

Sustainable Meetings: A Case Study - Exploring Drivers,
Challenges, and Impacts of Sustainability Programs for
Meetings

by
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SUSTAINABLE MEETINGS: A CASE STUDY - EXPLORING DRIVERS, CHALLENGES,
AND IMPACTS OF SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS FOR MEETINGS

by
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*Presented as part of the requirement for the award of MA Degree in Sustainable Leisure
Management within the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at
Vancouver Island University*

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THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

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ABSTRACT

The meetings industry, one of the largest and most lucrative industries within business tourism, is experiencing an increasing demand for sustainable products and services. Despite this growth, the existing research on sustainable meetings is somewhat limited. There is an evident gap in the literature not covering the actual process, drivers, challenges, stakeholders, and key success factors in meeting industry's adoption of sustainability practices. Therefore, to gain an understanding of the perspective and behaviour of suppliers as it pertains to sustainable meetings, this study sought to explore: a) how do suppliers of meetings understand sustainability?; b) how important is sustainability for the meetings that they host?; c) why are convention centres investing in sustainable facilities, products, services, and infrastructure?; D) what are the drivers and barriers associated with the greening of the meetings industry?; e) what methods are used to assess return on investment in sustainable products and services?; and finally, e) who is creating the demand for sustainable products and services? The data collection tool utilized in this study included four semi-structured interviews, conducted on phone and face-to-face with the sales and service managers of the Vancouver Convention Centre and Metro Toronto Convention Centre between November and December, 2015. The findings indicate that the importance of the triple bottom line of sustainability has been recognized by the meetings industry as an essential business goal. The main drivers of incorporating sustainability in the meetings industry were deemed to be competitive advantage, image enhancement, cost savings, reduced environmental footprint, and altruism. Some of the barriers to incorporate sustainability among the venues were a lack of education about sustainability, limited stakeholder commitment and initial financial constraints. Lastly, a number of recommendations were identified to help the meetings industry move forward such as providing training and education to their staff and the public, as well as implementing additional sustainable practices to keep up with advances in the industry.

DEDICATION

Mom and Dad. I cannot express how grateful I am for your support, love, and encouragement throughout this whole journey. Without your support, I would not have been able to accomplish my dreams, achieve my goals, and start my career. Thank-you for helping every minute, and for that I dedicate this to you. You both worked so hard to help me in fulfilling my dreams and I would always appreciate that. Love you Maa & Papa.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Concept/ Acronym	Definition	Reference
Meetings	The term “meeting” refers to a gathering of 10 or more participants for a minimum of four hours in a contracted venue.	Convention Industry Council (2012)
MICE	The acronym MICE, include meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibition.	Mair & Jago (2009).
ASTM	The ASTM standard consists of practices and procedures around staff management, waste management, communications, energy efficiency, air quality, water use, procurements, and community partners.	Goldblatt & Goldblatt, (2011)
ISO	The term ‘ISO’ stands for ‘the international organization for standardization’. The ISO has developed a set of environmental standards held under the ISO 20121: 2012 system, which requires organizations to implement policies and objectives related to environmental management for their everyday business operations such as: energy consumption, reduced cost of waste management, lower distribution cost, improved corporate image, and a continual environmental improvement.	Henderson & McIlwraith (2013)
CSR	The term CSR stands for ‘Corporate Social responsibility’, which requires businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large.	Holme & Watts (1999)
LEED®	LEED® certification process was designed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC); it concerns itself primarily with the infrastructure of a building and how that helps into reducing the resource consumption and become environmentally sustainable.	USGBC (n.d.)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The term “go green” has become a well-recognized phrase across several media forums on a consistent basis. An increasing number of organizations and businesses want to embrace the image of an environmentally conscious organization and many prefer selecting services, products and venues based on their ability to meet the needs of eco-friendly clients. The idea of being proactive to make buildings including convention centres more sustainable, has emerged as a green movement (Jeter, 2010). According to Goldblatt (2011), the green movement has become a critical business model and facilities that want to be competitive and in forefront of their industry are taking steps to join the green movement including for example, making efforts to make their products and services more sustainable. Whether for the automobile or hospitality industry, the growing concern for climate change and sustainable development has become increasingly important for all sectors of the economy (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). This trend has also been followed by the meetings industry (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions), considering the huge amount of international and domestic travel associated with it, and the growing understanding of the greenhouse gas emissions from long haul flights (Mair, 2011). It is one of the fastest growing and more lucrative industries within tourism and as such, it is vital for the sector to look for ways to improve its sustainability credentials in order to maintain business in the long term (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012).

The meetings industry has experienced an exponential growth over the last few decades and emerged as a truly global industry, with as many as 252 countries vying for a share of this lucrative market (Wan, 2011). Meetings have the ability bring influence and connections, which can lead directly or indirectly to academic, commercial, sporting, cultural and political investment for destinations. Additionally, they also have the ability to support

economic development of host communities because they bring significant revenue to host cities, as well as supporting urban renewal, increasing tourism, job prospects, and many other commercial benefits (Goldblatt & Goldblatt, 2011). Thus, the recognition of the economic impacts of meetings industry has gained interest of many countries to start developing this industry as part of their tourism strategy (Wan, 2011). For example, in a study conducted by the Convention Industry Council (2012), the economic impact of the meeting industry in the United States was bigger than both the auto industry and the motion picture industry combined and supported 5.3 million jobs while generating \$280 billion in spending and \$234.6 billion in total labor income. Also, it was estimated that more than 1.8 million meetings were held in the United States in 2012 attracting 225 million participants (Convention Industry Council, 2012). Down under in Australia, the global meetings & events exhibition (2010) Industry trend and market share report found, that the country received 168,000 conventions and conference arrivals during the year 2010. This was an increase of 15 percent year-on-year, which was much larger than the growth of other tourism arrivals. In 2010, Australia conducted a study of the economic impact of meetings which showed that yearly economic contributions were \$17.3 billion (The global meetings & events exhibition, EIBTM, 2010). 2011 data showed that more than 400,000 conferences and exhibitions are held each year globally with a total annual outlay of around \$280 billion (Wan, 2011). In the United Kingdom, an economic study of meetings from 2010 found that it was worth \$18.8 billion to the UK Economy (UK Events Market Trends Survey, 2010). In Denmark the revenue from “meeting tourism” was calculated to be DKK 7.8 billion in revenue, on accommodation and daily expenditure (VisitDenmark, 2007).

