustainability], because it is their business, but 94% of Event Organisers do not care.

You're not going to make them care about certifications because events are about content and experience. The other problem is that they're busy – the last thing they want to do is to add one or two more tasks.

Finally, organisers don't have the pressure that other companies have. An organiser generally does not have an institutional investor/stakeholder/customer saying "hey we want to do something". They have a bunch of attendees, but the attendees don't have the collectivism to say "We want you guys to do green programmes." If it's an exhibit floor, their customers are the exhibitors, and they don't want to tell the exhibitors that they want the exhibitor to do xyz...

That's why it's done at a destination level, sustainability info is submitted to a DMO as a city wide initiative, who then uses it to help get more business for the city.

Events are just awesome and so fun and amazing, but you need a different paradigm for sustainability. It needs to be based on innovation, experience, interaction, and context based.

Greenview has a niche focus and expertise in the hotel industry and work with many of the hotel industry's leading chains including Marriott, IHG, Wyndham, Mandarin Oriental, Hyatt, and Hilton. Beyond hotel companies, Greenview works with research institutions, destinations, and cruise lines to catalyze sustainability as the industry's thought leader.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Simplify the process for Event Organisers to select & partner Eco-Hotels by introducing an Eco-Hotel programme.

The precursor to partnering Eco-Hotels is identifying them, which proved to be a challenge. Each hotel has its own sustainability definition, initiatives, and accreditation methods. One hotel might assess building infrastructure while another focuses on environment, and yet another emphasises social responsibility. While most hotels are undertaking sustainability initiatives, the breadth and depth of their efforts is not always clear.

One way to resolve this problem is to adopt an industry wide Eco-Hotel programme which benchmarks hotels against a standardised criteria which is transparent and publicly available, much like BCA's Green Mark. This would help ensure:

1. Equitable comparison of hotels, as all hotels are evaluated against a standardised criteria
2. Consistency and reliability
3. Simplifies the process by which EOs can identify Eco-Hotels

Orlando, rated as the top event destination in the USA (CVENT, 2018), introduced standardisation and consistency to green hotels through the Florida Green Lodging Program (FGLP) in 2004. It is a state-run voluntary programme where hotels are evaluated across 6 categories – Communication and Education; Waste Reduction; Reuse and Recycling; Water Conservation; Energy Efficiency; and Indoor Air Quality (FDEP, 2018). Hotels which are part of the programme are listed as Green Certified in the Orlando Meeting Professionals Guide (Visit Orlando, 2018), and get preference for state-run meetings and conferences. All hotels are listed in a publicly

accessible directory (Florida, 2019).

In Singapore, the Sustainability Guidelines for the Singapore MICE Industry (STB, 2013) provides a set of guidelines to help EOs assess and work with sustainable hotels, on an event basis. With some modification, these guidelines may be adopted as a common criteria for an Eco-Hotel programme, analogous to Green Mark or FGLP. Another option is the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard (ASEAN, 2016), which forms the basis of the ASEAN Green Hotel Award. Overall, an Eco-Hotel programme would help pave the way for increased partnership with Eco-Hotels, which in this study stands at 37%.

2. Capitalise on International Delegates favourable opinion of sustainable accommodation by providing information on Eco-Hotels.

Based on Event Organisers' feedback it is clear the presence of Eco-Hotels on partner hotel lists, is for the most part, an incidental occurrence rather than a pro-active attempt at sustainability. It could be argued that, at the very least, it may have an unintended positive effect. However, the lack of supporting sustainability information prevent delegates from being able to make informed decisions, thus limiting potential benefits. When it comes to recognizing a sustainable place to stay, Booking.com's 2019 global travel study indicates 62% feel better about staying in an accommodation that had an eco-label (Booking.com, 2019).

In addition, two-thirds of IDs in this study do not think Eco-Hotels to be of lesser quality than regular hotels. This is mirrored by Booking.com's study where 80% of 12,134 respondents felt sustainable travel did meet their level of luxury

and comfort (Booking.com, 2018). The overall favourable opinion of international travellers presents an excellent opportunity for Event Organisers, and particularly Eco-Hotels, to capitalise on.

