

STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY IN EMERGING MARKETS: MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM QATAR'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Sustainability has become a strategic priority within the global hospitality industry, shaped by environmental constraints, changing consumer expectations, and international development agendas. In Qatar, sustainability is embedded within Qatar National Vision 2030 and reinforced by mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup 2022. Despite this policy emphasis, limited empirical research has examined how hotel managers interpret sustainability and translate it into operational practice within Qatar's distinctive socio-economic and cultural context. This study aims to investigate the conceptual understanding of hospitality managers in defining a sustainability strategic position within business strategy, and operationalize the process in daily hotel operations. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 hotel managers across luxury, mid-range, and local hotels in Doha and the surrounding areas. Thematic analysis reveals five interrelated dimensions: strategic conceptualizations of sustainability, implementation of green operational practices, leadership and staff engagement, systemic barriers, and the influence of external institutional forces. The findings highlight the dynamic interaction between internal organizational capabilities and external constraints in shaping sustainable transformation. The study offers theoretical insights, managerial implications, and policy recommendations to support context-sensitive sustainability strategies within Qatar's hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Sustainable Hospitality; Organizational Sustainability; Green Operational Practices; Leadership Commitment; Institutional Constraints; Qatar.*

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry represents a paradox in the global sustainability agenda. On one hand, it is a vital driver of economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange. On the other hand, it is resource-intensive, characterized by high levels of energy and water consumption, significant waste generation, and substantial contributions to greenhouse gas emissions (Gössling & Hall, 2019). Over the past two decades, sustainability in hospitality has transitioned from a peripheral concern to a strategic imperative. Industry reports, consumer behavior studies, and regulatory frameworks have consistently demonstrated the rising importance of eco-certification, waste reduction, renewable energy adoption, and stakeholder engagement (Mensah, 2019; Chan, 2011). Tourists are increasingly aware of environmental issues and seek accommodation providers that align with their values. Likewise, multinational hotel chains have embedded sustainability reporting and performance metrics into their global strategies, leveraging them as a competitive differentiator (Han & Hyun, 2018). In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, the reliance on oil and gas revenues, rapid urbanization, extreme climatic conditions, and aspirations to diversify economies through tourism development create a complex environment for sustainable hospitality practices (Font & McCabe, 2017). Luxury is a defining feature of Gulf hospitality, raising

questions about the compatibility of resource-intensive service models with sustainability imperatives (Stephenson, 2014). However, GCC countries, particularly Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, have increasingly positioned sustainability as central to their national development agendas, framing it as both a competitive advantage and a socio-political necessity. Although regulations and sustainability frameworks are increasingly established, there remains a lack of empirical understanding regarding how hotel managers actively and responsibly engage in integrating operational sustainability into their daily practices (Khatter, 2023).

Consequently, the primary objective of this study is to examine how hotel managers in Qatar conceptualize sustainability and position it within their overall business strategy. The research seeks to understand whether sustainability is viewed as a core strategic priority, a compliance requirement, or a reputational enhancement tool within hotel and resort operations. A further objective is to identify and analyze the range of green practices currently implemented across hotels and resorts, including operational initiatives related to energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and responsible sourcing. This objective aims to assess the extent to which sustainability principles are embedded in daily operational processes. The study also aims to explore how leadership and staff contribute to sustainability efforts, focusing on managerial commitment, employee engagement, training initiatives, and organizational culture in driving sustainable transformation. Another objective is to investigate the key challenges faced by hotels in advancing sustainability, including financial constraints, supply chain limitations, technological barriers, and shifting guest expectations.

Finally, the research seeks to examine how external stakeholders—particularly customers, suppliers, and government regulations—influence sustainability-related decision-making within hotels. Through these objectives, the study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of how sustainability is interpreted, operationalized, and shaped within Qatar's hospitality sector. Additionally, the study examines the influence of external drivers such as government regulations, international brand standards, and mega-events on sustainability strategies. Ultimately, the study seeks to develop a conceptual framework that explains the dynamic interaction between internal organizational capabilities and external institutional constraints in shaping sustainable transformation within Qatar's hospitality industry. The study addresses this gap by exploring managerial perspectives on sustainability within Qatari hotels. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do hotel managers define sustainability, and where does it fit in their overall business strategy?
2. What green practices are currently in place in hotel and resort operations?
3. How are staff and leaders involved in driving sustainability efforts?
4. What are the biggest challenges hotels face in becoming more sustainable?
5. How do customers, suppliers, and government regulations influence sustainability decisions?