North of the border in Canada, in 2012, the largest proportion of meeting participants were corporate/business meetings (50%), followed by conventions/congresses/conferences (27%), and trade shows (12%) (Convention Industry Council, 2012). Similarly, meetings,

conventions, and incentive travel attracts approximately two million visitors each year to Canada with total spending of \$1.7 billion (MPIFC, 2012). Canada is the number one location for outbound meetings business from the United States, which brings in about \$1.4 billion to Canadian economy annually (MPIFC, 2012). In 2012, 44 million people attended meetings in Canada, which included 37.8 million delegates, 3.3 million exhibitors, and 2 million professional speakers or other attendees (MPIFC, 2012). A total of 585,000 business events were hosted in Canada in 2012, which attracted a broad range of participants and non-participants and accounted for \$29.0 billion in overall spending (MPIFC, 2012). Meetings organizers generated a total of \$7.9 billion to host business events in Canada, which includes \$4.5 billion registration fees and \$3.4 billion from sponsors and other non-participants (MPIFC, 2012). This evidence from across the globe showcases that this industry is a high yield and lucrative growing segment worldwide.

Despite these significant positive economic impacts, the benefits of meetings are often hindered by their negative impacts. Business meetings create a significant ecological footprint on the environment because they consume massive amounts of energy, natural resources and produce significant waste and carbon emissions (David, 2009). The United States Environmental Protection Agency (2000) indicates conferences in the United States compared to conferences in Europe and Asia consume 28 billion gallons of water, 58 billion bio-thermal units of energy in hotels and restaurants, 120 trillion bio-thermal units of energy in transportation, and produce 730,000 tons of solid waste annually. The United Nations Environment Program (2001) also identifies air travel as a primary source of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. These concerns can be somewhat mitigated by managing meetings sustainably and setting environmental objectives with strategies to decrease the negative impacts, while still cultivating the positive impacts and realizing economic impacts (Smith-Christensen, 2009). Scandinavian Airlines has developed the

industry's most efficient fuel saving program with a target of saving 6 -7% in 2010. Some of the activities of reduce the carbon footprint of air travel include "green approach" potential saving every landing approx. 350 kg CO₂. "Fly slower" was another strategy where tests show reduced speed from 860 km to 780 amounts to reduced CO₂ by 420 kg on a Bergen-Oslo flight (ICCA, 2013).

Sustainable practices across the tourism industry are an influential, rapidly growing and evolving trend (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). Sustainable meetings and corporate social responsibility were previously only considered by a few environmentally conscious meeting planners and suppliers, but they have become a standard practice (Goldblatt & Goldblatt, 2011). Many convention centres around the world have also joined the green movement by making efforts to transform their buildings and events to be more sustainable. For example, the Vancouver Convention Centre, ShoWare Centre in Kent, Washington, and the Pepsi Centre in Denver, Colorado, and Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Toronto have all taken steps to incorporate greening into the meetings industry (Goldblatt & Goldblatt, 2011). This trend of embracing sustainability can potentially lead to greater benefits for convention centres such as increased efficiencies (cost saving), more engaged staff, more satisfied eco-friendly customers, and a competitive distinction within the market (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014).

Despite the awareness that sustainability has generated over the past few years, very little research exists that addresses how meeting planners and suppliers are handling environmental issues. Many organizations that host small or large scale events including the convention centers are beginning to address environmental concerns and suppliers have started to develop practices and products that support environmentally preferable procurement for meetings and event activities (McKinley, 2006). However, it is unclear why

suppliers are increasing their investment in environmental or sustainable facilities and practices – in other words, what is driving the greening of the meetings industry and who is creating the demand for sustainable products and services as it pertains to meetings industry. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the understanding and inclusion of sustainable initiatives in the meetings industry from the supplier's perspective. This study attempted to identify the drivers of, and barriers to, sustainable meetings and consider how sustainable meetings might be a vehicle for promoting sustainable behaviour (Mair & Laing, 2012). The Model of greening developed by Mair & Jago (2010), sought to create a general conceptual framework to understand the process of corporate greening and underpin the development of strategies to enhance greening, which could be applied in other events contexts. Therefore, this study applied the Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening in the field of meetings to validate its relevancy and applicability in sustainable meetings within convention centres. In doing so, this study had the secondary objective of identifying the barriers and drivers in respect to the “greening” of meetings.

Research questions

This research considered the following six main questions:

1. How do suppliers of meetings understand sustainability?
2. How important is sustainability for the meetings that they host?
3. Why are convention centres investing in sustainable facilities, products, services, and infrastructure?
4. What are the drivers and barriers associated with the greening of the meetings industry?
5. What methods are used to assess return on investment in sustainable products and services?
6. Who is creating the demand for sustainable products and services?

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the literature relevant to the development of this research. Important concepts, which underpin the research such as sustainability, meeting industry, the convergence of meetings and sustainability, standards & practices of sustainable meetings, role of stakeholders and collaboration of different stakeholders are discussed.

Sustainability

In order to understand how the concept of sustainability is applied to sustainable meetings, it is important to define ‘Sustainability’, as it is widely interpreted and continually evolving. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), sustainable development is, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is often referred as the concept of ‘Triple-bottom-line’. The concept of ‘Triple Bottom Line (TBL)’ was originally coined by John Elkington in mid-1990s, to consider the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainability and since then has become a well-recognized concept in the business environment (Fredline et al., 2005). This new framework (TBL) moves beyond the traditional measures of profits, returns on investment, and shareholder value by encompassing the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability (Elkington, 2004). The rationale behind the TBL is to illuminate the externalities associated with business activities and to promote sustainability through planning and management practices that reduce the negative outcomes while cultivating the positive ones (Fredline et al., 2005). TBL is a fairly comprehensive way of accounting for actions and impacts across industries (Getz, 2008).

a) Social sustainability

The social dimension of sustainability asserts that the laws governing basic human rights should be made in such a manner that the well-being of the present generation allows the continued well-being for the future generations (Jeter, 2010). The major components of social sustainability include basic needs, quality of life, social justice, poverty, equity, and education (Colantonio, 2009). Furthermore, social sustainability is, at its core, built around the idea of reducing poverty across the globe as the global perspective changes from pure growth to one of an effective method of development, that is “qualitative development, from redistribution and sharing” (Goodland (1995, p. 2). Social sustainability can also be defined as the “soft infrastructure” of a community, where communities are built around mutual support of each other and provide the ability to live together (Duhl, 1993). In addition, social sustainability affirms the intersectionality between community development, economic system and the natural environment (Jeter, 2010).

b) Economic sustainability

The economic aspect of sustainability encapsulates the portion of the natural resource base, which provides physical inputs, as well as both renewable and exhaustible resources in to the production process. Economic sustainability include consideration of the physical inputs into production, and emphasizing the value of the natural life-support systems without which neither humanity nor production could exist (Goodland, 1995). To become environmentally sustainable, organizations must maintain viability within the present economic system from which communities can benefit without putting undue pressure on natural resources (Raj & Musgrave, 2009).

c) Environmental sustainability

The third dimension of sustainability is probably the most important aspect of sustainability: the environment. The environmental aspect of sustainability emphasizes the mindful usage of natural resources and reflects potential influences to its viability and could incorporate air and water quality, energy consumption, natural resources, land use, toxic and solid waste (Fredline et al., 2005). Goodland (1995) states that “environmental sustainability seeks to sustain global life-support systems indefinitely...source capacities of the global ecosystem provide raw material inputs—food, water, air, energy; sink capacities assimilate outputs or wastes” (p. 6).

