



Full length article

Sustainable Business Practices for Competitive Advantage in Hospitality Industry in Rwanda, a case of Radisson Blu Hotel, Kigali

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to examine the impact of sustainable business practices on competitive advantage within the hospitality industry in Rwanda, with a focus on Radisson Blu Hotel. Specifically, it evaluates the effects of Triple Bottom Line (TBL), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and Green/Environmental practices on competitive positioning. **Methods:** The research utilized a descriptive and correlational design, guided by Porter's Five Forces Model, Resource-Based View theory, and Dynamic Capability theory. A sample of 220 respondents was selected from a population of 487 employees using Yamane's formula and purposive sampling. Data were gathered through field surveys and published reports, then analyzed with SPSS using correlational and regression techniques. **Results:** The findings reveal that Radisson Blu Hotel's application of TBL practices, CSR, and environmental initiatives all contribute significantly to its competitive advantage. Specifically, TBL practices (mean = 4.6916) and CSR activities (mean = 4.7032) show strong evidence of maximizing profits, ensuring fair treatment, and contributing to environmental sustainability. Green/Environmental practices also demonstrate a high impact (mean = 4.7047), with effective waste management and pollution reduction. The overall correlation between sustainable practices and competitive advantage was 0.851, indicating a substantial positive impact. **Conclusions:** The study concludes that Radisson Blu Hotel's strategic implementation of TBL, CSR, and environmental practices effectively enhances its competitive advantage. The strong correlation suggests that continued focus on these sustainable practices will likely sustain and improve the hotel's market position. **Significance:** This research underscores the critical role of sustainable business practices in gaining competitive advantage within the hospitality sector. It provides actionable insights for Radisson Blu Hotel and similar organizations, highlighting the importance of ongoing commitment to sustainability for long-term success and industry leadership.

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1. Introduction

Sustainability has been emerging as a new means to achieve competitive differentiation for many companies [1]. Effective sustainable manufacturing practices have now become a potentially valuable way of securing competitive advantage and improving organizational performance [2] however, in spite of the fact that sustainable manufacturing has been frequently promoted as a means of improving business competitiveness, little empirical evidence exists in the literature validating a positive link with organizational performance [2]

As such, the ever-present question is whether there is in fact a direct positive relationship between the adoption of sustainability practices, business performance and competitive advantage; that is, whether companies emphasizing a sustainability strategy and adopting sustainability practices outperform other companies that do not. More than a decade has passed since point out that customers, suppliers, and the public are increasingly demanding that businesses in general, and manufacturing firms in particular, minimize any negative impact of their products and operations on the natural environment. Since then, the ability of organizations to manage their environmental performance is emerging as a strategic issue for firms [3]

Some drivers for companies engaging in sustainability practices such as cost reduction, quality improvement, regulatory requirements and competition. Firms may also become proactive in anticipation of more efficient utilization of resources and improved corporate image, regardless of the reason for adopting sustainability practices, it is clear that more companies are viewing sustainability as an opportunity for competitive advantage. What is less clear from the extant literature is the extent to which the adoption of sustainability practices impacts business performance and competitive advantage. This paper proposes to empirically test the Strategic integration of sustainable business practices for competitive advantage in hospitality industry, business practices and competitive advantage for Hospitality industry in Rwanda [4]

Over the past decades, the hospitality sector has emerged as an important driver of growth and employment for the Rwandan economy. In 2019, the sector directly employed slightly over 164,000 people (4% of the labour force) across different education and skill levels. It has also been the biggest employer for women and the youth. Rwanda is currently the fastest growing MICE destination in Africa and the region. It is among the few countries in Africa to have established a dedicated convention bureau, and has experienced some remarkable successes in its short history under the proposition 'Meet in Remarkable Rwanda'. Rwanda is currently ranked 3rd in Africa by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) [5].

The number of delegates attending conferences in Rwanda has increased in the past 10 years - an 83% increase has been registered since the RCB inception in 2014. RCB represents the best interests of Rwanda's MICE industry stakeholders and offers impartial advice, guidance and support to international meeting and event planners through every stage of planning. RCB plays a key strategic role in supporting Government goals for MICE tourism, increasing the country's market share and thus helping drive economic development agendas forward. In 2017 Rwanda hosted 169 conferences [6].

