



Examining the Sustainability Standards and Measures of Hotel Industry in Inle Lake,
Myanmar



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SUBMITTED IN THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS,
SIAM UNIVERSITY, BANGKOK, THAILAND

2018



Title of Research: Examining the Sustainability Standards and Measures of Hotel Industry in Inle Lake, Myanmar

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Major: MBA (General Management)

Degree: Master in Business Administration (International Program)

Academic: 2018

This is Independent study has been approved to be partial fulfillment of the requirement for Degree of Master in Business Administration in General Management

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Abstract

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Motivated by the call for different sectors to work towards supporting sustainability goals, this paper sought to examine the sustainability standards and measures of hotel industry in Inle Lake, Myanmar. The main research question was whether the Hotel industry was responsive. The review of literature provided an opportunity to appraise five pillars of sustainability, which later served as a conceptual framework for the study: social, environmental, security and infrastructural development, traditions and culture, and globalization. The research involved the use of questionnaire to inquire on the perspective and experiences of managers of regional hotels on the matter. The findings revealed that the hotel industry around Inle lake were responsive and conscious about sustainability. However, there were certain critical areas of sustainability that were not given the needed attention. It is recommended that these areas of weaknesses be addressed.

Keywords: Lake Inle region, sustainability, social, environmental, security and infrastructural development, traditions and culture, globalization.

Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge everyone who played a crucial role either directly (such as providing financial facilitation and giving me tips on how to accomplish the project) or indirectly (such as giving me motivation and reason to hold on and complete the write up on time, especially when felt I could procrastinate).

But I must particularly acknowledge my advisors, Dr.Tanakorn Limsarun and Dr.Vijit Supinit, for being patient with me, tolerating my repeated mistakes, and guiding to my last full stop. Secondly, I thank my parents for the financial support and motivation they have accorded me. I could have never asked for more!

And how could I forget my friends — the likes of who cheered me up, the likes of who did not have to feel offended when I turned down their requests for an out and who, instead, decided to understand and act ‘cool’ by motivating me and giving me an ample time to write it up, ... and so forth. And my roommate even offered to do the house chores just so that I could find time to do my thing on some occasions. Certainly, all that was out of sacrifice and defines what friends are for.

You are all appreciated!

Ms. Aye Mya Mya Khaing

Bangkok, 16 November 2018

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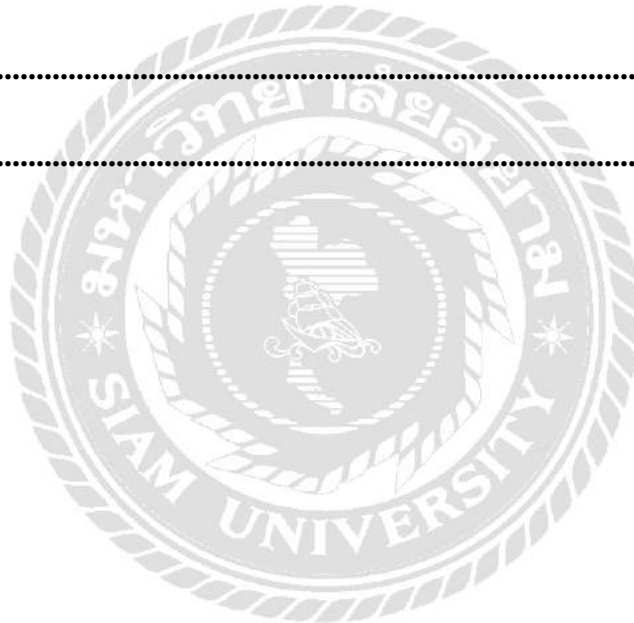
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

What is the nature and form of the sustainability initiatives in the hotel industry in the Inle Lake region? In Nyaungshwe township of Taungyi district of Shan state in Myanmar lies the second largest lake in Myanmar with an approximated surface area of 116km² (Journeys International, 2018). The freshwater lake is part of the Shan hills with its highest elevation peak at 2900 feet. The average depth of the lake is 7 feet during the dry season with the deepest parts extending to 12 feet. During the rainy season, however, the water can rise to an extra 5 feet. The North and West parts of the lake host the larger section of the watershed area. Despite its relatively smaller size, it is the home to some of the rarest endemic species. Nine species of fish and over twenty species of snails are present in this lake and nowhere else in the world. Another 20,000 brown and black head migratory seagulls add to the already vast ecosystem of the lake (Journeys International, 2018).

The lake occupied by some local inhabitants known as Intha. They have settled in numerous small villages along the shores of the lake. The Inthas dominate the population of this area, with the rest of the population consisting of Shan, Taungyo, Taungthu, Danu, Kayah, Danaw, and Bamar ethnicities. These self-sufficient farmers are devout Buddhists and live in simple wood and woven bamboo houses. The main economic activity of these people is fishing as one would expect. They own small traditional boats while some have somewhat bigger boats with single cylinder diesel engines. The lake is immensely covered by reeds and floating vegetation which makes navigation very difficult. As a result, the locals developed a unique way of rowing through the dense vegetation. Instead of the usual rowing, while sitting, the fishermen row while standing, one leg on the stern and the other around the oar (Gordon, 2015). They got

so used to the style that it became a part of their lifestyle, adding to their unique culture. The style is however only allowed for men, women row in the traditional style.

The most popular fish caught in the area, Inle carp, is used to prepare the local staple diet. The dish usually consists of fermented rice kneaded with fish and/or potato. Apart from fishing, the locals are again involved in a unique form of farming. They grow vegetables and fruits in large gardens that float on the lake and are usually the results of extensive labor. After gathering weeds from the deeper parts of the sea, they bring them back using their boats and build them into floating garden beds supported by bamboo rods. The gardens are resistant to flooding since they are made in a way to rise and fall with the water levels. The nutrient-laden water of the lake makes the garden very fertile and as a result making the gardens favorable for farming. This rare kind of technology possessed by this community is a major tourist attraction site.

Inle Lake forms a major attraction site, not because of its physical structure but the culture of the people and communities living in this area. The culture and activities carried out in Inle Lake are unique to its inhabitants and is yet to be noticed in other parts of the world. The community holds several festivals especially in the period from August to October. The lake is often used as a venue from various activities involved in the festivals. One popular ceremonial event in the area is the 'HpaungDaw U' festival that usually lasts for a total of 18 days. During this celebration the Shan and the Inthas turn out in numbers, dressed in their best clothes to witness the occasion. A famous activity involved with the festival is the boat racing, where a dozen leg rowers dressed in Shan traditional dress compete in teams, with each team on a different boat.

The local tourist economy has also been boosted by the traditional silversmithing. Silver is mined from mines in the hills surrounding the lake and is transported by boat to the village.

Tourists can satisfy their thirst for memorable moments by watching the silversmiths work on the silver. Local silk workshops that operate similarly provide an alternative attraction site for tourists not interested in silversmithing. The community is also involved in making and selling of hand-made tools. The popular products include tools, carving, and other ornamental objects. The selling of these products is set up in the local markets. The shopping day, however, shifts around five different areas in the lake, such that each area organizes the shopping event every fifth day. The markets are situated on the surface of the lake and are commonly known as 'floating markets' (Hotels.com, 2018). These markets attract more tourists and contribute to a great percentage on the tourist trade. The weaving industry also has its roots in this area. Silk weaving carried out by the inhabitants of this area, produces high-quality hand-woven silk fabrics used in making shan-bags and baskets. Tourists fancy buying these unique antiques.