Principles and Frameworks of Sustainability

In literature, sustainability is often perceived as the value or the end and sustainable development as the process. According to Newman (2005), the difference between the process and the goal of sustainable development is critical and crucial in developing our understanding of the interactions between human society and the biosphere. Sustainable development is a widely acknowledged term used by many organizations at all scale of management including local, regional, national, and global. Reflecting different worldviews, the concept of sustainable development has progressed to a point, where there are a number of interpretations and conceptualization have been proposed to operationalize and understand the concept of sustainable development (Gallagher & Pike, 2011). The “three-dimensional model” of sustainability was introduced by the United Nations at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, when the guidelines for sustainable development were first created (Edwards, 2005). This model distinguishes between an economic objective, an ecological objective – natural resources, and a social objective – poverty/equity, and their interaction (Figure. 1: people, profit, and the planet).

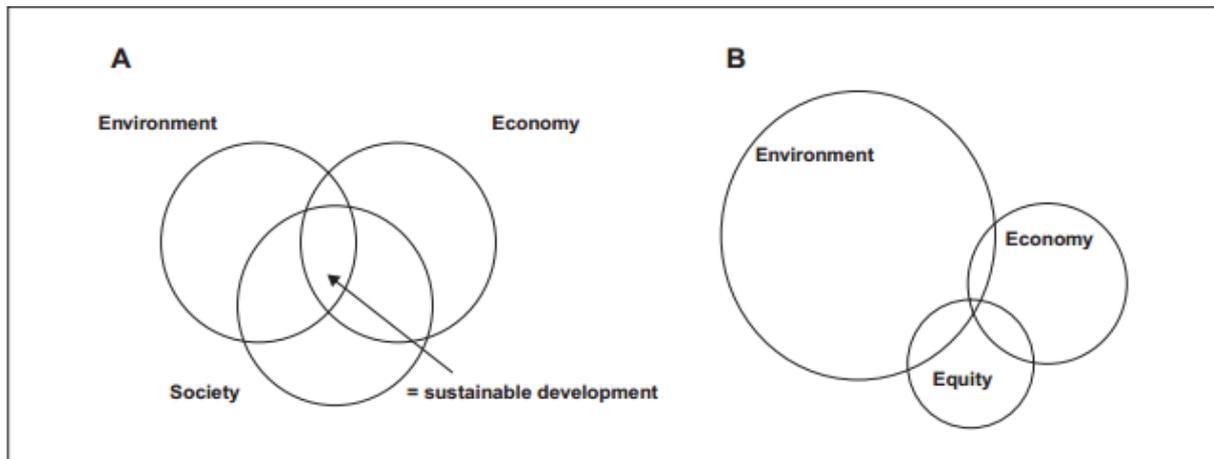
Figure 1: The 3p's sustainability model, Taylor (2010)



Source: Adapted by Taylor (2010), The human side of going green

As opposed to the 3p's sustainability model, which does not cover the overlaps between planet, profit and people, the model proposed by Venn (Figure 2) is possibly the most commonly used illustration of sustainable development. In this figure, the circle size reflects the relative importance of each "E" and the degree of overlap among the three circles represents greater sustainable accomplishments (Saha & Paterson, 2008). In the Venn's diagram, sustainability is reflected by the overlapping area of the three circles, shown as 'Sustainable development'. The overlapping-circles model of sustainability acknowledges the intersection of economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The areas outside of 'sustainable development' are considered either partial sustainability (the 3p's), the union of two circles, or not at all related to sustainability (Lozano, 2008).

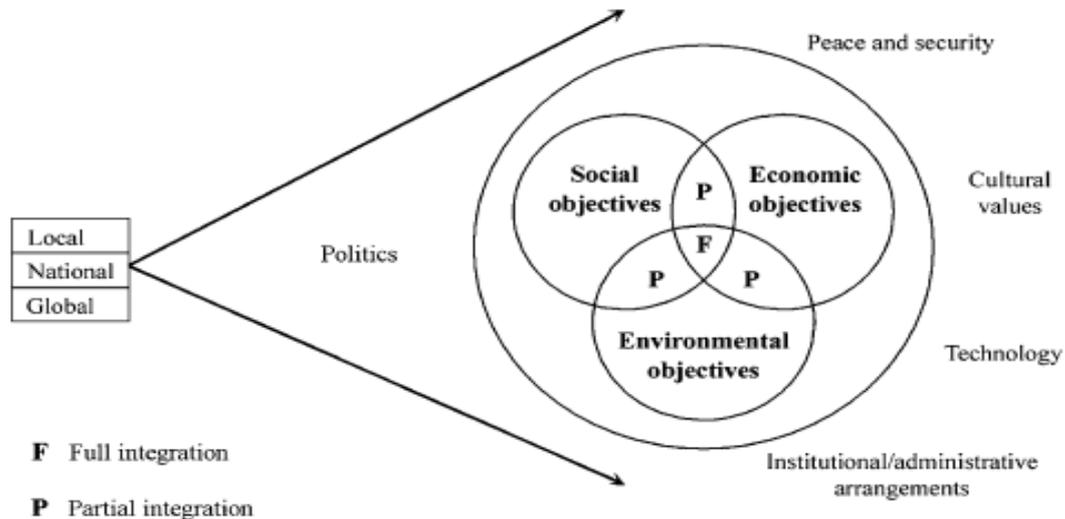
Figure 2: Venn diagram of sustainable development



Source: Adapted from Saha & Paterson, 2008, Local Government Efforts to Promote the “Three Es” of Sustainable Development

Dalal-Clayton and Bass (Figure. 3) complemented the Venn diagram representation by adding local, national, and global perspectives to the existing 3p’s model, which encompass four societal influences: politics, peace, and security, cultural values, and institutional and administrative arrangements (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002). The Dalal-Clayton and Bass’s model of sustainable development illustrates the relationship among the local, national and global levels and emphasizes the need to integrate cultural values, education, politics, technology and peace and security along with the economic, environmental, and social pillars of sustainability in a more holistic manner (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002) (Figure. 3).