By situating managerial perspectives within the broader context of Qatar's policy frameworks and global sustainability debates, this research makes three contributions. First, it provides empirical insights into an under-researched context within the Middle East. Second, it integrates Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory to offer a nuanced theoretical understanding of sustainability adoption. Third, it generates actionable implications for both managers and policymakers, aligning with the ambitions of Qatar National Vision 2030.

2. Literature Review

Hotels operate as microcosms of urban living, offering continuous services like air conditioning, heating, lighting, food and beverage, laundry, and recreational facilities. As a result, their environmental footprint per guest is often considerably higher than domestic consumption patterns (Mensah, 2019). Sustainability in hospitality is therefore not simply a corporate social responsibility initiative but a necessity for long-term operational resilience and alignment with global climate goals (Martínez-Pérez, García-Fernández & Ferrer-Rosell, 2020). Sustainability in the hospitality industry has become a core concept of academic and practical concern, reflecting the environmental footprint of hotels and the demand for sustainable tourism experiences. This literature review critically synthesizes global, regional, and local perspectives, as well as theoretical frameworks relevant to sustainability in the Qatari hospitality sector.

2.1 Conceptualizing Sustainability in Hospitality

The concept of sustainability has evolved significantly since the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) first defined it as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In hospitality, "sustainability is often framed through the lens of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL), encompassing environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic viability" (Elkington, 1999, P.15). Scholars have also highlighted the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a driver of sustainability practices, particularly in multinational hotel chains (Holcomb et al., 2007). Environmental factors include energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste management. Social sustainability involves community engagement, employee well-being, and cultural preservation (Jones et al., 2016). Economic sustainability is reflected in strategies that balance profitability with responsible resource use. The integration of these dimensions requires both strategic alignment and operational innovation.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks have been influential in studies of sustainability in hospitality: the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Institutional Theory. RBV posits that firms achieve competitive advantage by leveraging valuable, rare, and inimitable resources (Barney, 1991).

In the context of sustainability, organizational culture, staff expertise, and green technologies can be framed as strategic resources (Hart, 1995). Institutional Theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the external factors that shaping organizational behavior. DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concepts of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism explain how government regulations, competitor benchmarking, and industry norms drive sustainability adoption. In hospitality, these theories intersect: hotels adopt green practices both to comply with regulations and to develop internal capabilities that enhance long-term resilience.

2.3 Global Best Practices

Globally, the hospitality industry has witnessed a proliferation of green initiatives, certifications, and innovations. For example, the Green Key Eco-Rating Program and LEED certification provide standards for sustainable hotel operations. Energy-saving technologies such as smart thermostats, motion sensors, and renewable energy integration have become common in leading international chains (Bohdanowicz, 2006). Hotels in Europe and North America often emphasize carbon footprint reporting, eco-labelling, and partnerships with local communities to strengthen social and environmental performance (Graci & Dodds, 2008).

2.4 Sustainability in the Middle East and GCC

Despite being resource-dependent economies, GCC countries have increasingly emphasized sustainability in line with economic diversification agendas. In the UAE, the hospitality sector has introduced eco-certification systems such as Estidama and Green Star Hotel rating (Radwan et al., 2010; Gössling & Hall, 2019). Dubai's luxury hotels have pioneered energy efficiency retrofits and water-saving initiatives (Jones et al., 2016). In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 has framed sustainability as central to tourism diversification, including initiatives for eco-tourism and sustainable resorts. Qatar hotels were encouraged to comply with Qatar Green Building Council standards, adopt recycling programs, and enhance transparency of reporting (Zaidan & Kovács, 2020). Nevertheless, studies note that many initiatives remain driven by managers, yet lacks to utilize the significance of environmental sustainability (Khatler, 2023).