This area being the home to many tourist attraction sites is a destination for many visitors. As a result, there is an increasing need to host and accommodate them whenever they come to visit. The area has therefore enjoyed tremendous investments in the hotel industry in the area. Inle Lake is currently a home to numerous five-star hotels that serve a multitude of visitors trickling in daily from different parts of the globe. The industry has had the experience of interacting with people of different genders, race, and even physical ability. The industry began long before civilization came to the area. The kind and generous inhabitants of this place were used to hosting strangers in their homes providing them with food and shelter for the entire time they dwelt in the place. This is hospitality, an industry that is actually the same to the hotel industry.

Over the years, the hotel industry has attracted the interests of many leading to the advancement in the industry. This development can be attributed to the pursuit for innovation,

which is common in the hotel industry because of competition (Dzhandzhugazova, Blinova, Orlova, & Romanova, 2016). The tourism in the region has been increasing. This was attributed to the increase in business travel into the country to enjoy the leisure presence in the area. Traveling to the area had also been made easier by the establishment of improved infrastructure and transport network. The country has also been able to acquire extra airlines. Visitors from the countries of these airlines' origin were now able to travel directly to Myanmar and satisfy their hunger for leisure activities.

Inle lake region and the country as a whole have observed impressive economic growth during the period of the hotel industry development (Buijtendijk & Tschunkert, 2016). Through accommodation of more visitors, the country has been able to earn more foreign exchange from the hotel industry, thus boosting their economy. The local economy has not been left behind in these advancements. The locals have in fact benefitted the most from this industry. Job opportunities have been created in the areas where this industry has been established hence acting as income generating source for the local community.

The strong bond and relationship resulting from the interaction of the community and the industry have seen both parties join hands for the betterment of both subjects' interests. The industry has provided the community with access to social amenities and exposure, and on the other hand, the community has returned the favor by acting as a resource center for the industry. Inle lake community, for instance, are involved in agriculture producing a variety of food products. The interaction of this community with the industry in the area has seen the locals receive tenders and contracts for supplying the industry with food products. All this are contributors towards the local economy. The industry has particularly been beneficial to the people of Inle Lake and Myanmar as a whole. The issue of sustainability, however, is still an

area of concern. Can the country and the inhabitants manage the industry to ensure the stable economic growth is sustained?

1.2 Problem Statement

With Inle Lake being the second largest Lake in Myanmar, it has not only attracted tourism in Myanmar but also resulted in the springing up of so many businesses that support the art of tourism. Many support industries in the field of tourism have as a result cropped up in order to advance tourism even to greater heights. Travel and hotel industries are ranking high among the supporting factors that have enhanced tourism in the area. The availability of plenty of natural and cultural resources has also become fascinating scenes that tourists have had to enjoy. The factors promoting tourism growth in Lake Myanmar are thus significant subjects of study not only to advance tourism to a higher level but also to ensure many investors in the tourism sector explore all the probabilities before deciding to cast their nets into this sea that generates massive profits to the investors. Transport and luxurious displays have also been significant avenues that reap much profit from tourism in the area (Buijtendijk & Tschunkert, 2016). The standards and measures affecting tourism are therefore key aspects of Myanmar's economic growth thus its study would be of benefit to many investors and economists. The standards help regulate the quality of the services offered in the tourism sector. Improvement in the service thus boosts the economy of the hotel industries around Myanmar due to the expected rise in the number of tourists who consume these types of services. What are some of these measures? How do they contribute to the quality and the magnitude of hotel industry growth in Myanmar? There are some of the questions whose answers would generate massive profit making ideas which if put into use by investors can turn into better sources of revenue. The aim

of this paper is to explore the nature form of sustainability initiatives of the hotel industry in the Inle Lake region.

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and form of sustainability initiatives of the hotel industry in the Inle lake region, Myanmar and make recommendations for change.

There are a number of questions that will need to be answered to realize the objectives:

- 1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainability initiatives?
- 2) Is there evidence of the pursuit of sustainability?
- 3) What are the elements of interest for sustainability for the hotels in the Inle lake region?
- 4) What are the presenting opportunities and threats?
- 5) What are the challenges that need to be addressed?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to determine both the positive and negative standards and measures that lead to the development of the economy of the hotel industry around Lake Inle in Myanmar. Other specific objectives would also be of great aid to ensure the study is successful and they include:

- 1) To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainability initiatives?
- 2) To find out whether there is evidence of the pursuit for sustainability?
- 3) To find out the focus for sustainability goals for the hotels in the Inle lake region?
- 4) To identify presenting opportunities and threats, as well as the challenge that needs to be addressed to help the region realize sustainable standards.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The hotel industry is one of the major sources of livelihood for many middle-income families in our world. The hotel industry employs a wide range class of personalities including cooks, cleaners, accountants among many other specialists in the field of hospitality and management. The study of the factors contributing to the expansion and development of the hotel industry is thus a key area of exploration for those who look forward to investing heavily in any lucrative field in order to gain some income at the end of the day.

The hotel industry is also a major attractor of tourists who also find comfort in staying around places of interest for pleasure. During such activities, much revenue is paid to the government which in turn is converted into developmental initiatives that boost the infrastructure and provision of social amenities in any given area. It also boosts the security of the vicinity and attracts foreign investors.

1.6 Research Model and Conceptual Framework

The research model entails a descriptive survey involving the cross-sectional area of a locality in Inle Lake in Myanmar. The survey engages the respondents on the fundamental factors that play a big role in the development of the economy of the hotel industry around Inle Lake in Myanmar. The conceptual framework included factors that played independently, dependently and the varying factors that all ensured the study was a success, and that data was obtained without any form of prejudice or bias.

1.7 Research Hypothesis

The research study was guided by a set of two competing hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The hotel industry in Inle Lake region is faring poorly in pursuing sustainability standards and a lot needs to be changed.

Hypothesis 2: The hotel industry in Inle Lake region is faring well in pursuing sustainability standards and needs to be commended.

In this case, Hypothesis 1 is featured to represent to represent the concerns that the hotel industry, like other sectors like the pollutant manufacturing industry, is not doing enough to foster different sustainability goals as required. Hypothesis 2, on the other hand, exists to represent the optimistic view that hotel industry in this region is unique and following a positive path in achieving sustainability.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature on the subject is documented and touches on a number of areas, including the criticality of sustainability, its place in the hotel industry, and the tenets of sustainability. Concisely, the hotel industry is one of the fast-growing industries in the world currently contributing huge percentages to the revenues of a country. The industry has for long had a significant impact on the economies of various countries. In order to continue enjoying the benefits of the industry, the players must invest in sustainability. Quality and environmental management are considered a source of competitive advantage (Molina-Azorín, Tarí, Pereira-Moliner, López-Gamero & Pertusa-Ortega, 2015). However, Inle Lake has been marred by environmental concerns (Koppen, 2015). The rest of the issues underlying the literature review are explored in sections as follows.