3. Eco-Hotels should provide competitive hotel rates for partner events.

While price and proximity are important factors in booking a hotel. 61% of IDs are receptive to Eco-Hotels when stacked up against regular hotels. Global trends indicate similar trends where 70% of 18,077 global travellers prefer an eco-friendly accommodation, whether or not they were looking for a sustainable stay (Booking.com, 2019). Therefore, providing competitive rates alongside hotel sustainability info can help attract more guests – a missed opportunity for Eco-Hotels.

4. Improve International Delegates sustainability experience during hotel stay.

The majority of delegates did not view their hotels as very sustainable. In addition, some hotels were not following through on their sustainability measures. It has been empirically shown that the amount of sacrifice required by guests to go green (e.g. linen reuse) has to be matched by the hotel's sustainability efforts. If it is not, guests do not have a positive impression, and are unlikely to revisit the hotel (Rahman et. al. 2015). Read about Greenwashing in Hotel Industry in Box 2.

Novotel reduces food waste by informing & engaging guests. Novotel has Green Mark GoldPlus certification, Planet 21 programme & the ASEAN Green Hotel Award.

Hotels can do a few things to improve guest experience and perception:

1. Improve communications on how the hotel is going green
2. Ensure sustainability is integrated throughout the hotel, and not isolated to linen reuse or bulk amenities.
3. Improve sustainability initiatives which are part of the guest experience e.g. providing water in reuseable bottles & providing information on Singapore's water quality.
4. Ensure service staff are trained adequately on following through with hotel sustainability practices. The importance of training service staff on sustainability cannot be emphasised enough. Service staff are the ambassadors of any hotel, thus, not following through on sustainability initiatives is likely to affect the hotel image.



BOX 2. Greenwashing and its' implications for the hotel industry

Greenwashing is a term used for products, services, or businesses that are made to appear environmentally sustainable, but in reality are NOT. Often this image of being sustainable is projected either through marketing, packaging or unsubstantiated claims of being eco-friendly. The term Greenwashing was coined by environmentalist Jay Westerveld in 1986 when he came across a hotel in Fiji requesting guests to reuse their towels in an effort to save water. However, he also noticed that all the other activities of the hotel did not indicate a desire to be truly sustainable. Hence, he coined the term Greenwashing, in reference to using the environment (green) as a ruse to get guests to return the towels (washing) – Greenwashing.

In 2015, Rahman et. al. carried out a study titled “Consequences of “greenwashing”: consumers’ reactions to hotels’ green initiatives”. One of the impetus for the study was the insincere claims of going green by hoteliers who attempt to jump on the green bandwagon by way of simple initiatives like linen reuse, without any real organisation-wide effort. This leads to scepticism amongst guests, which has often been identified as an obstacle for green lodging, despite the desire to be eco-conscious. The results of their study revealed that guests’ scepticism can have negative consequences, not just for the hotel in question, but for the entire industry. For example, when guests see linen reuse but no recycling bins, it induces scepticism. The study recommends hoteliers improve credibility by implementing an all-rounded sustainability programme, third-party certification by recognised green programmes, and good communication with guests. Increasingly, consumers are more savvy of environmental practices, and simply hanging a board that says “we are a green hotel” doesn’t cut it.

Minimising plastic waste by providing glasses for a refreshing drink in the Swissotel Merchant Court’s lobby. Swissotel Merchant Court has Green Mark Platinum certification, Planet 21 programme and the ASEAN Green Hotel Award.

Table 2. Summary of recommendations for partnering and promoting Eco-Hotels at International events.

CHALLENGE/OPPORTUNITY	RECOMMENDATIONS
Identifying sustainable hotels is a challenge.	Adopt an industry wide Eco-Hotel programme which benchmarks hotels against a standardised criteria which is transparent and publicly available, much like BCA’s Green Mark. This criteria needs to address both building infrastructure and business operations.
Majority of International Delegates did not think sustainable hotels were less luxurious or comfortable.	The favourable opinion of International Delegates presents an excellent opportunity for Event Organisers, and particularly Eco-Hotels, to capitalise on.
A sizeable number of International Delegates rated their hotels as not very sustainable.	Guest experience and opinion can be improved in a few ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve communications on how the hotel is going green and 2. Ensure sustainability is integrated throughout the hotel, and not isolated to linen reuse or bulk amenities.
International Delegates do not find partner hotel rates competitive.	Providing competitive rates alongside hotel sustainability info can help attract more guests – a missed opportunity for Eco-Hotels.
Feedback on hotels not following through on their sustainability initiatives.	Hotels need to train staff adequately on carrying out sustainable initiatives properly.