2.5 Managerial Perspectives on Sustainability

The literature highlights the critical role of hotel managers in operationalizing sustainability strategies. Managers act as intermediaries between corporate headquarters, government regulations, and frontline staff. Studies in various contexts showed that managerial commitment is strongly correlated with the successful implementation of green practices (Mensah, 2019). However, barriers such as cost, lack of training, and guest expectations often limit adoption (Chan, 2011). In emerging economies, managerial perspectives are further shaped by cultural, political, and economic factors (Ali et al., 2021).

2.6 Gaps in the Literature

While global research on sustainability in hospitality is extensive, notable gaps exist in the Middle East, and particularly in Qatar (Albasoos, Hassan & Al-Zadjali, 2021). Current studies focus on policy frameworks, guest perceptions, or case studies of individual hotels. Few studies have systematically examined how managers in Qatar define, interpret, and implement environmental sustainability within their hotels (Khatteer, 2023). However, this gap underestimates the need to capture managerial voices and explore the interaction between environmental constraints and resource capabilities in the hospitality sector (Mensah, 2019).

3. Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the research questions, this study adopts a qualitative research design. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for capturing the lived experiences, interpretations, and meanings assigned by hotel managers to the concept of sustainability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative methods allow rich, nuanced insights into managerial perspectives and the contextual factors of sustainability adoption in Qatari hotels. The study employs semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. This approach offers a balance between structure and flexibility: while core questions guide the discussion, participants are free to elaborate and introduce new themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The study used purposive sampling to identify participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience in sustainability practices within the hospitality sector. A total of 15 hotel managers were interviewed, representing three categories of hotels: (1) luxury international chains, (2) mid-range business hotels, and (3) local hotels. This diversity ensured diverse perspectives while maintaining a manageable scope.

Participants were selected through professional networks, industry associations, and direct outreach. All participants were assured of anonymity, with pseudonyms (M1–M15) used in reporting. A semi-structured interview was conducted between January and March 2025. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were conducted either face-to-face or via secure online platforms, depending on participant availability. An interview guide was developed (Table 1) to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing space for flexibility. The study went through an interview with key questions to explore participants' experiences and opinions, and ensure relevant themes are covered. The following table shows the research questions and prompt answers.

Table 1: Interview Question Guide

Research Question	Interview Prompt Questions
How do hotel managers define sustainability, and where does it fit in their overall business strategy?	Can you describe what sustainability means for your hotel and how it is integrated into your long-term strategy?
What green practices are currently in	What specific initiatives or technologies

place in your hotel/resort operations?	have you implemented to reduce energy, water, or waste?
How are staff and leaders involved in driving sustainability efforts?	What role do your employees and management team play in promoting sustainability?
What are the biggest challenges your hotel faces in becoming more sustainable?	Can you describe barriers—financial, cultural, or operational—that limit sustainability initiatives?
How do customers, suppliers, or government regulations influence your sustainability decisions?	How have guest expectations, partnerships, or regulations shaped your hotel’s approach to sustainability?

4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step framework: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. This systematic approach ensured rigor while allowing themes to emerge inductively from the data. Interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim. NVivo software was used to organize and code the transcripts. Codes were developed iteratively, starting with descriptive labels (e.g., ‘energy efficiency’) and evolving into broader themes such as ‘operational practices’ and ‘institutional constraints’. The following table shows the description of the main themes and sub-themes.