2.2 Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Industry

A sustainable industry has several definitions. The commonly used one is the ability to cater for today's needs while ensuring that the future generations will be able to provide for their needs through the same industry. It basically describes the sound and conscious husbandry of resources, equity in the allocation and careful distribution of the profits thereof (Myanmar Center for Responsible Business, 2014). A sustainable hotel industry, therefore, is one that is able to account for present needs and predict trends and possible future needs putting in place measures to satisfy these needs. This usually involves setting of measures and standards to ensure the economic output of the industry remains stable and relevant to a country or its particular locality. The industry has seen itself boost not the only the national economy but right from the local

economy going higher. Establishing a sustainable industry that will be able to withstand all the challenges that are characteristic of this industry requires a combined effort from various sources. The government should particularly be in the frontline in spearheading the development of a sustainable hotel industry. In setting standards and measures towards a sustainable hotel industry it is important to look at the various factors that contribute first towards the development of this industry. It is from this point that we can identify the pressure points and pivots of the industry. Careful understanding of these factors allows a body such as the government to put in measures towards the development of a sustainable industry.

The tourism industry has been known to go hand in hand with the hotel and hospitality industry. One can hardly exist without the other. The two industries exist in a symbiotic relationship where one benefits from the other (Myanmar Center for Responsible Business, 2014). Tourism basically involves the traveling of individuals known as tourists to a particular destination to enjoy the sites of nature present in the area. The sites may include natural phenomenon and physical features that are unique to that particular location. Wildlife forms a major tourist attraction site in most countries. A variety of wildlife is unique to specific areas and so to have a view of these unique creatures provides the need to travel to their specific ecosystems. Physical features such as mountains, lakes, waterfalls, etc. also act as tourist attraction sites. These physical features often form spectacular sceneries or are home to some rare creatures hence attracts the interest of nature lovers. The terrains, slopes, and vegetation of certain physical features act as exquisite venues for various exploration activities and are an attractor of explorers.

Climatic conditions are often reason enough for people to traverse continents in order to enjoy the favorable climatic conditions. This is particularly pertinent to Europe and other

countries affected by extremely cold conditions. Countries along the equatorial region and especially along the oceans enjoy relatively good climatic conditions all year long. These countries enjoy a large number of tourists trickling in during the winter seasons in the European countries. Inle Lake in Myanmar is an example of those countries with good climatic conditions all year long thus attracting thousands of visitors every year. The lake itself is a unique physical feature that provides a scenic view that attracts tourists from all over the world(Koppen, 2015).

Tourism provides the need for construction of hotels especially near the various attraction sites in order to accommodate the tourists visiting the areas. Accommodating does not only involve the provision of places of residence during their stay but providing them with meals too (Koppen, 2015). In order to be able to prepare foreign dishes, there is a need to establish colleges for catering and hospitality to master the art. This has boosted the hotel industry and hospitality industry as a whole in the countries that enjoy a good spell of tourism. Inle Lake enjoys this spell, and as a result, the hotel industry around the lake is booming with the establishment of five-star hotels along the shores of the lake.

2.3 Cultural Diversities

The cultural activities of a particular people located in a certain region usually affect the hotel industry but not too directly (WAGENINGEN, 2015). Different cultures have different delicacies and different methods of preparing the common delicacies. For such reasons, the regions enjoy a lot of visitors coming to have a taste of these delicacies. This has contributed to the building of more hotels and guest houses where they receive a smaller amount of visitors. The lifestyle and cultural heritage of certain communities are quite interesting, and many culture lovers fancy visiting such communities to get to know more about the culture. The residents of

InleLake area possess a unique culture that is only characteristic to them. The art and traditional technology employed in this area reveal how much the people of this area treasure their culture.

Advancement of technology and industrialization has caused depletion of culture and heritage among most of the native communities in various countries around the world. The Inthas however still hold to some of the practices and even commemorate the traditional festivals (Buijtendijk & Tschunkert, 2016). The spectacular scenery brought about by their colorful dressing and decorations during these festivities is such awe to the eyes. Such activities provide entertainment to the tourists and even locals visiting these places. A glance at their methods of carrying out various economic activities like farming automatically creates an urge to know more concerning the community. This place is also the home to a variety of art and skills ranging from silver smiting to silk weaving. They are able to come up with ornaments and objects that fascinate any foreigner that happens to be in the area. The general way of life of this small and unique community is an attraction site itself. Cultural practices and heritage is generally a source of tourism. The large number of tourists boosts the hotels. Accommodation of these tourists and visitors is necessary thus the building of hotels and coming up with hospitality training institutes. The revenue earned from the tourists residing into the hotels can be used in expanding the hotel and bettering the service of the hotels.

The hotel industry is all about providing services that one would otherwise receive at their homes. And so for an individual to go seeking for these services in a hotel, he/she must be very far from their homes. It is therefore important to consider the prevalent conditions while venturing into the hotel industry. The industry depends on unquantifiable consumers. The investor cannot estimate how many consumers are going to be using his/her services. In this manner, when setting up the hotel and hospitality industry it is necessary to identify the need for

hospitality in the specific area. You cannot possibly set up a hotel for instance in the middle of a village where everyone owns a home and expect the business to flourish. There has to be something interesting and unique in the area that will encourage foreigners to visit these areas. Most of these factors have already been identified. There is, however, another factor that is particular to the Inle Lake and its people. The people are involved in intense agricultural activities including fishing and farming. This area is a source of a variety of foodstuffs that can easily be obtained and used in the hotels. A rare dish of fermented rice and fish is also characteristic of this region. The foodstuffs are the raw materials for any hotel and hospitality company. The availability of these raw materials at a throw stone distance is of great importance towards the amount of revenue earned from the industry. These crop products help save on costs that would have otherwise been used in transporting of the particulars to the hotels. The resulting revenue is a boost to the area's economy hence the ability to expand and sustain the industry. These products also ensure the hotel industry is a self-sustaining industry that is able to cultivate and harvest its own raw materials.

2.4 Infrastructure

The hotel industry is usually related to the travel or transport industry directly. To access the services of this industry normally requires one to travel from one place to another. We said that the services provided by the industry are usually home services that are delivered to someone away from his/her home. This means that the individual should travel or be transported to the location of the hotel, which is away from home. After identifying a phenomenon of interest that one would love to see or go to, then the transport industry chips in. Without it, the hotel industry would be limited. Through the travel industry, the hotel industry has been able to serve a diverse culture promoting globalization. A well-defined transport system and

infrastructure are crucial to the development of a sustainable hotel and hospitality industry. Most consumers of the industry have been proven to be majorly foreigners in the particular locations of the hotels. This suggests that in order for such an industry to prosper there is a need for a well-established air travel system that will allow visitors from all over the world to come visiting. The general infrastructure of the hotel and even the environment of the hotel should be pleasing to the eyes, and it is considered to be a vital satisfier element (Kim, Kim & Heo, 2016). This way, even visitors will be able to enjoy their stay and wish to come back to the same venue.