Figure 3: The system of sustainable development underscoring the relationship among the local, national, and global levels



Source: Adapted from Dalal-Clayton & Bass (2002), Sustainable development strategies, p. 358

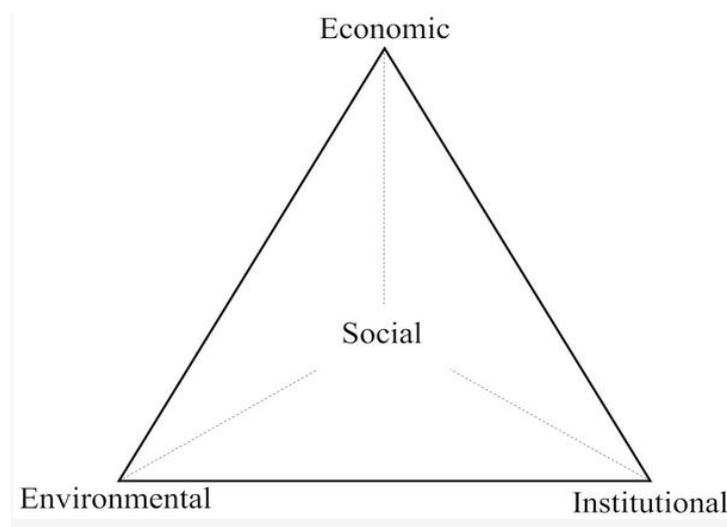
Robert Gibson, a political activist from the University of Waterloo, Canada, suggests that the overlaps in the three dimensions or ‘pillars’ of sustainability should be filled by adding a political and cultural pillar (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Hawkes (2001) in his paper ‘the fourth pillar of sustainability’ emphasized that “new governance paradigms and views of what constitutes a healthy and sustainable society would be more effective if cultural vitality were to be included as one of the basic requirements, main conceptual tenets and overriding evaluation streams” (p. 2).

McKweon (2002), on the other hand, conjectured that ‘education’ should be considered as the fourth pillar of sustainability and should be used to develop “learning skills, perspectives, and values that guide and motivate people to seek sustainable livelihoods, participate in a democratic society, and live in a sustainable manner” (p. 16). Edwards (2005) also suggested that education has been adapted as the fourth “E” to complement the “3E’s” of sustainability: equity, environment and economics. Sustainability education could develop

learners' capabilities, leadership and contribution to the greater transition towards sustainability (Stettler, 2010). The journey to sustainability needs a collective shift in thinking from that which perpetuates un-sustainability to that which generates sustainability, and education is the tool to shift the thinking from 'compete and consume' to 'care of conserve' (Sterling, 2001, p. 21). Capra (2005) suggest that people are in need of regaining their ecological literacy and should learn to be attuned to food cycles, water cycles, season cycles and all other aspects that are interconnected in the planetary web of life. Sustainability education aims to not only to provide society with new knowledge about sustainable development but actively engage them with emergent and transformative learning (Stettler, 2010).

Furthermore, Waas et al., (2011) proposed the fourth dimension of sustainable development - 'institutional', which is also referred as "democracy" or "governance" and has gained attention at both national and international level and included as the fourth pillar in the existing equilateral triangle model of sustainability (Waas et al., 2011)(Figure 4).

Figure 4: The four pillar sustainability model

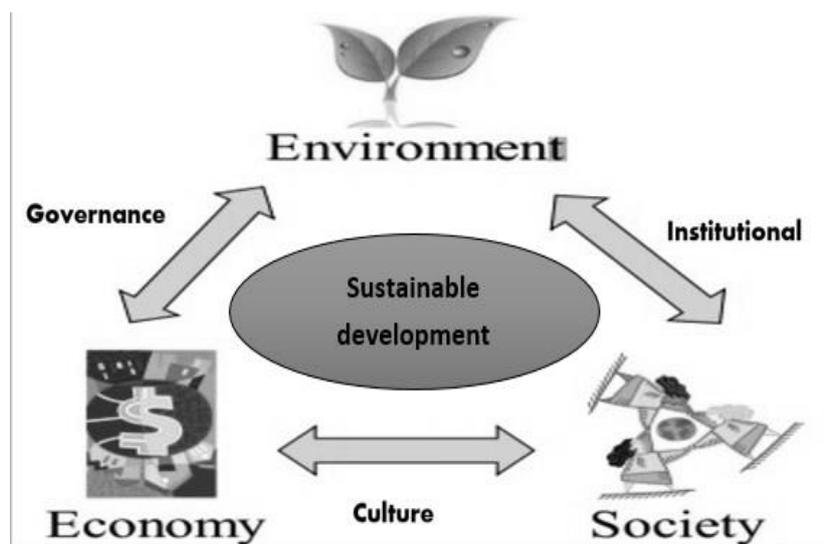


Source: Adapted from Waas et al., (2011), Sustainable development: A bird's eye view

This model (Figure. 4) emphasizes the importance of institutional change for sustainable development, as agreed on in 1992 in Agenda 21, where the institutional dimension is outlined in a separate chapter. Institutional change requires the environment and economics to be merged into decision making and to enforce the common interest through greater public participation, both locally and internationally (Waas et al, 2011).

Opinions about the significance of the pillars and the models of sustainable development are thus quite divergent in the literature. While some advocate for two pillars (environment and socio-economic), others argue for a third or fourth adding culture, education, politics, and institution in order to fully address sustainability. In both theory and practice, sustainability has been observed as a concept, process, and goal. In this era, sustainability is interpreted differently amongst individuals, organizations, governments, often in favour of one's own agenda and interest (Wass et al., 2011). Thus, this thesis strives to maintain a holistic interpretation of sustainability comprised of economic, environmental, social, and other dimensions of sustainable development (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The holistic interpretation of sustainability



Source: Adapted from Framework for assessing environmental, social and economic sustainability of ICT organizations, Khuloud Odeh, 2013

Meetings Industry

For the purpose of this research, “the term “meeting” refers to a gathering of 10 or more participants for a minimum of four hours in a contracted venue. Meetings include conventions, conferences, congresses, trade shows, and exhibitions, incentive events, corporate/ business meetings, and other meetings that meet the aforementioned criteria” (Convention Industry Council, 2012, p. 3). Meetings are often replaced by the acronym MICE, which include meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibition (Mair & Jago, 2009). Others have defined ‘meetings’ as restricted attendance at off-site gatherings of corporations or professional associations, whereas conventions are open to the entire membership of the sponsorship organization (Oppermann, 1996).

The global economic impact of this sector is significant; however, it is difficult to define with any authority, since there are no global figures available and many destinations worldwide have used different definitions and meanings to produce figures which makes aggregation and comparison more difficult (Mair & Jago, 2010). The British Conference Market Trend Survey (BCMTS, 2000) estimated that 1.3 million conferences and meetings were held in United Kingdom in 2000, which contributed around £6.6 billion to the local economy of United Kingdom. When visitors travel to a destination, their spending has a substantial effect on a destination’s economy in the areas of food service, public transportation, lodging, auto transportation, recreation and amusement and retail. Similarly, in Australia the meetings sector is important to their national economy and showed that 28.4 million delegates attended business events in Australia in 2003 which represented a total spend of \$17.4 billion (Deery at al., 2005). According to a landmark economic study released by Meeting Professionals International Foundation, Canada (MPIFC, 2009), the meetings industry in Canada supported 235,500 jobs, attracted 70 million attendees and generated

approximately \$33,843 billion in direct spending in 2008. The 160,000 square-foot Winnipeg Convention Centre generated over \$38.9 million in 2004, which resulted in 376 person/years of employment, contributed \$8.4 million in tax revenues, and economic spin-offs for hotels, taxi companies, restaurants, retailers, and recreation facilities (MPI, 2009). In 2012, meetings in Canada attracted 35.3 million participants and involved \$29.0 billion in direct spending. These events contributed \$27.5 billion to Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2012 – approximately 1.5% of Canada's total GDP. Business events contributed \$8.5 billion in taxes and service fees to all levels of governments and supported more than 200,000 full-year jobs (MPIFC, 2012).

