


Chapter 12


Integration of Design Thinking in the Green Hotel Business

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the integration of design thinking within the green hotel sector, focusing on innovative strategies for creating sustainable solutions across hotel management. It explores how design thinking can address guest expectations and environmental demands, facilitating eco-friendly products, services, and practices that reduce a hotel's environmental footprint. The chapter analyzes the role of design thinking in promoting sustainable innovation, enhancing competitiveness, and meeting the needs of eco-conscious consumers. Key concepts like “design management,” “design thinking,” and “green hotel business” are explored to align sustainability goals with hotel operations. Using a comparative analysis and case studies of leading hotel brands, the chapter demonstrates how design thinking drives

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green practices. It highlights methods like empathy mapping to understand consumer attitudes towards sustainability and recommends further research on partnerships to foster sustainable tourism development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have been reshaping the global landscape, elevating living standards and accelerating the consumption of goods and services. However, these developments have also led to a surge in waste production and environmental pollution (Kurek et al., 2023). As a result, environmental sustainability has emerged as an increasingly urgent issue, one with significant implications for public health and quality of life (Njoku et al., 2024). This trend affects various sectors, including the hotel industry, which, traditionally focused on providing comfortable accommodations for transient guests, is now faced with the need to adopt sustainable practices in the face of these global environmental challenges (Bovsh et al., 2025).

With consumers becoming more environmentally conscious, there is rising pressure on hotels to meet higher sustainability standards. In response to these demands, the hotel industry is seeking innovative solutions in both the design and delivery of its core and supplementary services (Bovsh et al., 2024). Among the strategies gaining prominence is design thinking, a problem-solving approach that encourages the creation of creative, user-centered solutions, making it a promising tool for integrating sustainability into hotel operations.

One of the key concepts emerging in the context of sustainability is green business models, which have captured global attention for their potential to drive environmental stewardship and innovation. In this regard, design thinking has been identified as an important framework to support the transition to greener business practices (Kurek et al., 2023). However, the process of developing sustainable and circular business models remains complex, posing a challenge for their widespread adoption across industries, including hospitality (Santa-Maria et al., 2022).

In the hospitality sector, design thinking has proven to be a valuable tool for tackling intricate, multifaceted challenges. By focusing on human-centered design, it emphasizes addressing the needs of guests and stakeholders at every stage of the design process (Ranti & Lee, 2018). Design thinking has thus emerged as a significant force in promoting sustainability within the hospitality industry, offering a framework that emphasizes the creation of environmentally responsible solutions through a deep understanding of users' expectations (Santa-Maria et al., 2022).

Design thinking's emphasis on user-centric approaches has led to its growing recognition as a potential method for addressing complex socio-ecological challenges, including sustainability issues within hospitality. It fosters innovation by

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