This development of this industry has been influenced by many more factors, especially in recent times. Advancements in technology have a significant impact on this industry. The introduction of the internet to the industry has particularly been influential. The internet has allowed for easy communication in undertaking tasks such as bookings. This has also been boosted by the development of smartphones and mobile Apps used in the industry. Mobile applications have been developed to ease the booking of hotel rooms thus avoiding traffic during the high peak seasons. The industry has also enjoyed the service of experienced and skilled workers as the years pass along. Establishment of schools and colleges of hospitality and catering management has provided the industry with skilled labor. The skills gained in the institutions have seen the industry improve on its service delivery in terms of quality foods and beverages being prepared. The undeniable outcome of this would be the increase in interest of more investors and individuals in the industry. Organization learning, shared vision and joint ventures have been instrumental in supporting sustainable practice (Leonidou, Leonidou, Fotiadis & Aykol, 2015).

Developing a sustainable industry would, therefore, require the emphasis on the factors discussed above. It is notable that all these factors are aimed at preserving high rates of visitors'

influx into subject areas to improve on the hotel industry. The best route to take in establishing measures and standards should, therefore, be directed towards protecting and safeguarding that which attracts visitors to the subject area. Measures should, therefore, be aimed at achieving three broad types of sustainability; economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and socio-cultural sustainability. This three if achieved would ensure the industry is sustainable and remains viable to its consumers.

2.5 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability refers to the preservation of the environment to cater not only to the needs of today but of future generations too. The environment is a major source of attraction and has a huge influence on the development of the hotel industry. Environmental sustainability refers to ensuring, the physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency and purity of the environment (Gebreegziabher& Kumar, 2018). Physical integrity refers to maintaining the scenic beauty by preventing any form of environmental degradation. This popular with physical features that act as attraction sites and therefore promotesthe influx of visitors to a specific area. Several measures can be taken to ensure the physical integrity of a particular region is maintained. The government can, for example, put laws restricting development of urban structures in these areas as this would completely distort the beauty of the physical features. Since the areas act as tourist attraction sites, development of tourism facilities in the area should be closely monitored to ensure the physical integrity of the region remains intact. The installation of advertisement and signposts in this area should be kept on the minimum to preserve the beauty brought about by the natural environment.

Biological diversity refers to the various distinct species of living organisms present in the subject areas. Animal life and vegetation have also been major tourist attraction sites.

Different areas have unique biological diversity depending on climatic factors that either favors their presence or absence in these areas. It is therefore prudent to conserve this wildlife by protecting their natural habitat such that from their natural homes they can grow and multiply. Attempts in doing this have already been made in several countries by the introduction of national parks and reserves which are areas particularly set aside for the habitation by wildlife and tourist are able to come and view them from this place. Laws have been put in place to safeguard this area against inhabitation by any other factor that would cause harm to the wildlife here (Gebreegziabher & Kumar, 2018).

Resource efficiency refers to minimizing on the use of non-renewable resources in operating tourism facilities. It emphasizes the need for conservation of the environment even by visitors. It goes hand in hand with environmental purity that also aims at preserving the cleanliness of the environment. The purity of the environment directly affects both the biodiversity and beauty of the environment. Measures should be put to ensure pollution of the environment is kept at the minimum. This can be achieved for example by reducing the use of products containing chemicals that are harmful to the environment. The successful conservation of the environment directly affects the hotel industry. In creating a sustainable environment, visitors are able to sustain the conditions present in the area. Environmental sustainability, therefore, affects hotel industry sustainability. People are becoming conscious and endeavoring to share resources and engaging in collaborative consumer activities to protect the environment (Tussyadiah, 2016)

2.6 Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Social, cultural sustainability refers to maintaining the support and positive attitude towards the industry. It involves ensuring social equity, visitor fulfillment, local control,

community well-being and cultural richness (Soini & Dessein, 2016). Social equity is to seek widespread sharing of economic and social benefits resulting from tourism and consequently hotel industry. Tourism usually takes place in a place owned by a certain community. To ensure sustainability, the tourism business has to win the trust of the community. This can be done by coming up income-earning opportunities for the community with preference given to those with special needs. This way the community is able to embrace the business in the area and hence ensure its sustainability. As a result, the hotel industry is sustained too.

Visitor fulfillment is the indiscriminate provision of a safe and thrilling experience to all visitors despite age, gender or disability of any kind. The visitors are the consumers and so how they are treated directly affects the sustainability of the industry. To ensure visitor fulfillment, it is important to carry out routine surveys on how visitors are treated to avoid cases of discrimination because of color, race or gender. This can also be improved by improving access to the tourist sites through improving infrastructure. It is also important to include the local community in decision making concerning the future of the tourism and hotel industry in the area. This provides the community with the confidence of ownership of the business. With the business situated on their land, it is only fair if they have a share of not only the profits but also participate in its development (Soini & Dessein, 2016). Such steps would see the future of the industry led by individuals who own the industry and have the urge to see the industry prosper.

To achieve sustainability, the industry can also engage in ensuring the well-being of the community. The industry can provide the community with access to social amenities and even life support services to ensure there is no exploitation or social degradation. This can be achieved by advocating for sharing of facilities and services by both locals and visitors. The industry should also be able to learn about the cultural heritage and practices of the local community. This

way they would ensure they do not involve in activities that are against the practices of the community (Soini & Dessein, 2016). The peace generated from mutually understanding one another's needs and practices is useful towards the sustainability of the hotel industry. The measures provided are vital towards creating a strong bond between the community and the industry. This way the industry would be able to develop and be sustained.

2.7 Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability refers to the ability to meet economic needs currently and in generations to come. It involves ensuring economic viability, local prosperity and employment quality (Cerina, Markandya & McAleer, 2010). Economic viability is basically the attempts made towards ensuring the industry remains viable and competitive in the long term. It involves securing a certain market that they can count on to continue using their services in years to come. Measures to achieve would obviously include prioritizing visitor satisfaction and keeping track of regular feedback from the visitors. This is a way of gaining consumers' confidence by providing quality service, such that the visitors would only come to you when in need of the same service in the future. The industry may also study the market trends and be able to determine the type of market they will be serving in a few years to come.

The industry should be able to consider improving on the local economy too (Cerina, Markandya & McAleer, 2010). This can be done by maximizing visitor spending the local resources. This can be done through outsourcing from the local community resources such as foodstuff. The industry may also support local businesses and provide labor to the locals to avoid leakages. This allows the community to grow significantly at the same rate as the industry. The industry is able to enjoy higher profits for a longer time if the surrounding community is relatively developed too. In providing jobs, the industry should ensure employment quality in the

kind and number of jobs availed to the locals. The jobs should be provided without no special preference given according to gender, race or disability. This they can ensure by establishing institutions where the locals can be trained on the various skills needed for the jobs present in the industry.

Attaining sustainability has been proven to not be a walk in the park but a combination of determination, focus and strategic planning. The measures provided above are the fundamentals in achieving a sustainability industry. Inle lake area enjoys a fast-growing hotel industry cropping up daily. The sustainability of this industry is dependent on these same factors.

Based on the literature review, sustainability can be conceptualized as comprising of five elements that are interrelated. The figure below summarizes the conceptual framework. Of particular interest for the present research is to question the position of these elements in the Inle lake initiatives.