Table 2: Overview of Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Description	Sub-Themes
Strategic Positioning of Sustainability	How managers conceptualize sustainability and integrate it into business strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability as cost efficiency • Sustainability as brand positioning • Sustainability as regulatory compliance • Sustainability as corporate responsibility
Adoption of Green Operational Practices	Implementation of environmentally responsible operational initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy efficiency measures • Water conservation systems • Waste reduction and recycling • Sustainable procurement practices
Leadership Commitment and Staff Engagement	Organizational drivers of sustainability culture and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top management commitment • Sustainability training programs • Employee participation initiatives • Internal communication and awareness
Systemic Challenges to Sustainability	Internal and external barriers to sustainable transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High implementation costs • Supply chain limitations • Limited local green infrastructure • Guest resistance or expectations
External Institutional Influences	Role of stakeholders and environmental constraints shaping decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government regulations and policies • International brand standards • Mega-events (e.g., FIFA World Cup 2022) • Customer sustainability expectations

5. Findings

This chapter presents the findings from semi-structured interviews with 15 hotel managers (M1–M15) representing luxury, mid-range, and local hotels in Qatar. Thematic analysis revealed five interrelated themes: (1) definitions and strategic positioning of sustainability, (2) adoption of green operational practices, (3) leadership commitment and staff engagement, (4) systemic challenges to sustainability, and (5) external influences, including customers, suppliers, and government regulations. These themes are elaborated below, supported by illustrative quotes from participants. Figures and tables are included to summarize key patterns. The paper uses the following table to illustrate themes and codes, as below in Table 3.

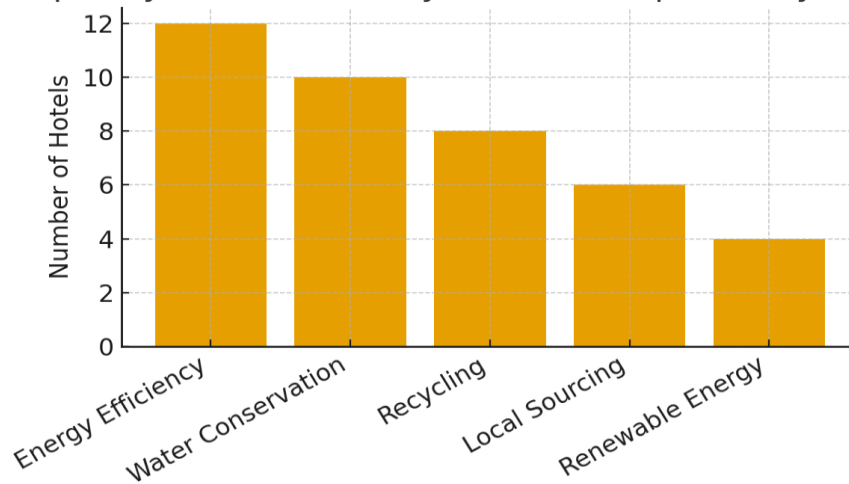
Table 3: Study Themes and Codes

Theme	Codes
Strategic Positioning of Sustainability	“For us, sustainability is long-term value for both guests and the local community.” (M3)
Adoption of Green Operational Practices	“We installed water-saving devices and reduced laundry cycles.” (M6)
Leadership Commitment and Staff Engagement	“Our general manager personally drives these initiatives.” (M1)
Systemic Challenges to Sustainability	“The main challenge is cost; we cannot always justify the upfront investment.” (M4)
External Institutional Influences	“Government regulations gave us the push we needed to comply.” (M7)

Theme 1: Strategic Positioning of Sustainability

Managers conceptualized sustainability in diverse ways, ranging from narrow environmental definitions to broader strategic approaches integrating economic, social, and environmental factors. Luxury hotel managers tended to align definitions with international brand strategies, whereas local hotels emphasized community engagement and cultural preservation. M3 stated: “For us, sustainability is not just about saving energy—it’s about creating long-term value for our guests and the local community.” M8 added: “Our definition is aligned with brand standards; we have a global framework we must implement here in Qatar.” Figure 1 shows the sustainability practices and integration across the 15 hotels, with energy efficiency and water conservation being the most common.

Frequency of Sustainability Practices Reported by Ma



Theme 2: Adoption of Green Operational Practices

Participants reported a wide range of green practices, with energy efficiency and water conservation being the most common. Luxury hotels highlighted advanced technologies such as smart building management systems, while mid-range hotels focused on cost-effective measures such as LED lighting. Local hotels emphasized recycling and partnerships with local suppliers. M6 commented: “We installed water-saving devices and reduced laundry cycles, which immediately cut our utility costs.” M11 explained: “Our corporate office mandated renewable energy pilots, though they remain at an experimental stage.”