On the contrary, the benefits of meetings are often hindered by their negative impacts. Meetings have huge ecological footprints on the environment because they consume massive amounts of energy, natural resources and produce significant waste and carbon emissions (David, 2009). The Economy and the Environment report (2008) claimed that an average conference participant, over the course of a three-day meeting generates about 28kg (61lbs) of waste, compared to 6kg (13.5lbs) at home over the same period, and produces 640kg (1,42lbs) of greenhouse gases in just three days including flights, road miles, getting to the event and other CO₂ emissions from the venue and hotel (What is a green meeting, 2011). Similarly, In Canada business travel (road transportation, rail, marine transportation and aviation) accounts for 26.7% to total greenhouse gas emission (MPIFC, 2012). Tourism in general and especially meetings sector has a major dependency on air travel. The United Nations Environment Program (2001) also identifies air travel as a primary source of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Airline traffic is in general growing but many airline organizations are working on reducing CO₂ emission in many different ways. Since climate change and its effect on tourism activities is being more and more visible, environmental protection has become one of the major concerns in the meeting industry.

There is little literature available regarding meetings and sustainability and the impact that meetings have on our day-to-day life (Dickson & Arcodia, 2010; Laing & Frost, 2010).

Additionally, this issue specifically has not been dealt in detail in the meeting management literature. Many corporations have started to cut back on their business travel and meetings out of concern for their carbon footprint and it is likely that increasing emphasis on combating climate change will increase the pressure for suppliers, venues, sponsors and others to find solutions to contribute to the sustainability of the industry (Mair & Jago, 2010).

Relationship of the meeting industry and sustainability

There are many benefits in investing in sustainable meetings. Organizing a sustainable meeting involves more than just ensuring that the operations and venues are environmentally adaptable (Laing & Frost, 2010). Meetings can also be used to promote sustainable education through awareness, design and experience (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). Sustainable meetings are growing in popularity as tools to inspire and motivate people about environmental awareness (Laing & Frost, 2010). Moreover, the purpose of sustainable meetings also involves generating awareness about other issues, such as climate change, sustainable lifestyles, healthy living, organic products and a variety of other social issues (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). Apart from generating awareness, sustainably managed meetings and events can also provide education through venues such as themed displays or stalls, presentation and sale of organic food and beverages that suit the sustainable theme (Laing & Frost, 2010). If venues are designed and operated in sustainable ways, they can give people an exposure to experience, engage and practice about sustainable infrastructure, culture and choices (Orr 2004,). Therefore, sustainable meetings have the power to educate the society around issues that needs to be addressed for sustainable development.

The idea of organizing meeting sustainably emerging as a common trend, which does not only helps the facilities minimizing the negative environmental impacts but also provide many socio-economic benefits for the host community. Additionally, meeting professionals are recognizing that sustainable practices such as recycling, reuse, and eco-efficiency can translate into lower onsite costs and cost savings. On the venue side of the industry, more and more facilities are setting a trend and have achieved significant savings by reducing the energy and water they consume and the waste they generate (MPIFC, 2006). These initiatives have provided them a distinct marketing advantage by positioning themselves as sustainable venues (MPIFC, 2006). Interestingly, the green character of the meetings industry helps not only in saving energy, paper, and waste, but it also draws the attention of media and sponsors which helps to reinforce the image and reputation of these building/venues for their environmentally friendly practices (MPIFC, 2006).

The Concept of Event Sustainability

In recent years, more and more meetings planners are trying to minimize the environmental impact of meetings and increasing the social engagement of stakeholders. The shift towards environmental awareness at meetings has gained popularity and the proliferation of sustainability consulting is becoming a profitable and important business (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). As Getz states “in an era of global climate change, rising energy costs and the risk of scarcity, environmental issues have recently come to the fore in the events literature” (Getz, 2008, p. 404). The term ‘sustainability’ initially was used commonly in managerial, technical, administrative, and political forums and later was associated with different sectors such as sustainable business, sustainable living, sustainable tourism and, now, ‘sustainable meetings’ (Smith-Christensen, 2009). In the field of meetings, the concept of ‘going green’ has gained popularity in the last decade (Laing & Frost, 2010).

Every sector appears to interpret sustainability differently since there is no universally accepted definition of sustainable development (Hunter, 1997). Therefore, to better understand the relationship between meetings and sustainability, it is important to define the term 'sustainability' in the context of the meeting industry as sustainable meetings are a relatively new trend, and there is still a need for clear interpretation around this concept. They are often referred to as 'sustainable events,' 'conscious events,' or 'responsible events' (Stettler, 2010, p. 11).

In general like other concepts of sustainability the term 'greening' has an environmental association and is used to describe the process of turning a product, service, activity or organization into a more environmentally sustainable exercise (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). According to the report published by the Environmental Affairs Division, Canada, "A green meeting ensures that all aspect of an event, including its location, food services, transportation, and the provision of materials are approached with pollution prevention in mind in order to reduce its environmental impact" (Environmental Affairs Division, 2007). Thus, a sustainable meeting is one where sustainable practices, ideas; design, awareness, and theory are fully incorporated into all levels of management, logistics, operations, and production (Laing & Frost, 2010).

The idea of sustainable meetings has been evolving over the past two decades and gaining popularity at both the national and international level (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). Every corporate event, meeting, and activity has an impact on the triple bottom line of sustainability (MPI, 2012). Meetings planners increasingly try to integrate sustainable practices by measuring the need and importance of such events (Sustainable Event Alliance, 2011). They are also trying to improve the sustainability credentials of meetings, and sustainable meetings have become common topic of discussion amongst media and public

(Laing & Frost, 2009). Sustainable practices have begun to take hold in all kinds of events including conferences and meetings, trade shows and exposition, community and civic events (Sustainable Event Alliance, 2011). Organizations are increasingly adding ways to make CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) a business imperative and meetings, events, trade shows, and conferences are being organized in a sustainable manner considering different practices that reduce the carbon footprint of the meetings and contribute to the sustainable development of the industry (MPIFC, 2012). Suppliers are working hard to promote what is being termed as ‘sustainable meetings’ (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012). Though sustainable meetings continue to grow in demand and popularity, there is still a need for a clear interpretation and definition around the concept of sustainable meetings, so that the meetings industry including the suppliers can leverage the benefits.