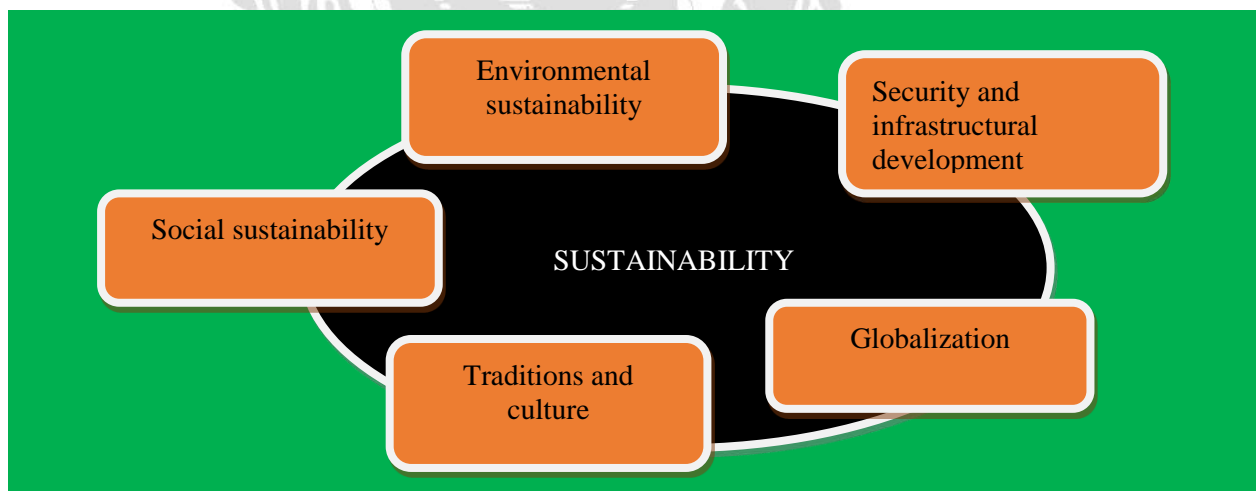


Figure 1: Conceptual framework based on literature review

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

3.1. Type of Research

The research type was fieldwork research. The researcher intended to answer the underlying questions by going to the field and making interviews from the selected respondents. The research method was underpinned by the onion research framework. The figure below summarizes the onion research framework.

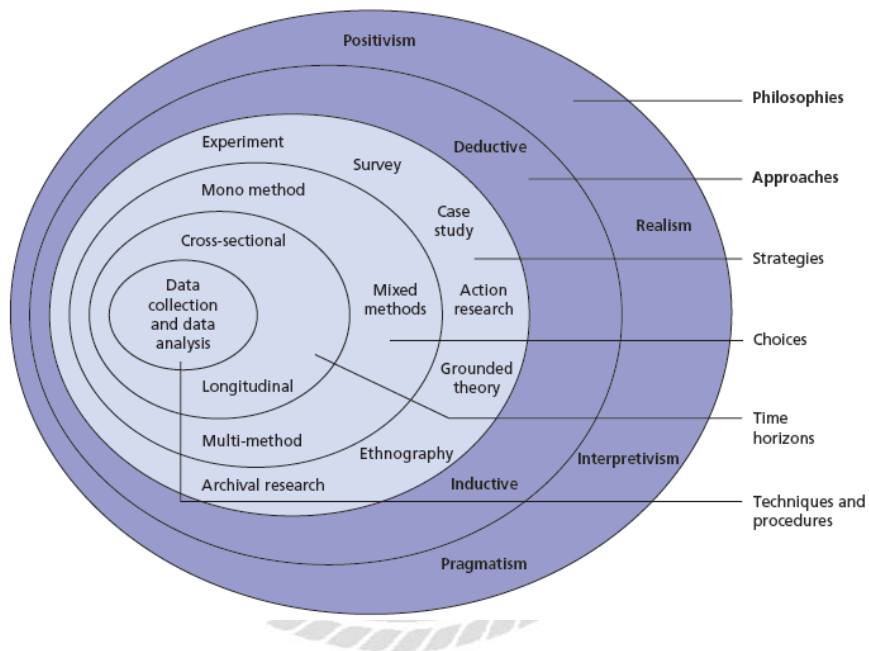


Figure 1: Onion Research Diagram (Junid, 2014).

Based on the onion research framework, the method of the research is summarized in the table below.

Table 1: The present study methodology summary

Philosophy	Research Approach	Research Strategy	Time Horizons	Data Collection Methods
Positivism	Deductive	Experiment	Cross-sectional	Sampling
Realism	Inductive	Survey	Longitudinal	Secondary data
Interpretivism		Case study		Observations
		Grounded theory		Interviews
		Ethnography		Questionnaires
		Action Research		

As far as philosophy is concerned, the study embraced the realist philosophy. One of the outstanding attributes of the realist philosophy is that it is borne on the notion that nature and forms of phenomena, including the associated events, have certain causes such as social structures, processes and entities to which they can be attributed. Therefore, it is often essential for the researchers investigating the phenomena to consider this point. Ideally, researchers can begin by drawing theories and conducting studies to validate or falsify them. The use of the realist view is advantageous in the sense that the underpinning philosophy is intermediary of interpretivism and positivism. Such a scenario created the allowance for the researcher to tap the advantages associated with either of these philosophies.

3.2. Research Design

Regarding the research approach, the used the deductive research approach. The deductive approach is appropriate for the study because it aligns with the realist philosophy. In particular, it based on available theories to investigate sustainability practice of Myanmar. Exploring the subject from the perspective of the deductive research approach enabled the

research to identify the existent theories and formulate hypotheses that were subsequently validated or falsified by way of research. In essence, the use of deductive approach was particularly justified because it is oriented towards reconciling the gaps in theories and practice.

The research used the survey technique, focusing on only the hotels closest to Inle Lake. One of the outstanding attributes of the survey strategy is that it enables the researches to conduct inquiries on phenomena by focusing on only a small sample. The results obtained by studying the sample can be subsequently generalized to the vast sample. The underpinning assumption of the survey is that the nature of specific phenomena tends to be related. Indeed, the use of a survey in the study was potentially justifiable because of the homogenous dynamics of the hotel industry in Inle Lake. In this regard, there would be no point in spending many resources studying the different contexts when the findings of a small sample could be validly generalized to ascertain the situation in broad contexts of Myanmar.

The present study also used the cross-sectional technique. The outstanding advantage of this time horizon is it allowed the researcher to examine the trends of a phenomenon at one instant and give a recommendation. It was convenient in the sense that it saved resources, contrasting with the longitudinal technique that would otherwise take longer.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The study chose to collect primary data. The primary data collection process entailed formulating a questionnaire, then emailing them to the respondents to fill in. The question is designed to be as objective as possible to inquire about the different elements of the subject. The questionnaire used is attached in the appendix (see Appendix A).

The respondents in the study were hotel managers within the Inle Lake region. The questionnaire sought to collect the views of at least 35 hotel managers. In arriving at this sample,

it was first considered that the number of the hotels close to lake Inle around 19. Each of these hotels has at least 2 senior managers. Therefore, the least total number of senior managers would be 38. Based on Cochran formula of sample size determination and adjustment for a small sample size, a sample of 35 respondents was found to be adequate.

