

Sustainability: What Matters to Students, Educators, and Hospitality and Tourism Professionals?

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Introduction

- Climate change is gaining global attention
- The need for sustainable tourism is more important than ever
- Comprehensive education in sustainability concepts and practices is essential, and methods for networking to share information critical.



Sustainability Education

- However, although sustainability is taking center stage globally,
- It is not receiving significant attention within the curriculum of universities in the United States in particular hospitality management programs.



Background

- Suggested methods for teaching sustainability include:
 - An interdisciplinary approach
 - (Dale & Newman, 2005)
 - Transdisciplinary case studies and problem-centered learning
 - (Posch & Steiner, 2006; Stauffacher, Walter, Lang, Wiek, & Scholz, 2006)
 - Project-based learning
 - (Stauffacher, Walter, Lang, Wiek, & Scholz, 2006).



A recent survey of hospitality educators that included primarily American instructors found that

- Respondents valued sustainability, but it was not taught on a consistent basis within hospitality management courses

(Deale, Nichols, & Jacques, 2009).

- ✓ 72% believed in the importance of sustainability, yet they did not consistently include it in their courses or provide student-learning experiences that incorporated sustainability.



Sustainability is important for hospitality management students...

- But what should be taught?
- How should a sustainable learning community be established on university campuses
 - Creating C.O.R.E. values
 - (Curriculum, Operations, Research, and Engagement)?
 - (Aber, Kelly and Mallory, 2009)
- In addition, how will this information be shared via networking opportunities or other means?



The Purpose of the Study

- To discover similarities and differences in beliefs about sustainability between stakeholders:
 - Hospitality students
 - Industry professionals
 - Hospitality educators
- To determine how ongoing communication strategies can be developed to encourage collaboration via networking among stakeholders



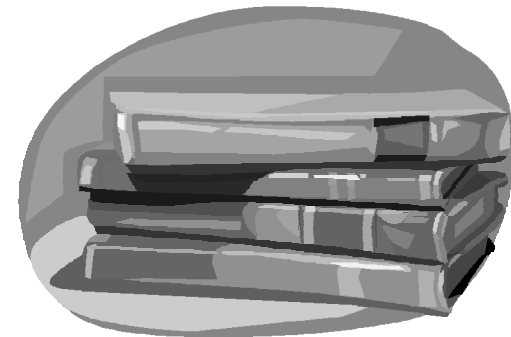
To determine what stakeholders believe are the important concepts needed in sustainability education

- The research questions framing the study were:
 - H1: Is there a significant difference between the groups' environmental attitudes?
 - H2: Is there a significant difference between the groups' reported environmental behaviors?
 - H3: Is there a significant difference between the groups' interest in sustainability?
 - H4: Is there a significant difference in importance of environmental issues in the hospitality curriculum?
 - H5: Is there is a significant difference in the priority of environmental topics that are relevant in the hospitality curriculum?
 - H6: How can these three groups network to engage in ongoing communication about sustainability education?



Contribution of the Study

- Results of this study are expected to have application beyond the hospitality curriculum and act as a blueprint for other academic disciplines



Methods -The sample

- Hospitality students:
 - were sampled from six university hospitality programs across the United States.
- Post-secondary hospitality educators
 - were sampled from the members of the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (ICHRIE).
- Members of the hospitality industry
 - were sampled via ICHRIE and university advisory boards.



Methods - Procedures



- An online survey was e-mailed to the three stakeholder groups
- Respondents were asked to answer questions about their beliefs about sustainability in hospitality education
- Using survey results, the investigators explored ways for the three groups to network about sustainability topics



Methods - Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were employed.
- To test the six hypotheses, a series of ANOVA were then used to determine if statistically significant differences existed between the three stakeholder groups. *



* Before proceeding to the multivariate analysis, reliabilities of the behavior and attitude scales were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Results - Respondent Demographics

Respondent Demographics (n = 341)