Sustainable buildings and convention centres

For the purpose of this thesis, the consumer of meeting refers to organizations that host their meetings and events in convention centres and convention centres are referred as suppliers/producers of meetings. When it comes to sustainability within the meeting, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE) industry, convention centres play a significant role as the central event venue and “host” (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). A number of major convention and conference centers around the world have taken a leading role to promote sustainability in meetings sector such as the Vancouver Convention Centre, and the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. These facilities play an influential role within the MICE industry due to their size, the number of people they host each year globally and the economic activity they help generate (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). They have not only designed the buildings in a sustainable manner, but have also extended the greening process to the meetings that occur within their facility. Facilities such as the Melbourne Convention

and Exhibition Centre, which is the first convention Centre in the world to be awarded a six-star Green Star Environment rating by the Green Building Council of Australia for its innovative environmental design and operational features such as energy efficient lighting, solar hot water, radiant slab heating and cooling, and sustainable use of building material (Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, 2008). The Spring Preserve in Los Angeles has embodied the preserve's message of sustainability and received platinum LEED® certification by the U.S. Green Building council for providing sustainable meeting facilities for occupants (Robinson, 2007). The Los Angeles Convention Centre was awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2008 for its waste diversion program, which recycled more than 1500 tons of material (Goldblatt & Goldblatt, 2011). Many convention centres are municipally owned facilities, providing an opportunity to illustrate the city and destination's commitment to sustainability (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). Also, many convention centres are investing resources towards achieving building sustainability certification such as LEED®, ISO 20121: 2012, APEX/ASTM Environmentally Sustainable Event Standard, BOMA BEST, and ENERGY STAR (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014).

Standards & Certifications

The Vancouver Convention Centre was the first building in the world that received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) platinum certification for its sustainable design strategies (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). LEED® certification process was designed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC); it concerns itself primarily with the infrastructure of a building and how that helps into reducing the resource consumption and become environmentally sustainable. It is based on point scale which corresponds to different levels; from basic certification to platinum ranking with silver and

gold designation in between. It has paved the way for multiple industries including healthcare, convention, hotels, new buildings to design green buildings and build a sustainable building and more environmental friendly infrastructure (USGBC, n.d.). There are many LEED® certified building across the globe including the Washington National Park (United States of America), ShoWare Centre in Kent, Washington, Philips Arena in Atlanta and many more, which have made significant efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and contributed to the green building movement (Reichard, 2009).

Similarly, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre and the Colorado Convention Centre were among the first convention centers to achieve third-party certification for ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) environmentally Sustainable Meetings, Events, Trade Shows, and Conferences (E2774-11) Level 1 for venues. (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). The ASTM standard consists of practices and procedures around staff management, waste management, communications, energy efficiency, air quality, water use, procurements, and community partners (Goldblatt & Goldblatt, 2011).

Tracking and reporting

Internal tracking and reporting on utilize use, sustainability performance and community impacts are some of the important factors that could help the convention centres to understand how they are performing and contributing. Interestingly, it is becoming as a common practice amongst the event organizers to request reports related to sustainability metric such as water use, energy use, waste generation and diversion, green cleaning, etc. The industry has developed some standards that could help the centres in tracking and monitoring their performance and overall contribution to sustainability (Green Venue report, 2014). The most common standard for environmental aspects for buildings and offices comes from ISO,

the international organization for standardization. The organization was established in 1946 with the goal, “facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards” (ISO, 2010, p. 1). The ISO has developed a set of environmental standards held under the ISO 20121: 2012 system. This standard requires organizations to implement policies and objectives related to environmental management for their everyday business operations such as: energy consumption, reduced cost of waste management, lower distribution cost, improved corporate image, and a continual environmental improvement (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013).

Among all the standards ISO 14001 is the world’s most recognized framework for environmental management system (EMS) that helps organizations both to manage better the impact of their activities on both environment and to demonstrate sound environmental management. It offers a wide-ranging portfolio of standards for sampling and test methods to deal with specific environmental challenges. It has developed around 570 international standards for the monitoring of the quality of air, water and the soil, as well as noise, radiation, and for controlling the transport of dangerous goods (Henderson & McIlwraith, 2013). These standards can help the convention industry to measure the impacts of their events and meetings and develop strategies to further enhance their sustainability programs.

Maxine Golding, writer for the Magazine of the Professional Convention Management Association: Convene (2008) stated that convention centers are “roaring ahead – assessing their environmental impact, upgrading their systems, improving on the vision laid out by government leaders...” and further brings up that, “the more sustainability features convention centers add to their operations, the more they raise consciousness across the industry” (Jeter, 2010, P. 14). This has coined the term “green convention”, which is a subset of the broader term “green meeting” that is often used by the convention and conference

industry (Park & Boo, 2010). The quote in the Green Venue Report (2014) “Green meetings happen in green venues” illustrates the importance of convention and conference centers in promoting sustainability in the MICE industry (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). They are not only investing in sustainable products and services but also providing sustainability education to their staff and customers (Goldbatt, 2011). Apart from providing education to staff, convention centers are also offering other programs for their employees and attendees such as discounted transit passes and partnership with local public bus commission to provide cash and discount rewards for using public transit (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014). Centres are also emphasising heavily on staff engagement with efforts such as monthly or quarterly “champion for the environment” award, awards programs for sharing innovative ideas about sustainability, monthly training sessions around sustainability topics, incorporating sustainability into all kind of events from town hall meetings to major hallmark events, and distribution of annual sustainability reports (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014).

Interestingly, sustainable meetings have created their own niche market and created new economic opportunities for the planners and suppliers (McKinley, 2006). The idea of hosting sustainable meetings by curbing waste and minimizing resource consumption creates a new economic opportunity for convention and conference centres to increase their market share and competitiveness by providing goods and services that supports sustainable events (McKinley, 2006). The more sustainable products and services a facility can provide, the more positive attention they receive from clients and it also helps them to develop a ‘sustainable or environmental-friendly’ image (Jeter, 2010). Moreover, it has created many formal job opportunities such as sustainability officers and other management positions that develop sustainability programs & policies and to oversee long-term projects like LEED® certifications and annual budgeting and reporting (Unterkofler & Simons, 2014).