The formula is given by:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

In this case, e describes the precision level, p is the estimated population proportion, while q is the value is $1 - p$. Z value is given by the Z -table. The random sample (n_0) based on Cochran's Formula is calculated as

$$n_0 = ((1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)) / (0.05)^2$$

$$= 385.$$

The sample is adjusted for a small sample size using the formula

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

Given the sample size is

$$385 / (1 + (384 / 38)) = 35$$

Data analysis was both qualitative. The qualitative analysis provided an opportunity to analyze data that cannot be quantitatively ascertained.

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Discussions

A total of 35 questionnaires were received from respondents (100 %). The respondents indicated serving in different management positions, including human resource managers, chief executive officers, operations manager, events manager, catering manager, sales and marketing manager, lodging manager and maintenance manager. The table below summarizes the position representation.

Figure 1: The position and the number of participants

Position	Number of participants
Human resource manager	3
Chief executive officer	2
Operations manager	11
Events manager	3
Catering manager	2
Sales and marketing	1
Lodging manager	5
Maintenance manager	4
Front-office manager	2
Meeting manager	2

As it can be inferred, several management positions are represented, which hints of the strength of the study to accommodate different managerial views regarding sustainability. The diversity management representation is also reflected in the hotel of work. When asked the hotels that they work, the respondents mentioned a number of hotels in Inle lake region, including,

Royal NyaungShwe Hotel, The Hotel Emperor-Inle, Thiri Nanda Villa, Inle Cottage Boutique Hotel, Myanmar Treasure Resorts Inle, Hotel Maineli, Sanctum Inle Resort, ThanakhaInle Hotel, Paramount Inle Resort, ManawThukha Hotel and Sandalwood Hotel. Although these are not all the hotels in the region, this representation is potentially advantageous because it allows the findings to be generalized to other contexts.

All respondents (100 percent) had been working in the hotels for at least 3 years. The distribution of age of service in the hotel in Inle Lake is summarized in the table below.

Figure 2: The duration of service of participants

The Duration of service in Inle Lake hotels	Number of participants
Below 2 years	0
2-5 years	10
5 to 7 years	9
7 to 10 years	15
Over 10 years	1

The fact that all of the respondents have worked in the regional hotel for at least 3 years is a prerogative to find reliable responses, considering they would be versed with the sustainable practices of their hotels.

The respondents gave several perspectives regarding sustainability, including caring about the environment, the people, the law, the economy and the environment. Some of the definitive themes of sustainability that were highlighted in the questionnaire responses include “social and economic responsibility”, balancing between the hotel interests and those of the

society” and “being conscious about the environment”. This level of knowledge shows that managers in the hotel industry in Inle lake region are aware of the criticality and significance of sustainability pursuit.

Nevertheless, the question of whether the hotels pursue sustainability standards was perhaps the most important question. Although the respondents acknowledged working towards sustainability, the orientation of their initiatives varied, ranging from social sustainability to environmental sustainability, security and infrastructural development, tradition and culture, and globalization measures. The table below summarizes the orientation of sustainability initiatives based on the questionnaire responses.

Table 1: The orientation of sustainability initiatives based on the questionnaire responses

Sustainability aspect	The number of times mentioned
Economic sustainability	29
Social sustainability	11
Environmental sustainability	35
Security and infrastructural development	25
Traditional and culture	15
Globalization measure	2

The summary table provides an opportunity to infer several elements regarding the subject. Firstly, the hotels in the Inle lake region have varying priorities regarding the sustainability aspects. The priority is particularly directed towards environmental sustainability, followed by economic sustainability, security and infrastructural development, traditions and culture and social sustainability. The global aspect of sustainability is the less prioritized as it is only mentioned twice. In essence, it means all hotels are striving towards environmental

sustainability, while a few have recognized the globalization measure. Meanwhile, the respondents acknowledged the importance of tourism on economic development, further appraising the role of cultural activities and the benefits of the different sustainability initiative orientation and measures.

Economic Sustainability

The respondents highlighted a number of themes regarding economic sustainability. In general, the respondents conceived economic sustainability as a standard of measure of economic growth, which was otherwise ascertained through different initiatives such as building on the assets available to ensure optimal performance, enhancing reputation with the businesses products, customers and stakeholders, planning on the finances and acting in a fair manner. The respondents indicated that all these areas are the core focus for the hotel industry.

In this regard, it can be inferred that hotels in the Inle lake region are faring relatively well with their economic sustainability goals. This direction, however, is also motivated by initiatives at the government levels. Indeed, economic sustainability is one of the standards and a measure that has been put in place by the government of Myanmar which has impacted positively on the economy of the people living around Myanmar. It has enabled enough revenue collection for expansion of the various service hotel industries that have also regenerated even much revenue. Economic sustainability has entailed putting in place economic measures for regulating the use of a given asset of any organization so as to enable it to function optimally. Optimal functions enable many incoming generating institutions like these hotel industries around Inle Lake in Myanmar to boost their income generating capacity which in turn boosts their economy and promotes their expansion and wider development. The government of the people around Myanmar seems to have focused more on the enhancement of economic

sustainability as a means of promoting livelihood that largely comes through employment. One of the means widely ventured into in order to promote economic growth is the empowerment of citizens to be financially stable. This is often done by increasing the income generation capacity of the various businesses that work well to generate broad vacuum for the rest of the uninvolved population to find a way of generating income. An increase in such kind of opportunities will definitely enhance the growth of the various industries not only economically but also regarding the quality of output will redouble. Economic sustainability as a measure and a standard of promotion of hotel industry growth has been employed by the government in ensuring all businesses and companies are capable of paying all their debts and costs of work to minimize so much dependency.

Social Sustainability

The responses on approaches to social sustainability invited a number of views. While many respondents acknowledged that this aspect was important, they indicated that this area had received less management priority — a lot of focus was directed on economic and environmental sustainability to benefit the businesses and avoiding legal suits associated with the environmental laws. More importantly, social sustainability occurs in both formal and non-formal setups. It is one of the key pillars that can be used to further economic advancement of any given place. In Inle Lake around Myanmar, social pillar has not been left behind. The science of social sustainability enables both the formal and informal sectors of the society to unite in achieving a common goal so as to better the livelihood of those living around the society. Socially sustainable communities have a quality life which ranges from the equitable distribution of resources and wealth, democratic governance and many ways of ensuring there are equity and fairness in service provision of services. Social sustainability is useful in business and in this way

it has been an instrumental standard and measure that has contributed to the economic growth of the people living around Myanmar. Social sustainability enables a broad understanding of how various co-operations help to better the social lives of various individuals living in a given area.