Marina Bay Sands reduces food waste via five anaerobic digesters. In 2017, 529 tonnes of food waste was diverted away from landfill. Marina Bay Sands has Green Mark Platinum certification, and Sands ECO360 programme.



7.0 DISCUSSION

An Eco-Hotel programme **levels the playing field** and opens up more avenues for engagement with Eco-Hotels. While this recommendation is intended for the MICE industry, other linked industries may benefit from such an initiative. The tourism industry, for instance, would be able to tap on it for eco-conscious travel groups who have a preference for Eco-Hotels. Independent travellers who choose sustainable travel can also tap on this resource. Eco-tourism is a trend which is likely to stay, and should become an integral part of Singapore's tourism (including BTMICE) repertoire.

The current Sustainability Guidelines for the Singapore MICE Industry is setup to promote green events through an event certification process. It requires investment, in terms of time & effort, from event organisers/hosts to work with, gather and assess information from hotels and other vendors. Thus, the responsibility to drive greener events falls almost entirely on event organiser/host, and would most likely act as a deterrent. An alternative would be to **streamline the process** by providing information on verified sustainable hotels and vendors. Instead of having multiple organisers collect the same information, it is more efficient to have the same set of information provided to all.

Two sets of criteria for hotels already exist: ASEAN Green Hotel Standard and Sustainability Guidelines for MICE. Most, if not all, hotels are practising sustainability to various extents. By integrating elements of both into an Eco-Hotel programme, hotels can be assessed fairly.

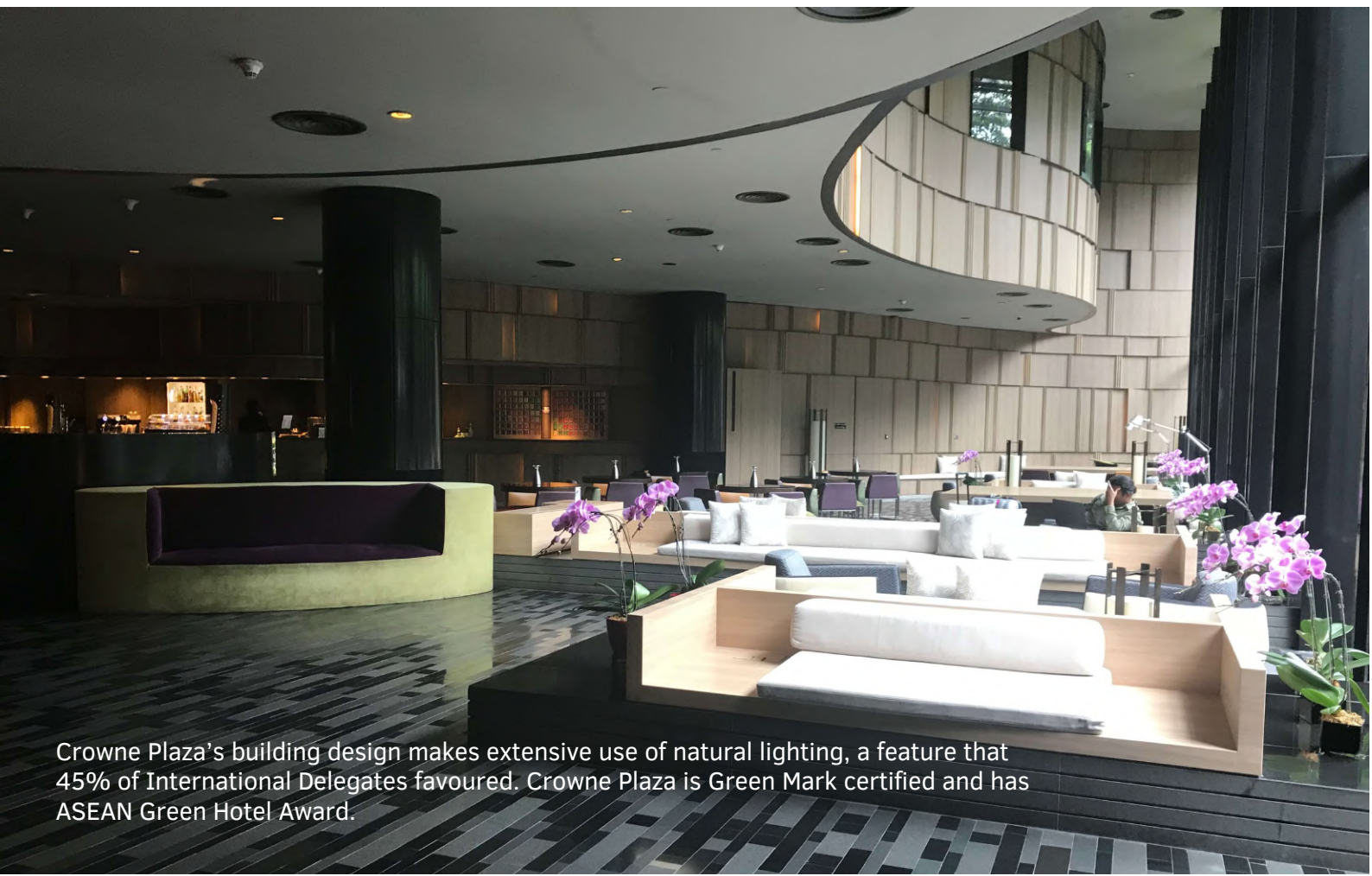
Some of the issues identified in this study were also identified in STB's 2015 study on Business Events & Sustainability. A similar recommendation was put forward for events to partner hotels with green certifications or awards as a way to green events. Improving communication regarding Singapore's water quality was another recommendation. Alleviating the concern over Singapore's potable water quality can help reduce the need for single-use plastic bottled water in MICE, as well as the larger tourism sector. Communicating water quality needs to be undertaken at multiple levels, which include overseas promotions of Singapore as an event destination, at points of entry into Singapore, on event registration platforms and at hotels. Four years on, the same recommendations have surfaced in this study.