The meeting industry is a completely service-based employment sector and the industry has grown significantly over the past decade in terms of numbers and diversity resulting in increasing demand for sustainable meetings (Goldblatt, 2011). For example, Las Vegas IBM Information on demand conference requested the organizers to replace the paper with digital alternatives, donate non-recyclable materials to local schools, and place uneaten food in compost. A Meeting News survey in 2009 revealed that 93% of corporate and associate meeting planners have planned to at least occasionally incorporate sustainable elements into their meetings (Boehmer, 2009). Jackson et al., (2005) suggest that the recreation and leisure industry could be at the centre for the expansion of the new economy if the sector were not so carbon and energy intensive. If meeting organizers can lessen the heavy ecological footprints and control the consumption through sustainable meeting management practices, they can be a vital player in the development of the new sustainable economy (Jackson et. al., 2005). In summary, the meeting industry is growing and creating significant demand for sustainable meetings which presents opportunities for the industry to advance sustainability and make important contributions to the new economy.

Paradigm shift in the event management literature

The majority of the event-related studies show that there has been a focus on the economic evaluation of events and much of the academic literature has attempted to focus primarily on economic impacts of events (Fredline et al., 2005; Crompton, 1999; Faulkner, 1993; Mules, 1999). There are many studies regarding mega-events including Olympic games, world cup, and large festivals and their environmental impact (Collins, Jones, & Munday, 2009; Collins et al, 2007; Dickson and Arcodia, 2010; Roper, 2006). However, there is little literature available regarding meetings and sustainability and the impact that day-to-day events have on the environment (Dickson & Arcodia, 2010; Laing & Frost, 2010).

Hede (2007) and Mair (2010) also noted that there has been a bias towards the economic evaluation of meetings and events and very few studies have been undertaken to evaluate the social and environmental impacts of events. Similarly, Lee and Back (2005) argued that economic impacts have been a dominant research theme in meetings sector. These criticisms have resulted in a recent paradigm shift in the event management literature calling for a new focus on the three pillars of sustainability (Hede, 2007).

As opposed to merely looking at the single bottom line of economy, the concept of triple bottom line is a more progressive approach because these three dimensions of sustainability are interconnected and must be addressed concurrently to achieve effective solutions (Fredline et al., 2005; Raj & Musgrave, 2009; Carlsen et al., 2007). Similarly, Yoo and Weber (2005) suggested that there is a need for studies evaluating economic, social and environmental impacts of convention tourism. It may be argued that meetings have less or minimal impact than other types of events such as festivals or mega-events but meetings still create significant environmental impacts which to date have not been fully explored in the literature (Mair & Jago, 2010). Recent research has attempted to explore social and environmental sustainability in the festival context (Mair & Laing, 2011), but, this topic has not been discussed in detail in the meeting industry's context (Mair, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the primary focus will be on advancing understanding of the environmental pillar of sustainability in the meeting sector and specifically how suppliers addressing the increasing demand for eco-friendly products and services resulting in this trend.

Stakeholders and collaboration

A number of stakeholders including the organizers, suppliers and others have started to take significant steps to reduce their environmental footprint (Mair & Jago, 2009). Event

organizers and managers are central connectors between key industry stakeholders and are crucial leverage points for making events more sustainable (Brooks, et al., 2007). Stakeholder engagement and participation contributes to event viability and the success of sustainability initiatives (Anderson & Getz, 2008).

The stakeholder concept was originally coined by Freeman in 1984 to describe the nature of corporate behaviour and social behaviour (Freeman, 2010). In a broader sense, it envisages an organization of fluid boundaries, nested in constituencies of 'interests', some overlapping, and some reciprocal (Mitroff, 1983). These interests are represented by various interest groups and individuals, some outside the organization and others which may internally situated. All stakeholders have a particular 'stake' in the performance, process, product or image of the organization (Mitroff, 1983; Wood, 1990). Stakeholders will, to a greater or lesser extent, try to exercise influence over the way a firm or industry conducts its affairs, while firms attempt to affect them (Fineman & Clarke, 1996). Figure 6 provides an illustration of internal & external stakeholders in the meetings industry (Figure. 6).

Figure 6: Illustration of stakeholder's relationship in the meetings industry



Source: Adapted from Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell and Haris, 2012

There are four broad interest groups that can influence an industry's response towards environmental protection (Gladwin, 1993). The first group consists of bodies whose manifest mission is to care for the planet and people. These groups can also be defined as national or local green pressure groups such as Greenpeace, Earth First and other high-profile individual champions in society such as David Suzuki foundation. Their methods range from conservative persuasion ('environmental care is good for businesses') to moral exhortation ('it is your duty to care for') or direct confrontation/ sabotage ('ecotage') (Fineman & Clarke, 1996). The second group represents regulatory authorities. A regulator's interest is to make environmental law to protect society and natural resources from the environmental harm that can accrue from an unfettered industrial practices (Fineman & Clarke, 1996). The third group comprises of people and organizations that have indirect interests in industry's environmental performance such as financial shareholders, banks, who may gain from the economic attractiveness of a sustainable product or industry; customers who prefer to 'buy green' products; suppliers whose environmental reputation is linked to the organizations with which

they deal; media – television, radio, newspaper, trade and popular magazines- interested in newsworthiness of corporate environmental performance (Fineman & Clarke, 1996). The fourth group are called ‘internal stakeholders’. These are corporate officers in industry whose role includes environmental work, health and sanitation, such as chief executives, environmental managers, public relation managers, as well as production, marketing and legal personnel (Fineman & Clarke, 1996).

Mossberg & Getz defines stakeholders as ‘strategic stakeholders’ those “who can affect the firm’s performance” (Mossberg & Getz, 2006) and those “affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” are called moral stakeholders (Mossberg & Getz, 2006). Jones stresses the importance of stakeholder participation for hosting sustainable events and divides them into internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders are the person(s) responsible for the sustainable initiatives of the event and other staff members such as the marketing and advertising staff, the waste manager, site managers, stage/lighting/sound managers, production co-ordinators and other that are involved in the pre-production and production process of an event. External stakeholders include sponsors, suppliers, the media, local community members, volunteers, and others, who are not on the core staff of an event, but are equally important for its success (Jones, 2010).

The development and implementation of sustainable initiatives is highly dependent on relationships between stakeholders (See figure. 6) (Buhalis, 2000). According to Andersson and Getz, (2008) by maintaining the support of committed stakeholders with the community, media and suppliers event organizers can maintain long-term viability of events. Watt, (1998) believes that for the success of an event all the stakeholders should agree on the purpose and benefits of sustainable initiatives. However, stakeholders are driven by their own objectives and self-interests and often have colliding interests (Marzano & Scott, 2009) and not all

stakeholders may be supportive and agree on all purpose and benefits, when making the decision to organize a sustainable meeting or event (Laing & Frost, 2010).

To better understand the connection and links between different stakeholders in the meeting industry, network analysis could be a potentially valuable tool. Links in networks are the relationships between the actors (stakeholders), and these links can have different content and values such as communication, information sharing, and financial transactions etcetera. These links could be either directly or indirectly linked (Timur & Getz, 2009). Networks are the actual pattern of actors, whether they have many or few linkages, and which actors have the power (Timur & Getz, 2009).