Theme 3: Leadership Commitment and Staff Engagement

The role of leadership and staff engagement emerged as a critical factor in implementing sustainability. Managers emphasized the importance of training, internal communication, and incentivizing sustainable behavior among staff.

M1 reflected: “Sustainability cannot succeed without leadership commitment. Our general manager personally drives these initiatives.”

M12 added: “We run monthly training sessions, so staff understand not just what to do, but why it matters.”

Theme 4: Challenges in Implementing Sustainability

Despite progress, managers identified significant barriers. Financial costs were frequently mentioned, particularly in mid-range and local hotels. Other challenges included limited local suppliers of green technologies, cultural resistance among some staff, and guest expectations of luxury.

M4 explained: “The main challenge is cost. Installing energy-efficient equipment requires upfront investment we cannot always justify.”

M9 noted: “Some staff see sustainability as extra work, not as part of their job.”

Theme 5: External Constraints

External stakeholders were identified as powerful drivers of sustainability, such as customers, suppliers, and regulations. Government regulations, particularly those linked to Qatar National Vision 2030, were highlighted. International brands enforced compliance with global sustainability frameworks, while customer demand varied depending on the market segment.

M7 commented: “Government regulations gave us the push we needed—we had to comply, or risk reputational damage.”

M15 added: “Some guests actively ask about our green regulations, but others prioritize luxury over sustainability”.

The findings indicate that while sustainability is recognized as strategically important, implementation is uneven across hotel categories. Luxury hotels benefit from international frameworks and resources, mid-range hotels adopt cost-driven practices, and local hotels focus on community-based approaches. These findings set the stage for a deeper discussion of theoretical and practical implications in the next chapter.

6. Discussion

The findings reveal that sustainability within Qatar’s hospitality sector is not merely an operational adjustment but a strategic and organizational transformation shaped by both internal capabilities and external institutional forces. The five themes emerging from the analysis provide a nuanced understanding of how sustainability is interpreted, embedded, and challenged in practice.

a) Sustainability through Strategic Positioning

Sustainability through strategic positioning highlights that hotels increasingly frame sustainability as a long-term competitive strategy rather than a compliance requirement. Managers described sustainability as intertwined with brand differentiation, cost efficiency, and reputation management. This aligns with Porter and Kramer’s (2011) shared value perspective, which suggests that environmental responsibility can generate both economic and societal value. Similarly, research in sustainable tourism emphasizes that proactive environmental strategies enhance market positioning and resilience in competitive destinations (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2016). In the Qatari context, national policy frameworks such as Qatar National Vision 2030 act as macro-level signals encouraging strategic alignment between sustainability and long-term growth. (Chan, 2011).

5.2 Operational Green Practices through Resource-Efficient Technologies

Operational green practices through resource-efficient technologies demonstrate that sustainability becomes tangible through investments in energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction systems. Managers frequently linked sustainability to measurable operational outcomes, particularly cost savings. This reflects prior findings that eco-

efficiency strategies in hospitality reduce operating costs while improving environmental performance (Bohdanowicz, 2006; Mensah, 2014). The adoption of smart technologies and energy management systems also aligns with the resource-based view, which positions operational capabilities as sources of competitive advantage when embedded in organizational routines (Barney, 1991).

5.3 Leadership Commitment and Staff Engagement through Sustainability-Oriented Culture

Leadership commitment and staff engagement through a sustainability-oriented culture underscore the human dimension of sustainable transformation. Participants consistently emphasized that sustainability initiatives succeed when senior leaders visibly prioritize them and when employees understand their role in implementation. Organizational culture theory suggests that sustainability becomes embedded when shared values and leadership signals reinforce environmentally responsible behavior (Schein, 2010). In hospitality settings, employee engagement has been shown to significantly influence environmental performance outcomes (Kim, Kim, Han, & Holland, 2016). This finding reinforces the idea that sustainability is not solely technological but fundamentally behavioral and cultural.