The respondents particularly mentioned several core aspects of social sustainability, which include social equity, local control and community wellness, and cultural wellness. Such responses reveal the knowledge and awareness of the managers regarding the pivotal elements of sustainability. Indeed, social equity helps to provide a widespread and equal distribution of various resources and wealth that are shared by the community at large. Social sustainability was enhanced as a measure and standard of promoting tourism and hotel industry economic growth by ensuring there is equity and fairness in the distribution of the benefits realized to them. The benefits include employment opportunities for those who live around these facilities. Once financially empowered, the people around the locality will be able to afford such form of luxurious lifestyle. This increases the customer base thereby increasing the demand for the services offered. Through this means, there have been increased profits realized and this has helped boost the economic growth of that place. Local control is also another key pillar that has contributed widely to the promotion of the hotel industry economy through social sustainability. Local control is engaging the local communities or residents with the task of decision making especially on various issues that would affect their lifestyle. The local control provides security of thoughts to all the members of any given community and enables them to gather trust with those entrusted in the management and leadership of the various hotel industries around Inle Lake in Myanmar. Example of a local control initiative involves in decision making especially in the decisions that mainly affect them like the effect of tourism. Social sustainability being

instilled measure has thus promoted the wide economic growth of the hotel industry. Finally, cultural wellness entails recognizing and promoting the cultural values of the people.

Environmental and Sustainability

The comments on environment sustainability measure were perhaps the most elaborate and overwhelming. The respondents highlighted that their measures were mainly concerned about protecting and conserving the environment, which was fulfilled through a series of social responsibility initiatives such as cleanup and minimizing pollution through the disposal of wastes. The benefits have been encouraging, including avoiding legal suits, serving as a marketing tool and identifying with the local communities. Environmental sustainability as a measure and standard in Myanmar has also enabled rapid economic growth especially in the field of tourism and hotel industry. Environmental sustainability measure has enabled various tourist attraction sceneries to be preserved and this has further promoted tourism around Myanmar. Lake Myanmar is an example of the results of environmental sustainability. The Lake and many other features around have attracted tourism and this is the main reason for the growth of hotel industries around Lake Inle in Myanmar. Various organized projects and developmental conferences have enabled campaigns for environmental sustainability, a factor that has promoted a healthy life and a growing economy for those who value environmental conservation methods.

The questionnaire responses highlight environmental sustainability pillars such as the environmental purity, resource efficiency, biological biodiversity and physical integrity. In this case, environmental purity refers to various measures and standards put in place to minimize pollution and degradation of the environment. Pollution refers to the contamination of the existing natural resources. There are various forms of pollution that highlighted to be of interests for hotel managers. Since water pollution is a serious type of pollution in Inle Lake Myanmar, it

has been campaigned against and this has tried to enhance the quality of Inle Lake so as to keep it fascinating to the visiting tourists as often as possible.

Resource efficiency helps in the productive management of resources for careful use so as to be put into use for a great period of time. Resource efficiency majorly deals with the renewable and non-renewable sources of energy. Non-renewable sources of energy are discouraged because they often result in environmental degradation while renewable sources are encouraged a lot because they cause too much harm to the environment. Standards and measures put in place to ensure there is resource efficiency that promotes the hotel industry include;

Biological diversity helps in conservation of the natural areas, resources and wildlife which also would attract visitors to the hotel industry and boost its market capacity. Examples of measures and guidelines outlined to ensure biodiversity in Inle Lake Myanmar include ecotourism which is tourism with environmental conservation. Tourists are encouraged to conserve nature both in the lake and in other areas around Myanmar which they also explore. Biodiversity conserves natural resources enabling them to thrive long hence they become constant tourist attractive features. This enables tourists to keep coming in the area making them the economy of the hotel industries around to thrive.

Finally, physical integrity is another method of enhancing environmental sustainability. Physical integrity entails measures that have been put in place to maintain and balance the landscapes present in the area around Myanmar. Physical integrity ensures the physical features around the Lake and around the city of Myanmar are all attractive, it ensures urban planning and management is efficient in enabling people to venture into the area for investments and other business activities, by this means, it helps to promote tourism which in turn boosts the economy of the hotel and hospitality industry.

Security and Infrastructural Development

The respondent acknowledged the importance of security and infrastructural development in sustainability development. However, they indicated that this was largely an area of the government and that hotels only come in to support the government. This is fulfilled through initiatives such as building roads, provisioning clean water and social amenities where convenient.

Security is one of the confidence boosters for all who like to visit the strange land. It has been the same case in Myanmar. The government has enhanced proper details of security in the area, and this has brought about an influx in the number of visiting tourists every year. The tourists consume the services of the hotel industry thereby increasing the economic advantage and growth of that sector. Infrastructural development has also played a key role in promoting the activities of the services of the hotels in Myanmar. The government has established good roads and communication network that has enabled tourism and other business activities to thrive in Myanmar. With good roads and proper communication network, it is easier to navigate through the area with ease and it also promotes the general security outlook of the environment. With the support of the hotels, Inle lake region should be able to address all the current and emerging security and infrastructural issues in the future.

Traditions and Culture

Many respondents indicating prioritizing traditional and cultural aspect measures, considering they were one of the notable factors of tourist attraction. Notably, various customs and traditions of various communities living around Inle Lake have also been the basis of standards and measures that have been instilled so as to ensure the hotel industry keeps thriving during all seasons. Cultural dances and displays that often occur around the lake and in the hotels

around to entertain visiting tourists have also made people love visiting and staying around the area during holidays and leisure time. Cultural heritage has therefore been upheld for a long time so as to keep boosting the tourism traffic in Myanmar region. The national culture often comprise of a system of values and norms that dictate the behavior of a certain group of people. Culture is diverse and several people from various backgrounds all have different beliefs and norms. It turns out that most of these cultures are often attractive to those who have not been used to them thus they turn out to be symbols of national heritage or even lucrative economic activities. The hotel industry in Myanmar has embraced culture as an important aspect of the normal day activities (Buijtendijk&Tschunkert, 2016). By this, it has been able to successfully woo many tourists who in turn become consumers of their services. This leads to an increase in the size of profits generated hence a surge in the general economic growth.

However, some elements of cultural erosion and homogenization have been noted as a challenge. Homogenization of culture has lowered the diversity of culture which is often appreciated by different cultural groups coming together for a common objective. Homogenization has marginalized some culture among' other societies especially those that have been marginalized for a long period of time. Homogenization has also caused similarity of the various destinations thus hindering the uniqueness that was often desired by various tourists. Therefore, this issue presents itself as one of the challenges that will need to be addressed.

Globalization

Although globalization is regarded to be an important aspect of sustainability, it was the least prioritized according to the respondents. Many managers indicated that sustainability measures were largely limited to economic, cultural, environmental and social aspects. Globalization refers to the process by which the constricted network between various countries

in the world is broken down by socio-economic or common political agendas of international interest that promote nation building. Globalization is usually influenced by the fast movement of people, money and fast transmission of ideas in the corners of the world. The socio-economic measures instilled under globalization have contributed to the development of a common world platform especially in the hotel service industry where meals of all international backyards can be served at a common point. The world's diverse culture all being catered for at a common point makes tourists visit the places with these fascinating features for pleasure with ease.