The total 2017 MICE economic contribution was estimated as USD 41.8 million. Calculations are based on the direct contribution to the GDP through accommodation, meals (not included in accommodation bill), transport within Kigali, shopping, entertainment and others. From the 12 surveys conducted in 2017 the average daily spend per delegate was established as USD 300 with 4.6 measured as the average length of stay. Only the di-

rect economic contribution is considered for 2017; for 2018 RCB intends to reflect a holistic multiplier effect indicating not only the direct, but also the indirect and induced contribution of the MICE sector to the GDP[6].

Rwanda hotel industry has for a while been limited to independent local hotel and one or two hotels with a regional brand in Kigali, mainly owned by the private sector. Today, and according to the Rwanda Development Board, the Rwanda hotel supply reaches approximately 486 tourism related accommodation establishment of which about 50% are concerted in Kigali. The remaining bigger percentage is concentrated in the secondary cities of Rubavu, Huye, Musanze, Karongi and Rwamagana. Rwanda currently has 10,776 accommodation rooms and 57% of these are found in the capital city [7].

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Rwandan hospitality industry faces significant challenges related to sustainability and competitiveness. As global business practices shift towards sustainability, Rwandan hotels must integrate these practices to stay competitive. However, investors face issues such as the country's poor image, inadequate tourism infrastructure, being landlocked, a shortage of skilled personnel, and insufficient tourism information. Ernest (2021) notes that by May 2018, numerous refurbished hotels in Rwanda had closed due to service delivery gaps, poor management, limited hospitality skills, and financial literacy issues[8]. Additionally, ineffective marketing strategies, low social media engagement, and poor customer retention exacerbate these problems. Nshimiyimana (2021) highlights that the COVID-19 pandemic further impacted the industry, with job losses and financial strain on employees at key establishments like Radisson Blu Hotel and Kigali Convention Centre[9]. The pandemic also halted group events, harming local communities. Key issues include a lack of empirical studies on integrating sustainability into Rwandan hospitality operations, low service standards, insufficiently trained professionals, and limited tourism infrastructure. To address these gaps, there is a need for comprehensive research into how sustainable practices can be effectively implemented and leveraged for competitive advantage. This research would benefit academics, industry practitioners, and policymakers by providing insights to enhance Rwanda's hospitality sector's sustainability and competitiveness.

1.2 Objective of the study

The study aimed to analyse the Strategic Integration of Sustainable Business Practices for Competitive Advantage in Hospitality Industry in Rwanda, A case of Radisson Blu Hotel, Kigali.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Study Design

The researcher employed a descriptive and correlational research design for this study. The descriptive design systematically identifies and describes the characteristics of the variables, while the correlational design examines the relationships between these variables. The research was carried out at Radisson Blu Hotel in Gasabo District, Kigali City, Rwanda.

2.2 Study Population and sample size

According to (Yamane, 1967), a sample is a part of an entire population that possesses attitude opinion, habit or characteristics that you wish to study. The appropriate sample size is influenced by your purpose in conducting the research. Inappropriate, inadequate or excessive sample size can highly influence the quality and

accuracy of results of the study. The sample size of this study is 220 determined by using the solvent's formula which is a random sampling technique formula to estimate sampling size. The sample size for this study were 220 respondents representing all staff working in Radisson Blu hotel.

The study calculated the sample size to balance cost constraints while ensuring the ability to detect the effects of independent variables. The sample size (n) was determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N \cdot e^2}$$

where:

- N is the total population,
- e is the error tolerance, and
- 1 is a constant.

Given:

- $N = 487$,
- $e = 5\% = 0.05$,

The sample size (n) is calculated as:

$$n = \frac{487}{1+487 \cdot (0.05)^2} = 220$$

2.3 Data collection instrument and procedure

Data were collected through primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered using structured questionnaires distributed to large corporates, including Radisson Blu Hotel employees. The questionnaires, divided into three parts background information, business practices, and management approaches were designed to explore sustainable business practices and competitive advantages.

Secondary data were sourced from related articles, Radisson Blu Hotel reports, and their annual performance reviews on sustainability.

The study utilized closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires to capture a wide range of information on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. These were crafted with clear instructions to align with the study's objectives. A pilot study helped refine the questions and ensured their validity through expert review, confirming the reliability and relevance of the instruments.

2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis aims at fulfilling the research objectives and provided answers to the research questions. The research used qualitative and quantitative techniques in analysing the data. After receiving questionnaires from the respondents, the responses have classified, coded and tabulated to analyse quantitative data using statistical package for social science. The collected data were thoroughly examined and checked for completeness and

comprehensibility. The data were then being summarized, coded and tabulated. Finally, after the comparison from all findings the conclusion was made by depicting the strategic integration of sustainable business practices for competitive advantage in hospitality industry in Rwanda.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Ethics is deeply rooted in ancient Greek philosophy and involves a system of principles that can alter previous views on choices and actions[10]. In this study, respondent confidentiality was rigorously maintained. Questionnaires were anonymized with identification numbers unrelated to any participant's personal information. Since the questionnaires were distributed and collected simultaneously, there was no need to match them with a separate list of names.