Events are as old as societies. In trying to nudge the events industry towards sustainability, spontaneous adoption cannot be expected. There are a slew of reasons, namely, lack of understanding of sustainability, not recognising relevance, resistance to change and information gaps. Resistance to change, to some extent, can be mitigated if information gaps are closed and solutions made accessible. Currently, event organisers are left to their own devices to piece together sustainable events, for the few that attempt it. If we are to aspire to greener events, it is necessary to re-shape the industry pro-actively, much like what BCA has accomplished with Green Mark.

A Final Note on Circular Events Ecosystem

In driving a circular economy, the events ecosystem can play an integral role. Resources are used and discarded in many forms – wood, plastics, metals, food & food waste, paper & pulp products etc. Much of the movement of these resources is currently linear, moving from supplier/vendor to event to waste disposal. Very little effort has been made to create circularity, either at the industry level or within events. While actual figures of Singapore’s MICE related waste do not exist in public records, we can speculate that the extent of solid waste should be significant, given Singapore’s role as an event destination.

By working towards circularity, “waste” from other industries could be diverted to events to be used as resources, while event “waste” can be diverted as resources to other industries – this would help reduce the amount of waste to landfill. However, it requires a system wide review of Singapore’s events ecosystem. We strongly encourage a review of other aspects of events to explore the potential for creating a circular events ecosystem in partnership with other sectors such as construction or performing arts.



Crowne Plaza’s building design makes extensive use of natural lighting, a feature that 45% of International Delegates favoured. Crowne Plaza is Green Mark certified and has ASEAN Green Hotel Award.