5.4 External Institutional Constraints through Cross-sector Partnerships

External institutional constraints through cross-sector partnerships highlight the influence of regulatory environments, international brand standards, and mega-events in shaping sustainability decisions. Institutional theory argues that organizations respond to coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures from their external environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In Qatar, global events such as the FIFA World Cup 2022 and national regulatory reforms have amplified these pressures, pushing hotels to adopt more visible sustainability commitments. However, managers also noted structural constraints, including limited local green supply chains. Cross-sector partnerships therefore, emerge as strategic responses to institutional gaps, supporting collaborative sustainability governance (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

5.5 Systemic Challenges to Sustainability through Implementation Strategies

Systemic challenges to sustainability through implementation strategies reflect the complexity of translating sustainability ambitions into operational reality. Financial constraints, supply chain limitations, and guest expectations create tensions between environmental goals and service excellence. These findings are consistent with prior hospitality research showing that sustainability adoption is often incremental and shaped by resource availability and market conditions (Chan, 2013). Implementation strategies, therefore require phased approaches, balancing innovation with financial feasibility and maintaining service quality.

Table 4: Sustainability Themes with Strategic Response Mechanism

Theme	Internal Drivers	External Drivers	Strategic Response Mechanism
Sustainability through Strategic Positioning	Leadership vision; Corporate strategy alignment; Organizational values	National sustainability agenda; Global sustainability frameworks; Market competitiveness	Integration of sustainability into long-term business strategy and brand differentiation
Operational Practices through Resource-Efficient Technologies	Operational capabilities; Investment capacity; Technological readiness	Regulatory standards; Environmental compliance requirements; Industry best practices	Adoption of energy-efficient systems, waste reduction technologies, and sustainable procurement processes
Leadership Commitment and Staff Engagement through Sustainability-Oriented Culture	Top management support; Employee training; Internal communication systems	Industry benchmarking; Stakeholder expectations; Certification standards	Development of sustainability-oriented culture supported by training and performance metrics
External Constraints through Cross-Sector Partnerships	Organizational adaptability; Strategic networking capability	Government regulations; standards; events; frameworks	Formation of partnerships with suppliers, regulators, and public agencies to overcome structural barriers
Systemic Challenges to Sustainability through Implementation Strategies	Financial resources; Managerial expertise; Change management capacity	Market expectations, Supply chain limitations, Economic conditions	Phased implementation strategies, cost optimization, and innovation in service delivery

The discussion illustrates that sustainability in Qatar’s hospitality industry is shaped by the dynamic interaction between internal organizational drivers and external structural pressures. Rather than viewing sustainability as a fixed policy directive, managers navigate it as an evolving process influenced by strategic priorities, cultural readiness, technological capacity, and institutional frameworks. This integrated perspective contributes to sustainability scholarship by demonstrating how emerging market hospitality sectors negotiate global sustainability expectations within locally specific socio-economic conditions.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that sustainability in Qatar's hospitality industry has evolved beyond isolated environmental initiatives into a multidimensional strategic transformation shaped by the interaction of internal organizational capabilities and external institutional pressures. (i) The findings reveal that hospitality managers increasingly conceptualize sustainability as a strategic positioning mechanism that enhances brand differentiation, operational efficiency, and long-term competitiveness rather than as a mere compliance obligation. (ii) The study further shows that operationalizing sustainability depends on embedding resource-efficient technologies within organizational routines, reinforcing the role of internal capabilities as strategic assets. (iii) Leadership commitment and employee engagement emerge as critical enablers, confirming that sustainable transformation is fundamentally cultural and behavioral, not solely technological. Without visible managerial support and aligned organizational values, sustainability initiatives remain fragmented and symbolic. (iv) Externally, institutional pressures stemming from national sustainability agendas, global brand standards, regulatory reforms, and mega-events significantly shape managerial decision-making. In the Qatari context, these pressures both accelerate sustainability adoption and expose structural constraints, particularly within supply chains. (v) Cross-sector partnerships, therefore function as adaptive strategic mechanisms that allow hotels to bridge institutional gaps and respond to evolving sustainability expectations. However, the findings also highlight persistent systemic challenges; for example, financial limitations, market expectations, and service quality requirements create tensions that require phased and context-sensitive implementation strategies. Sustainability adoption is therefore incremental and negotiated rather than linear or uniform. Overall, this study contributes to sustainability and hospitality scholarship by providing an integrated framework that links strategic positioning, operational capabilities, organizational culture, institutional pressures, and implementation strategies within an emerging market context. It advances understanding of how hospitality managers in the GCC region translate global sustainability discourses into locally embedded business practices.