<u>Hospitality College Students</u>	
Freshmen	20
Sophomore	18
Junior	35
Senior	32
Graduate	7
Total	112
<u>Hospitality College Educators</u>	
Department Chair	19
Professor	12
Associate Professor	20
Assistant Professor	32
Senior Lecturer	8
Instructor/Lecturer	21
Total	112
<u>Industry Professionals</u>	
Hotel/lodging	42
Food Service – Full Restaurant	32
Food Service – Limited Restaurant	15
Clubs and Resorts	18
Travel and Tourism	10
Total	117



Results - Respondent characteristics

- **Average age = 37 years**
 - with the educators the oldest group (M = 45) and college students the youngest (M = 23).
- **More female students (65%) responding than males,**
- **Slightly more female college educators (54%) than males**
- **More male industry professionals (71%) than females.**



Results - Hypothesis one

Environmental Attitudes

- Weak attitudes =47%
- Strong attitudes=53%
- College educators overall had significantly stronger attitudes toward environmental issues ($M = 3.3, SD = .4$) compared to students ($M = 2.7, SD = .3$) and industry professionals ($M = 2.6, SD = .4$), $p < .03$,
- With educators considering that mankind is severely abusing the environment ($M = 3.0, SD = .5$) more so than students ($M = 2.4, SD = .9$) and industry professionals ($M = 1.5, SD = .7$), $p < .02$.



Note: Assessment scale 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree

Results - Hypothesis two

Environmental Behavior

- Overall respondents reported rarely to sometimes performed assessed behavior ($M = 2.7, SD = .3$),
 - Switching off lights when leaving a room rarely performed ($M = 1.9, SD = .8$)
 - Saving water performed sometimes ($M = 3.3, SD = .6$).
- Industry professionals reported higher environmental behavior ($M = 2.8, SD = .2$), compared to educators ($M = 2.7, SD = .2$), and significantly more when compared to students ($M = 2.4, SD .3$), $p < .00$.
 - Industry professionals turned off lights when leaving a room ($M = 2.6, SD = .6$) significantly more than students ($M = 1.9, SD = .3$) and educators ($M = 1.4, SD = .9$), $p < .00$.



Note: Assessment scale 1 = never and 4 = always

Results - Hypothesis three

-- interest in sustainability

Overall	College Students	College Educators	Industry Professional	Overall
Environmental Sustainability	3.1	3.2 ^a	2.9	2.7 ^b
Human Sustainability	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.8
Social Sustainability	3.0	2.8 ^b	3.3 ^a	2.9 ^b
Economic Sustainability	3.0	2.8 ^b	2.8 ^b	3.4 ^a

Note: 1 = means on a 4-point scale with 1 = not very interested and 4 = very interested. Means with a different letter across rows were significant at $p < .00$.



Results - Hypothesis 4

Sustainable Education—importance of environmental issues in hospitality curriculum

- industry professionals agreeing sustainability in the hospitality management curriculum was **not** really relevant ($M = 3.4$, $SD = .8$), significantly more than students ($M = 2.7$, $SD = .9$) and educators ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.0$), $p < .00$.
- Students ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.0$) and educators ($M = 3.5$, $SD = .7$) agreed that awareness of sustainability issues **was needed** in the curriculum significantly more than industry professionals ($M = 2.9$, $SD = .9$), $p < .00$.



Results - Hypothesis 5

Respondents' prioritization of relevant topics for hospitality curriculum

- Included in the top five topics reported were*:
 - creating sustainable business models
 - training and education
- Topics with statistically significant differences between groups.
 - More industry professionals considered changing consumer behavior and attitudes relevant to the hospitality curriculum (98%) than did college educators (91%) and college students (80%), $p < .00$.



* Both nearly equally reported by the three constituents.

Results - Hypothesis 6

Respondents' Selections for How Sustainability Concepts and Practices Can Best be Learned

- 65% of the respondents selected the lecture format, with industry professionals preferring lectures (80%) significantly more than college students (59%) and educators (54%), $p < .00$.
- The least preferred, with significant results, was the use of an individual term paper or project (24%). Both industry professionals (32%) and college educators (26%) thought this was more useful than college students (14%).
- Case studies were a significant learning method, with educators preferring this case study method (75%) significantly more than industry professionals (63%) and college students (37%), $p < .00$.
- Service learning activities or projects were preferred significantly more by college educators (72%), than industry professionals (60%) or students (42%), $p < .00$.