APPENDIX A

Hotel	Green Mark Certification	Sustainability Programme	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Conrad Centennial	Gold	LightStay Program	
Crowne Plaza Changi Airport	Certified	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Furama City Centre	Platinum	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Genting Hotel Jurong	Platinum	Sustainability 21	
Grand Hyatt	-	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Grand Mercure Roxy	Gold	Planet 21	
Holiday Inn Express Katong	Certified	IHG Green Engage System	
Holiday Inn Express, Clarke Quay	Platinum	IHG Green Engage System	
Holiday Inn Express, Orchard Road	Platinum	IHG Green Engage System	
Hotel Mercure	Certified	Planet 21	
ibis Novena	Platinum	Planet 21	
ibis Styles on Macpherson	Certified	Planet 21	
InterContinental Singapore	GoldPlus	IHG Green Engage System	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
JW Marriott South Beach	Platinum	Serve360	
Mandarin Orchard	Certified	Meritus Loves the Earth	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Marina Bay Sands	Platinum	Sands ECO360	
Marina Mandarin	Gold	Meritus Loves the Earth	
Marriott Tang Plaza	Gold	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Movenpick Heritage Hotel	Certified	SHINE	
Novotel Singapore Clarke Quay	GoldPlus	Planet 21	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Park Hotel Clark Quay	-	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
Park Royal on Pickering	Platinum	–	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
RELC International Hotel	GoldPlus	RELC International Hotel's Sustainability Programme	
Resorts World Sentosa - Beach Villas	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Resorts World Sentosa - Crockfords Towers	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Resorts World Sentosa - Equarius Hotel	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Resorts World Sentosa - Festive Hotel	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Resorts World Sentosa - Hard Rock Hotel	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Resorts World Sentosa - Hotel Michael	GoldPlus	Sustainability 21	
Sofitel Singapore City Centre	Platinum	Planet 21	
Sofitel So	Platinum	Planet 21	
Swissotel Merchant Court	Platinum	Planet 21	ASEAN Green Hotel Award
The Ritz-Carlton Millenia	Gold	Green Hotels Global	
Treetops Executive Residences	Platinum	Treetop's Go Green Project	
YOTEL Singapore	Gold	Yotel's Green Scheme	

APPENDIX B

Country of Origin	Age Group (years)	Hotel Stay
Australia	36-45	Pan Pacific Singapore
Australia	> 46	Amara Hotel
Australia	26-35	Pan Pacific Singapore
Australia	36-45	Fullerton Hotel
Canada	18-25	Lloyd's Inn
Canada	> 46	Swissotel Merchant Court
China	26-35	M hotel
China	26-35	JW Marriott South Beach
China	18-25	YOTEL
China	26-35	Peninsular
China	18-25	Hotel Boss
China	26-35	Excelsior
Dubai	36-45	InterContinental Hotel
Dubai	36-45	InterContinental Hotel
France	36-45	InterContinental Hotel
France	36-45	Swissotel
France	36-45	JW Marriott South Beach
France	> 46	Mercure Hotel
France	36-45	Hotel in Little India
France	> 46	Regent Hotel
Germany	> 46	Carlton Hotel
Hong Kong	> 46	Destination Hotel
Hungary	36-45	JW Marriott South Beach
India	> 46	Hotel in Serangoon
India	26-35	Intercontinental Hotel
India	26-35	Pan Pacific Singapore
India	26-35	Mandarin Orchard
India	> 46	Pan Pacific Singapore
India	> 46	-
Indonesia	18-25	Fragrance Hotel Geylang
Italy	> 46	The Sultan Hotel
Japan	26-34	Hotel Grand Central
Japan	> 46	Village Hotel @ Bugis
Japan	> 46	Hotel Bencoolen
Japan	18-25	Ibis Bencoolen
Korea	26-35	Park Hotel
Malaysia	26-35	Orchard Parade Hotel
Malaysia	36-45	Grand Hyatt
Malaysia	36-45	Holiday Inn Express Clarke Quay
Malaysia	36-45	Holiday Inn Express Katong
Malaysia	18-25	-
Netherlands	26-35	JW Marriott South Beach
Netherlands	> 46	Amara Hotel
Netherlands	> 46	Park Hotel
Poland	36-45	Amara Hotel
South Africa	> 46	Innotel
Spain	36-45	Marina Mandarin
Spain	26-35	V Bencoolen
Sweden	> 46	Carlton Hotel
Switzerland	36-45	Park Royal on Beach Road
Thailand	26-35	-
United Kingdom	36-45	Amara Hotel
United Kingdom	18-25	Mercure Singapore Bugis
United Kingdom	26-35	Marina Mandarin
United Kingdom	26-35	Studio M Hotel
United Kingdom	> 46	Fullerton Hotel
United Kingdom	> 46	Pan Pacific Singapore
United Kingdom	26-35	Mercure Singapore Bugis
United Kingdom	36-45	Mercure Singapore Bugis
United Kingdom	> 46	Link Hotel
United Kingdom	> 46	Marina Mandarin
United Kingdom	> 46	Pan Pacific Singapore
USA	> 46	The Westin Hotel
USA	36-45	Holiday Inn Express
USA	36-45	The Westin Hotel
USA	26-35	Park Royal

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