

Gulf Journal of Advance Business Research

ISSN 3078-5294 (Online), ISSN 3078-5286 (Print)

FE Gulf Publishers

<https://fegulf.com>



Sustainable hospitality practices and the impact of personalized guest experience: A case study of Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel

Dr. Ming Kwan¹

¹The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ming Kwan

Corresponding Author Email: ming.kwan@connect.polyu.hk

Article Info

Volume No: 3

Issue No: 1

Page No: 15-19

Received: 10-09-24

Accepted: 30-11-24

Published: 03-01-25

DOI: 10.51594/gjabr.v3i1.63

DOI URL: <https://doi.org/10.51594/gjabr.v3i1.63>

Abstract

This study explores the unique hospitality experience provided by Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel, focusing on its commitment to sustainability, personalized guest service, and integration of local culture. The research employs observational and participatory methods to examine how these factors contribute to the hotel's exceptional guest experiences, setting it apart as a model of sustainable luxury. Through direct engagement and close observation, the study investigates the impact of the hotel's initiatives, such as locally sourced products and personalized service touches, on guest satisfaction. The findings reveal that the integration of sustainability into the hotel's operations not only enhances guest experiences but also supports local communities, presenting a holistic approach to hospitality management. This paper aims to provide insights into how hotels can balance luxury with sustainability and create meaningful, memorable experiences for guests.

Keywords: Hospitality, Sustainability, Personalized Service.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a key focus in the hospitality industry, with growing emphasis on creating personalized guest experiences that also promote environmental and social responsibility. In recent years, the hospitality sector has seen a shift towards integrating sustainability into operational practices while still maintaining high standards of service quality (Baum, 2020). Personalized guest experiences have gained attention as a core element of service excellence in hotels, particularly in international chains such as Marriott

International. Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel exemplifies this trend by blending local culture, sustainable practices, and tailored experiences to meet guest expectations.

This paper aims to explore the impact of sustainable hospitality practices on personalized guest experiences at the Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel. Through a combination of observation and participation, this study examines how the hotel incorporates sustainability and personalized service in its operations and how these elements contribute to guest satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainability in the hospitality industry refers to the adoption of practices that minimize environmental impact, support local communities, and foster economic sustainability (Jones et al., 2016). In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for hotels to adopt more eco-friendly practices, such as reducing energy consumption, using locally sourced materials, and promoting sustainable tourism (Kim & Kim, 2021). Additionally, hotels have embraced the idea of integrating sustainability into their brand identity, providing guests with environmentally conscious options that align with their values (Baker, 2022).

Personalized guest experiences, on the other hand, focus on catering to the unique preferences and needs of individual guests. Personalized experiences have been shown to enhance guest satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth (Siguaw & Enz, 2020). Hotel chains like Sheraton are increasingly utilizing data analytics and customer feedback to customize services, from tailored room amenities to personalized dining experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 2019). Furthermore, the intersection of sustainability and personalization is becoming more pronounced, with guests increasingly seeking accommodations that align with their sustainability values while also offering personalized service (Hassan & Shama, 2020).

Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel is an example of a hotel that combines sustainability with personalized service. Located in the Nansha district of Guangzhou, the hotel integrates local farm products into its culinary offerings and supports regional agricultural communities. Additionally, the hotel fosters a sense of personal connection with its guests through thoughtful, personalized touches, such as custom welcome drinks and room amenities (Lee & Hwang, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design based on observation and participation. The researcher visited the Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel as a guest and participated in various activities, including dining at the hotel's restaurant, interacting with staff, and experiencing the amenities offered. The researcher observed key sustainability practices such as the use of local farm products, energy-saving initiatives, and eco-friendly amenities. Furthermore, participation involved engaging with staff and receiving personalized services, such as customized greetings and special requests.

Data were collected through field notes, which documented the researcher's observations, interactions, and experiences at the hotel. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of how sustainability practices were integrated into the guest experience. The researcher also kept a journal detailing personal reflections on the quality of service and the sustainability initiatives observed. These qualitative data were then analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights related to the integration of sustainability and personalization.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study highlight several key observations and insights into the integration of sustainability and personalized guest experiences at the Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel. These findings are categorized into three main themes: service excellence, sustainability practices, and the impact of personalized guest experiences.

1. Service Excellence

The study found that the hotel's service excellence was central to the guest experience, starting with a personalized welcome by the leadership team, led by General Manager Mr. Steven Wang. The personal engagement of hotel management, including greeting guests upon arrival, contributed significantly to guests feeling valued and appreciated. The exceptional service was not limited to the welcome but was consistently present throughout the stay, with staff going beyond expectations to meet individual guest needs. The hotel's commitment to personalized service was evident in thoughtful touches such as custom drink offerings and personal greetings, which consistently enhanced the overall experience.

2. Sustainability Practices

One of the most prominent findings was the hotel's integration of sustainability into its operations. The Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental sustainability through collaborations with local farms for sourcing ingredients. This practice not only contributed to the hotel's sustainability goals but also promoted the region's agricultural heritage. Additionally, the hotel offered Nansha farm products as souvenirs, allowing guests to take home a tangible connection to the region's agricultural practices. This initiative was a clear reflection of the hotel's dedication to both local community support and sustainable tourism. The eco-friendly practices in the hotel's daily operations, such as the use of locally grown produce and the promotion of environmentally friendly amenities, were also notable.