Participants were assured of the study's non-harmful nature and minimal risk. They were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Formal consent was obtained from each respondent before participation, who were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was guaranteed regarding the information provided, with its use restricted to the research objectives.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Appreciations of the respondents on Sustainable Business Practices

The following section explores respondents' perceptions of Sustainable Business Practices, including the Triple Bottom Line, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and environmental sustainability.

3.2 Perceptions of the respondents on Triple bottom line

Table1: Perceptions of the respondents on Triple bottom line

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH decisions are generally carefully designed to maximize profits while reducing costs and mitigating risk	219	159	72.6	60	27.4	4.7260	.44702
RBH ensuring fair hiring practices and encouraging volunteerism in the workplace	219	170	77.6	49	22.4	4.6046	3.41945
RBH has measures to reduce their carbon footprint. Adjustments like using ethically sourced materials, cutting down on energy consumption	219	163	74.4	56	25.6	4.7443	.43726
Overall mean						4.69163	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 1 summarizes respondents' views on the Triple Bottom Line at Radisson Blu Hotel (RBH). The data reveal that 72.6% of respondents strongly agreed and 27.4% agreed that RBH's decisions effectively balance profit maximization with cost reduction and risk mitigation, achieving a mean score of 4.7260 and a standard deviation of 0.44702.

Further, 77.6% strongly agreed and 22.4% agreed that RBH promotes fair hiring practices and workplace volunteerism, with a high mean of 4.6046 and a standard deviation of 0.41945. Additionally, 74.4% strongly agreed and 25.6% agreed that RBH actively works to lower its carbon footprint by using ethically sourced materials and reducing energy consumption, reflected in a mean score of 4.7443 and a standard deviation of 0.43726.

The overall mean score of 4.69163, within the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, indicates a strong consensus among respondents. This aligns with Brinton (2019), who notes that integrating sustainable practices across business operations can benefit both society and the environment while maintaining profitability. In a capitalist economy, a company's success largely depends on its financial performance and shareholder profits [11].

3.3 Perceptions of the respondents on Corporate Social Responsibility.

Table 2: Perceptions of the respondents on Corporate Social Responsibility

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH pursue environmental stewardship by reducing pollution and emissions in manufacturing, recycling materials, replenishing natural resources like trees	219	144	65.8	75	34.2	4.6575	.47562
RBH IS acting fairly and ethically by fair treatment of all customers regardless of age, race, culture, or sexual orientation	219	179	81.7	40	18.3	4.8174	.38726
RBH Contribute to the society via employments given to the nationals as well as make part to the AGACIRO Fund contribution	219	139	63.5	80	36.5	4.6347	.48262
Overall mean	219					4.7032	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 2 presents respondents' views on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at Radisson Blu Hotel (RBH). It shows that 65.8% strongly agreed and 34.2% agreed that RBH actively pursues environmental stewardship by reducing pollution, recycling materials, and replenishing natural resources, with a mean score of 4.6575 and a standard deviation of 0.47562. Furthermore, 81.7% strongly agreed and 18.3% agreed that RBH treats all customers fairly and ethically, regardless of age, race, culture, or sexual orientation, with a high mean of 4.8174 and a standard deviation of 0.38726. Additionally, 63.5% strongly agreed and 36.5% agreed that RBH contributes to society through national employment and the AGACIRO Fund, with a mean score of 4.6347 and

a standard deviation of 0.48262. The overall mean score of 4.7032, indicating a very high level of agreement ($4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$), reflects strong support for RBH's CSR efforts. This aligns with Tai (2014), who highlights that CSR involves a company's commitment to being socially accountable and considerate of its economic, social, and environmental impacts[12].