7. Implications for Practice

The findings generate several important managerial implications for the hospitality sector in Qatar and comparable emerging markets. First, environmental sustainability should not be treated merely as a compliance obligation or reputational exercise; rather, it should be strategically embedded as a value-creation mechanism. Hotels can leverage sustainability initiatives to achieve operational efficiencies through energy optimization, waste reduction, and resource management, while simultaneously enhancing brand positioning and market differentiation in an increasingly sustainability-conscious global tourism market. Second, sustainable transformation requires visible and sustained leadership commitment. The findings indicate that sustainability outcomes are significantly influenced by the degree to which senior management prioritizes sustainability in strategic planning and performance evaluation. Leadership development programs and structured staff training initiatives are

therefore critical to cultivating a sustainability-oriented organizational culture. Embedding sustainability metrics into performance management systems can further institutionalize responsible practices and ensure long-term continuity beyond individual champions. Third, the study highlights the importance of ecosystem collaboration. Strategic partnerships with local suppliers, governmental bodies, and regulatory agencies can reduce structural constraints, particularly in areas such as sustainable procurement, waste management infrastructure, and renewable energy adoption. Collaborative engagement enhances resource accessibility and aligns hotel practices with national sustainability agendas, including Qatar National Vision 2030. Beyond managerial implications, the study also offers significant policy implications. Policymakers should move beyond regulatory compliance frameworks and provide structured incentives that encourage proactive sustainability innovation. Financial support mechanisms such as tax incentives, green subsidies, or low-interest financing for energy-efficient technologies can mitigate cost-related barriers identified by hotel managers. Clear and consistent sustainability standards tailored to the hospitality sector would also reduce ambiguity and enhance implementation coherence. Furthermore, government agencies can play a facilitative role by strengthening local green supply chains and investing in infrastructure that supports waste recycling, renewable energy integration, and sustainable sourcing. Public-private partnerships could accelerate knowledge transfer and capacity building, particularly for mid-range and locally owned hotels that may lack access to international brand resources. Integrating hospitality sustainability metrics into national tourism development strategies would further align sector-level practices with broader economic and environmental goals. Finally, the research underscores the necessity of reconciling luxury service expectations with sustainability imperatives. Policymakers and industry associations can support this transition by promoting sustainability certification programs, encouraging transparency in environmental reporting, and fostering industry-wide benchmarking initiatives. Such coordinated efforts would help reposition sustainability not as a constraint, but as a strategic pillar of competitive tourism development. In conclusion, sustainability within the Qatari hospitality sector emerges as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between global sustainability frameworks and local socio-economic realities. The study provides a contextually grounded understanding of how hotel managers navigate regulatory constraints, cultural expectations, and operational constraints to advance sustainability agendas. By illuminating the interplay between internal capabilities and external influences, the research contributes to both theory and practice, offering a foundation for more strategically integrated and locally responsive sustainable transformation in the hospitality industry.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study is limited by its qualitative scope, focusing on a relatively small sample of managers in Qatar. Findings may not be generalizable to all contexts within the Gulf region. Future research could adopt mixed methods approaches, include employee and customer perspectives, or conduct comparative studies across countries. Future studies could explore

quantitative assessments of sustainability performance metrics in Qatari hotels, longitudinal analyses of changes over time, and comparative research with other GCC countries. Research on customer perceptions of sustainability in luxury contexts could shed light on how guest expectations shape hotel strategies.

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