However, there are various gains in Inle Lake hotels and tourism activities associated with globalization. One is exposure to different cultural activities and that has already been broadly discussed. Other merits include improvement of technology, the growth in infrastructure and creation of seasonal employment. In the improvement of technology, globalization has enabled ease of access to various areas in the world that were previously considered remote areas. These areas have developed busy road and communication networks. The result of such improvement has been an increased number of visitors visiting the places that were once out of reach for the majority of humanity. Improvement of technology is also one merit that is closely related to the infrastructure of a place. Proper technology in terms of meals, communications, luxurious accommodation services and many more of such have been key areas where globalization has chipped in and provided better solutions. The world today is considered a global village due to the massive effects of globalization. All these advancements are significant in the hospitality industry and have contributed to the general growth and development of hotels. This has contributed so much revenue both for the economic benefit of the hotel industry around Inle Lake, the government and the citizens of Myanmar. These benefits hint the need for the

hotels in the areas to adjust their attention and include globalization aspect in their sustainability initiatives.

Need for Change

When asked whether there was anything that needed to change to support sustainability, various responses were mentioned. These responses revolved around the need for the leadership committed to sustainability, the need to invest more resources in the initiatives, the need to undertake research to understand the nature and form of the Inle Lake sustainability development initiatives, and training and development on sustainability and development among the industrial players. Therefore, on the overall, while sustainability expansion in the Inle Lake region is progressive, it also has several challenges that must be addressed.

The findings create the allowance to dismiss hypothesis 1 and uphold hypothesis 2. The hotel industry in Inle Lake region is faring well in pursuing sustainability standards and needs to be commended, albeit a few areas of weaknesses. On the overall, the nature and form of the sustainability focus of the hotel industry in Inle Lake can be summarized in the SWOT table as follows.

Figure 3: SWOT table based on the findings and discussion

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers have awareness for different aspects of sustainability. • The hotels are pursuing different aspects of sustainability. • Government is supporting the hotels in their sustainability initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is the lack of equal attention on all sustainability areas. • Globalization aspect of sustainability has received little attention.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The industry can benefit from training and development • Research can help identify the areas of weaknesses in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The limited resources threatens sustainability goals • The lack of committed leadership is also a major challenge.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the hotel industry in the Inle Lake region can be seen to be progressive in pursuing sustainability goals. The research has established an evidence of focus towards different aspects of sustainability, which include social sustainability, environmental sustainability, security and infrastructural development, and traditions culture and globalization.

The hotel industry has had a massive support from the government because it contributes to a significant amount of revenue that the government gains from it. The government consequently has developed various standards and measures which have been supported by every stakeholder in the sector to promote, expand and develop sustainable tourism which in the long run has helped in the rapid economic growth of the hotel industries in Myanmar. Some of the major findings were that the measures are aimed at enhancing the economic productivity of the hotel industry to the investors, to the people around and finally to the government of Myanmar. The government of Myanmar has been made tremendous measures towards ensuring the hotel industry remains relevant over longer periods to come, while the Hotels have also been committed to the pursuit of sustainability goals.

However, there are still various elements that needs to be addressed, especially the need for leadership committed to sustainability, the need to invest more resources in the initiatives, the need to undertake research to understand the nature and form of the Inle Lake sustainability development initiatives, and training and development on sustainability and development among the industrial players. In this regard, it is recommended that the initiatives adjust to address these areas.

Besides, the priority for some sustainability aspects such as globalization is also low. Therefore, globalization measures should be encouraged across all hotels. This would help to prompt the world's economic and technological advancement and marketing of the region. It would facilitate ease of access to various places in the world and help provide a good technological scope of any given country, translating to sustainable growth. Cultural erosion also needs to be addressed. Homogenization of culture has lowered the diversity of culture which is often appreciated by different cultural groups coming together for a common objective. Addressing these elements will need partnership of all the stakeholders and investment of resources.



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APPENDICE

Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. What is your position?

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.....

2. Which hotel in Inle Lake do you work?

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3. How long have you been work on the hotel

.....
.....

4. What is your view of sustainability?

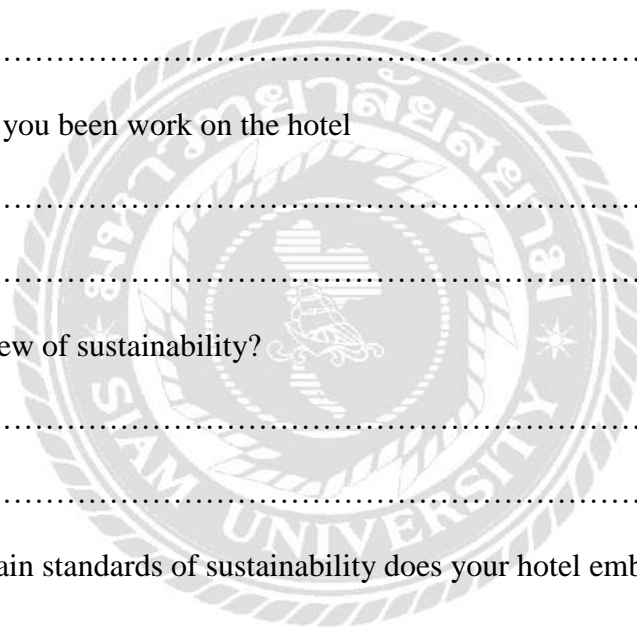
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5. What are the main standards of sustainability does your hotel embrace?

.....
.....

6. What are the effects of tourism in the economic growth of the town around Inle Lake in Myanmar?

.....
.....



7. What are the major economical merits related to the cultural and traditional activities in Myanmar?

8. Please comment on management approaches towards economic sustainability. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

.....
.....

9. Please comment on management approaches towards social sustainability. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

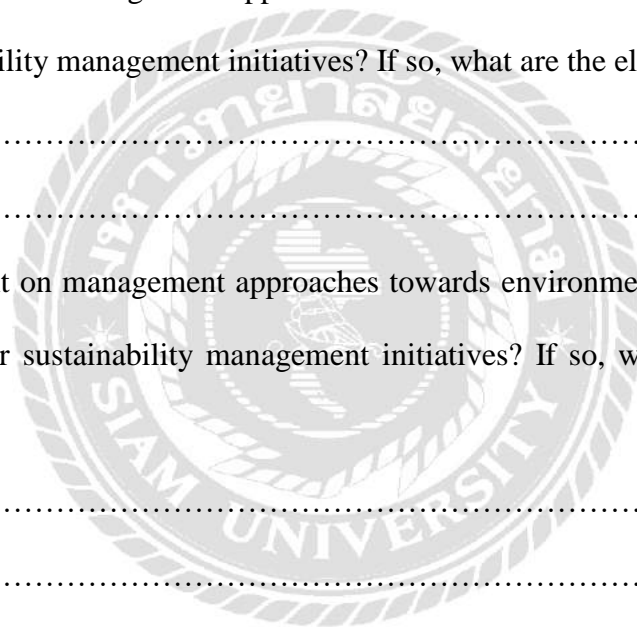
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10. Please comment on management approaches towards environmental sustainability. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

.....
.....

11. Please comment on management approaches towards security and infrastructural development. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

.....
.....



12. Please comment on management approaches towards traditions and culture. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

.....
.....

13. Please comment on management approaches towards globalization measures. Does it have a place in your sustainability management initiatives? If so, what are the elements of focus?

.....
.....

15. Is there anything you feel needs to be done to support sustainability initiatives in the region?

A. Yes

B. No

If yes, please elaborate

.....
.....