3.4 Perceptions of the respondents on Green/Environmental

Table 3: Perceptions of the respondents on Green/Environmental

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH is against water pollution	219	182	83.1	37	16.9	4.8311	.37557
RBH is against air and noise pollution	219	148	67.6	71	32.4	4.6758	.46915
RBH ensure effective waste disposal management	219	133	60.7	86	39.3	4.6073	.48947
Overall mean						4.704733	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 3 presents respondents' perceptions on RBH's environmental practices. It reveals that 83.1% strongly agreed and 16.9% agreed that RBH is committed to combating water pollution, with a very high mean of 4.8311 and a standard deviation of 0.37557. Additionally, 67.6% strongly agreed and 32.4% agreed that RBH opposes air pollution, reflected in a high mean of 4.6758 and a standard deviation of 0.46915. Furthermore, 60.7% strongly agreed and 39.3% agreed that RBH ensures effective waste disposal management, with a mean score of 4.6073 and a standard deviation of 0.48947. The overall mean score of 4.7047, indicating a very high level of agreement ($4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$), underscores RBH's strong commitment to environmental protection, including efforts against water, air, and noise pollution, as well as effective waste management. This aligns with Brundtland (2017), who emphasizes the need for sustainable development to address the current unsustainable use of resources and to mitigate environmental issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss[13].

Appreciations of the respondents on competitive advantages

This section deal with the perceptions of the respondents on competitive advantages such as Market share; Customer satisfaction; Innovation and adaptability and Brand Image and reputation as well as Cost efficient

Table 4: Perceptions of the respondents on Market share

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH engaged in making customer become loyal to gain market share.	219	145	66.2	74	33.8	4.3379	.47408
RBH do whatever needed to make consistent existing customer loyalty to prevent losing existing customers.	219	157	71.7	62	28.3	4.7169	.45154
RBH use Skilled and talented	219	159	72.6	60	27.4	4.7260	.44702

Workforce, which in turn reduce expenses related to hiring and training.

RBH skilled workforce allow a company to maintain its focus on producing exceptional products and sales

Overall mean	4.60845
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Source: Primary data 2024

Table 4 presents respondents' perceptions regarding RBH's market share strategies. It shows that 66.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 33.8% agreed that RBH effectively fosters customer loyalty to enhance market share, with a very high mean of 4.3379 and a standard deviation of 0.47408, indicating a high level of consensus. Furthermore, 71.7% strongly agreed and 28.3% agreed that RBH takes necessary actions to maintain existing customer loyalty and prevent customer loss, reflected in a very high mean of 4.7169 and a standard deviation of 0.45154. Additionally, 72.6% strongly agreed and 27.4% agreed that RBH utilizes a skilled and talented workforce, which reduces hiring and training expenses, with a very high mean of 4.7260 and a standard deviation of 0.44702. Similarly, 65.3% strongly agreed and 34.7% agreed that RBH's skilled workforce supports maintaining focus on producing exceptional products and sales, with a very high mean of 4.6530 and a standard deviation of 0.47712.

The overall mean score of 4.60845, within the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, confirms a strong consensus that RBH excels in customer loyalty strategies, effective workforce utilization, and maintaining high product standards.

Table 5: Perceptions of the respondents on Customer satisfaction

Statements	N	SA fi	SA %	A fi	A %	Mean	Std. Devia- tion
RBH enable customers to get Satisfied by fair treatment which in turn make customers to and buy more	219	155	70.8	64	29.2	4.7078	.45583
Satisfied customers from RBH recommend the service they received to their friends and colleagues	219	199	90.9	20	9.1	4.9087	.28873
RBH Satisfied customers share their experiences online Via media posts as well as to the social media platforms	219	183	83.6	36	16.4	4.8356	.37147
Overall mean						4.817367	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 5 presents respondents' perceptions of customer satisfaction at RBH. The findings reveal that 70.8% of respondents strongly agreed and 29.2% agreed that RBH enhances customer satisfaction through fair treatment,

leading to increased purchases, with a very high mean of 4.7078 and a standard deviation of 0.45583, indicating strong consensus. Additionally, 90.9% strongly agreed and 9.1% agreed that satisfied customers are likely to recommend RBH services to friends and colleagues, evidenced by a very high mean of 4.9087 and a standard deviation of 0.28873. Moreover, 83.6% strongly agreed and 16.4% agreed that satisfied customers frequently share their positive experiences online via media posts and social media platforms, with a very high mean of 4.8356 and a standard deviation of 0.37147. The overall mean score of 4.8173, within the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, indicates a strong consensus that RBH effectively satisfies customers through fair treatment, resulting in increased purchases, recommendations to others, and online sharing of positive experiences.

