

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Ziphozakhe Theophilus SHASHA^{a1}

*^aCape Peninsula University of Technology, Department of Tourism and Events Management,
Cape Town P.O. Box 8000, South Africa*

Abstract: This systematic literature review examines sustainable environmental practices in the hotel industry in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the practices adopted, factors influencing implementation, barriers to adoption, and reported environmental and organisational outcomes. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework was used for this review. The search in the Scopus and Web of Science databases was carried out using combinations of the terms hotel, accommodation, environmental sustainability, environmental management, green practices, and Sub-Saharan African geographical terms. A total of 347 records matched the search. After screening and eligibility assessment, a total of 32 studies were included in the final qualitative synthesis. Evidence was compared across countries, hotel categories, and research designs using a structured data-extraction matrix and narrative thematic synthesis. The findings suggest that energy conservation, water management, waste reduction and recycling, eco-friendly procurement and green technologies, and environmental management policies are the major prevailing environmental practices. Management commitment, environmental awareness, customer expectations, regulatory requirements, cost reduction, and competitive considerations are associated with adoption. However, finances, lack of infrastructure, technical knowledge, poor regulatory enforcement, and a lack of incentives and organizational commitment constrain implementation. Awareness of sustainable environmental practices is growing in hotels in Sub-Saharan Africa, with inconsistent implementation across both context and location. To progress from individual green projects, there is a need for improved environmental governance, management engagement, staff development, integration of suitable technology, financial resources, and effective environmental policy implementation.

Keywords: Sustainable environmental practices; Hotel industry; Sub-Saharan Africa; Environmental sustainability; Green practices; Sustainable tourism.

1. Introduction

The tourism economy in Sub-Saharan Africa is an important sector in which the hotel industry plays a significant role. However, hotel operations also have significant environmental impact in terms of energy and water consumption (Antonova et al., 2026; MacAskill et al., 2023), disposal of solid liquid waste (Barakagira & Paapa, 2024; Makoondlall-Chadee & Bokhoree, 2024), use of consumable products (Diaz-Farina et al., 2023; Sun & Nasrullah, 2024), transportation related activities (Shin et al., 2025; Zhang & Jung, 2025), and other resource intensive activities (Mbasera et al., 2016). The continuous operation of accommodation establishments means that environmental management is not simply an external sustainability concern but is directly connected to everyday hotel operation. Thus, the issue of environmental sustainability is a crucial aspect of hotel management, especially given that the sector is increasingly expected to take

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