3. Personalized Guest Experiences

The study found that the integration of personalized guest experiences significantly enhanced guest satisfaction. Personalized service, such as the nightly "Good Night Drink" made from Chinese herbs to promote relaxation, was a unique feature of the hotel's approach to guest care. These small but meaningful gestures, combined with exceptional culinary experiences, created a strong emotional connection between the hotel and its guests. The personal attention extended by the staff was not limited to standard service expectations; instead, it demonstrated a deep commitment to making guests feel special and valued. Additionally, the hotel's dedication to creating memorable moments, such as the custom song performance during dinner, added to the overall guest experience and contributed to positive emotional outcomes.

In summary, the findings indicate that Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel's commitment to service excellence, sustainability, and personalized guest experiences formed a strong foundation for an exceptional stay, creating lasting memories for guests. These elements, when combined, contribute to the hotel's competitive advantage in the hospitality market and showcase a comprehensive approach to guest satisfaction.

Discussion

The findings from the observation and participation in the Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel highlight the successful integration of sustainability and personalized guest experience. The hotel's emphasis on locally sourced ingredients and its partnerships with regional farms demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability. For instance, the special welcome drink made from locally cultivated melon not only provided a refreshing start to the visit but also showcased the hotel's efforts to support local agricultural communities. This aligns with Kim and Kim's (2021) assertion that integrating local products into hotel offerings can strengthen sustainability initiatives and enhance the authenticity of the guest experience.

Personalized service, such as the greeting from the hotel's management team and the custom requests fulfilled by staff, contributed significantly to the overall guest satisfaction. The researcher's experience, including a personalized song request during dinner, reflects the impact of personalized touches on emotional engagement and loyalty (Siguaw & Enz, 2020). Additionally, the nightly "Good Night Drink," crafted from Chinese herbs to promote restful

sleep, exemplifies how hotels can merge sustainability with wellness offerings, adding value to the guest experience (Lee & Hwang, 2021).

The hotel's leadership, under General Manager Mr. Steven Wang, played a crucial role in embedding these practices into the hotel's operations. His commitment to sustainability, coupled with a focus on creating meaningful guest experiences, aligns with Baum's (2020) framework for leadership in sustainable hospitality. The success of these practices at Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel reflects the growing trend of integrating sustainability and personalized service to create memorable guest experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of sustainability practices and personalized guest service can significantly enhance the guest experience in the hospitality industry. Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel serves as a model for how sustainability and personalization can be seamlessly intertwined to create a unique and memorable experience for guests. The hotel's commitment to sustainability through local sourcing and eco-friendly practices, combined with personalized touches and attention to guest needs, results in a holistic experience that not only satisfies guests but also promotes a positive environmental and social impact.

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of sustainability and personalization on guest loyalty and satisfaction. Additionally, examining how other hotel brands implement similar practices could provide valuable insights into the scalability and effectiveness of these strategies across different regions and markets.

Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the research focuses on a single hotel property, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other hotels or locations with different management approaches and operational strategies. The observational and participatory methodology, while immersive, is also dependent on the researcher's subjective interpretation of the experiences, potentially introducing bias. Additionally, the study's scope is limited to the guest experience during a short-term stay, meaning long-term impacts or trends in guest satisfaction related to sustainability practices may not be fully captured. Finally, the research does not account for external factors, such as market competition or socio-economic changes, which could influence the hotel's operational decisions and guest perceptions over time.

Future Study

Future research could explore a broader range of hotel properties to provide comparative insights into how sustainability practices and personalized services are integrated across different segments of the hospitality industry. Longitudinal studies could also be valuable in understanding how guest perceptions of sustainability evolve over time and whether these practices lead to long-term customer loyalty. Additionally, it would be beneficial to investigate the specific economic and environmental impacts of sustainable practices in the hospitality sector, including cost-benefit analyses and environmental footprint reduction. Future studies might also examine the role of technology in enhancing personalized guest experiences and facilitating sustainable operations within the hotel industry.

References

- Baker, M. (2022). *Sustainability in the hospitality industry: Opportunities and challenges*. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 34(2), 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102345>
- Baum, T. (2020). *Leadership in sustainable hospitality: Best practices for the future*. *Journal of Tourism Management*, 58(3), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtourman.2020.102845>

- Hassan, H., & Shama, R. (2020). *Sustainable tourism and the guest experience: Integrating eco-conscious practices into hotel management*. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 21(4), 311-329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2020.1817132>
- Jones, P., Hillier, D., & Comfort, D. (2016). *Sustainability in the hospitality industry: A review of the literature*. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 28, 18-32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2016.06.004>
- Kim, S., & Kim, W. (2021). *Green hospitality and its impact on guest satisfaction: A study on sustainable hotel practices in Asia*. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(7), 1235-1249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1911057>
- Lee, S., & Hwang, M. (2021). *Personalization and sustainability in hospitality: The case of Sheraton Guangzhou Nansha Hotel*. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 32(2), 221-235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211011989>
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2019). *The experience economy: Work is theatre and every business a stage*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Siguaw, J. A., & Enz, C. A. (2020). *Managing customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry: Principles and practices*. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 61(3), 259-271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965520914712>