Table 6: Perceptions of the respondents on Innovation and adaptability

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH Had Innovative staff fostering a culture that encourages creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking	219	149	68.0	70	32.0	4.6804	.46740
RBH Innovation made it more operational efficiency	219	178	81.3	41	18.7	4.2694	.44114
RBH use advanced technology as a result of innovation and creativity in the work place	219	165	75.3	54	24.7	4.7534	.43200
Overall mean						4.567733	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 6 presents respondents' perceptions of innovation and adaptability at RBH. The findings indicate that 68.0% of respondents strongly agreed and 32.0% agreed that RBH promotes a culture of creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking among its innovative staff, with a very high mean of 4.6804 and a standard deviation of 0.46740, reflecting strong consensus. Additionally, 81.3% strongly agreed and 18.7% agreed that RBH's innovation has enhanced operational efficiency, supported by a very high mean of 4.2694 and a standard deviation of 0.44114. Furthermore, 75.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 24.7% agreed that RBH leverages advanced technology resulting from workplace innovation and creativity, with a very high mean of 4.7534 and a standard deviation of 0.43200. The overall mean score of 4.5677, within the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, indicates a strong consensus that RBH fosters an innovative culture, enhances operational efficiency through innovation, and effectively uses advanced technology.

Table 7: Perceptions of the respondents on Brand Image and reputation

Statements	N	SA		A		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH Brand image is good to the nation as well as internationally	219	167	76.3	52	23.7	4.7626	.42649
RBH has a collective public perception of its brand whereby various stakeholders, including	219	159	72.6	60	27.4	4.7260	.44702

customers, employees, partners, and the general public, perceive and feel about its brand at every touchpoint and interaction

Overall mean	4.7443
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Source: Primary data 2024

Table 7 presents respondents' perceptions of RBH's brand image and reputation. The results reveal that 76.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 23.7% agreed that RBH's brand image is positive both nationally and internationally, with a very high mean of 4.7626 and a standard deviation of 0.42649, indicating strong consensus. Additionally, 72.6% strongly agreed and 27.4% agreed that RBH maintains a consistent public perception of its brand across various stakeholders—customers, employees, partners, and the general public—at every interaction, reflected in a very high mean of 4.7260 and a standard deviation of 0.44702. The overall mean score of 4.7443, classified in the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, underscores the strong evidence that RBH is perceived positively both nationally and internationally and maintains a cohesive public image across all stakeholder touchpoints.

Table 8: Perceptions of the respondents on Cost efficient

Statements	N	SD		D		Mean	Std. Deviation
		fi	%	fi	%		
RBH is cost efficient via skilled workforce, inexpensive raw materials, controlled costs, and efficient operations to create maximum value to consumers.	219	183	83.6	36	16.4	4.8356	.37147
RBH has the access to low-cost raw materials, Efficient processes and technologies, and Low distribution and sales costs as well as Efficiently managed operations	219	155	70.8	64	29.2	4.7078	.45583
Overall mean						4.7717	

Source: Primary data 2024

Table 8 presents respondents' perceptions of RBH's cost efficiency. The findings indicate that 83.6% of respondents strongly disagreed and 16.4% disagreed that RBH is cost-efficient through its skilled workforce, inexpensive raw materials, controlled costs, and efficient operations, as evidenced by a very high mean of 4.8356 and a standard deviation of 0.37147. This suggests a strong consensus among respondents that RBH does not achieve cost efficiency in these areas. Additionally, 70.8% of respondents strongly disagreed and 29.2% disagreed that RBH has access to low-cost raw materials, efficient processes and technologies, low distribution and sales costs, or efficiently managed operations, reflected in a very high mean of 4.7078 and a standard deviation of 0.45583. The overall mean score of 4.7717, which falls in the range of $4.20 \leq \mu \leq 5.0$, indicates a strong consensus that RBH is perceived as lacking cost efficiency in various operational aspects. This data

underscores the belief that RBH does not effectively leverage its workforce, raw materials, processes, or management to create maximum value for consumers.

4. Conclusion

By basing on the concern of the topic Sustainable business practices toward competitive advantages in hospitality industry in Rwanda a case of RBH Kigali, we conclude that all the objectives were achieved whereby Triple Bottom Line and corporate Social Responsibility as well as Environmental Practices are the strategic business practices applied in Radisson Blu Hotel Kigali as Table 4.14 showed the correlation between business practices of RBH and competitive advantage, it was revealed that the correlation was 0.851 which is classified as very high correlation which indicated that any change to the sustainable practices of RBH affect positively the competitive advantages by 85.1%.

Conflict of interest

We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

WU designed the study, led the data collection, cleaned, analysed and interpreted the data. WU and GN contributed to the conception, development of the manuscript and working on reviewers' comments until its publication.

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