Discussion

To establish a sustainable learning community -creating C.O.R.E. values
(Curriculum, Operations, Research, and Engagement)

- ✓ Attention needs to be given to the perspectives of these three groups
- ✓ in addition perhaps further attention needs to be paid to community members' views



Discussion

Further attempts need to be made to share educational information via networking opportunities.

For example: FaceBook may have many advantages for use as a networking tool

- ✓ because younger people are typically early adopters of social media, at the current time,
- ✓ Yet older people are the becoming more involved in FaceBook and are the fastest growing group using that media (Insidefacebook.com, 2009)
- Moreover, the use of other online tools such as blogs and twitter as a means to communicate openly and often about sustainability issues is a possibility that needs to be explored



Tips for successful social media sharing

- **Telling one's own story**
 - that means making sustainability personal so that it has meaning or interest for viewers from all three groups;
- **Sharing regularly so that there is something new often**
 - and therefore, interest and attention to the media content is maintained;
- **Posting a variety of items from videos to pictures**
 - to slideshows to enhance interest;
- **Using a variety of sources**
 - such as FaceBook, twitter, or LinkedIn for businesses;
- **Creating a simple blog**
 - that is kept up to date with new material and comments on recent posts via wordpress.com;
- **Developing ways for contributors to build partnerships and participate in opportunities offline** (Inc.com, 2010).



Discussion

Create an advisory board and a sustainability team composing a of subset industry members, educators, and students, and other additional community members, that could focus on the CORE values.

An example—A *Sustainability Day* could be held,

- with presentations for and by each of the three stakeholder groups and community members
- such an event could involve exploring sustainability agendas to focus on issues of particular concern in a particular university community and its greater community environment—as well as global issues

The event could provide networking sessions for the stakeholders to meet in a collegial setting and then allow the three groups to carry on further communications via electronic media and other means.



How this can translate from the study results?

Three of the most important topics for inclusion in a sustainable educational setting, as suggested by the respondents to this study were:

- Creating sustainable business models
- Training and education
- Changing consumer behavior and attitudes

And these fit well with the advisory board/sustainability team concept





Examples of strategies for developing and managing this new “sustainable team” or network group would be to:

- Identify how to set clear definable objectives for addressing these topical issues.
- Ask how this group can address these topics
- Ask how these objectives can be “SMART”
 - – specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and in time (Stibich, 2008).



The objectives should be based on a clear understanding of how the feedback loop between the sustainable team and stakeholders is managed and consider:

- **Listening and learning:**
 - monitoring what stakeholders are saying about the issue or programs and using the information to support the goals.
- **Building relationships and issues awareness:**
 - interacting with key audiences in order to build awareness.
- **Content generation and issues awareness:**
 - encourage stakeholders to create content about the issues and share it with others, encouraging others to offer feedback (McKeown, 2002).



Conclusions

- Today sustainability education is a significant and critical topic of importance around the world.
- Through this study, we understand more about:
 1. Hospitality students, educators, and industry professionals' views on sustainability concepts and practices
 2. How their shared values can be incorporated into the hospitality management curriculum.



Implications

- Those in higher education are uniquely positioned to address the challenges of sustainability by:
 - ✓ questioning how our society can sustain a high quality lifestyle and provide quality to future generations.
- To make sustainability in hospitality education meaningful for students and the hospitality industry:
 - ✓ the interests of the three stakeholder groups need to be aligned.



Industry's role

- Industry responsibility in the development of future managers and leaders is a precondition to sustainable policy development and action.
- This can be accomplished by developing partnerships with industry so that students can examine and explore current good practices.



Final thoughts

- What is clear - new, innovative, and simple methods are needed to improve networking between students, industry professionals, and educators
- We can no longer simply focus on traditional green policies such as recycling and reducing the carbon footprint
- More complex and multifaceted concepts and practices are needed
 - ✓ to tackle new issues
 - ✓ to enhance our capability
 - ✓ to teach about, learn about, and make informed decisions that influence sustainability in economic, environmental, and social realms around the globe



Questions or Comments?



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