Power has been considered as a very important influencing factor in the success or unsuccessful collaboration of stakeholders, as stakeholders often tend to have different levels of influence on the outcomes. Stakeholders can use power to advance their particular interests and convince other stakeholders of their interests (Marzano & Scott, 2009). In a case done by Marzano and Scott (2009) on the process of branding on the Gold Coast in Australia, the actual use of persuasion and authority was analysed showing that only 5 out of 420 members of the tourism stakeholders were considered to be powerful decision makers, and were largely related to those with financial capacity.

In these types of scenarios, ‘collaboration’ theory could be very useful in managing stakeholder relationships. Collaboration theory is defined as a tool to solve conflict and increase communication between multiple stakeholders, provide common goals, and build a sense of identity (Laing & Frost, 2010). Collaborative participation and cooperation of stakeholders including sponsors, venue and land managers, relevant government agencies and departments, artists, staff and attendees can contribute to positive outcomes of sustainability initiatives of sustainable meetings. However, legitimacy and power are critical to consider

when selecting stakeholders for collaboration. A legitimate stakeholder has an authority and some degree of power over the area of collaboration (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Fyall & Garrod (2012) argue that the vast majority of the tourism industry is no longer able to meet the likely future needs and demands of customers by working independently. It is agreed that the present and future customer demands have changed so much that success requires collaboration of ideas, products, and organizations. If an organization is to meet its objectives, they have to work in collaboration with other to provide better services to the customers. Similarly, Jamal & Getz (1995) state that stakeholders in tourism are highly dependent on each other; but, this dependency should work as a motivational factor as they need each other to get desired outcomes. Ahuja (2000) found empirical evidence that some actors might view collaboration as a way of losing control over other participants. However, Jamal & Getz (1995) believe that perceived benefits is one of the strongest conditions, for successful collaboration as self-interest comes first for each stakeholder. Therefore, an organization faces many challenges in multiple stakeholder collaboration efforts in the greening process of an event because of differences in power relationship and stakeholder's willingness to participate and cooperate. However, it is important to focus on common goals to advance agendas such as sustainability.

Industrial greening models

In early 1998, it was found that a substantial body of literature on achieving sustainability in the field of business had developed, which could be referred as "industrial greening". It covers different aspects of greening such as the technology behind greening, greening in specific industry sectors and the impact of greening on economic and financial performance (Fuchs & Mazmanian, 1998). A number of studies have undertaken to understand the drivers of, or motivations for, improved environmental performance in

different industries (Petts et al., 1999; Tilley, 1999; Marshall, 2005; Mair & Jago, 2009).

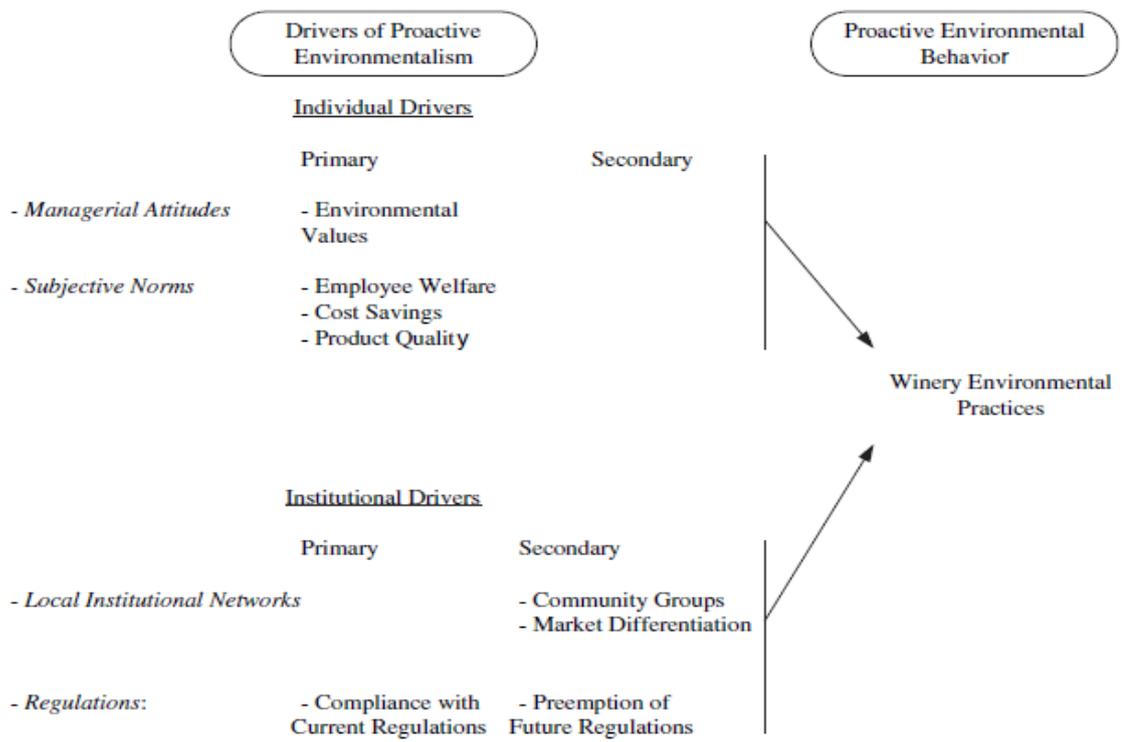
There have been a few studies in different fields covering the factors that create the pressure on different industries to 'go green' (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Marshall, 2005; Fineman & Clarke, 1996 & Schaper, 2002). Some authors have taken a macro approach, examining the situation broadly for small enterprises, with regards to environmental attitudes and some have taken a micro approach and have examined sustainability initiatives at the level of the individual firm (Mair & Jago, 2009).

At this point in time, much of the stakeholder management literature is concerned only with identifying different stakeholders who affect the greening process of any firm and not covering who is actually creating the pressure on industry to incorporate sustainability (Mitchell et. al., 1997). There have been studies concerning the push factor in a range of different industry sectors including US wine industry, automotive sector, and the oil industry and many others. For instance, Christmann (2004), found in her study several push factors in the chemical industry and divided them into three types of external stakeholders that creates the pressure on the industry to 'go green'. Firstly, government pressure, that regulatory pressure as a main determinant of firms' domestic environmental conduct in various countries. Secondly, industry pressure, in any industry, industry associations play a significant role in setting industry norms for environmental conduct and the aim of these norms is to protect the collective reputation of the industry (Hoffmann, 1999; King & Lenox, 2000). Competitors can also create great pressure on industry for environmental responsibility and firms aim to enhance their legitimacy by imitating successful competitors (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993). Lastly, customer pressure was identified as an important determinant of firms' environmental conduct (Christmann, 2004).

Marshall et al. (2005) (Figure. 8) also proposed a model of drivers of proactive environmental behaviour in US wine industry and divided the drivers into primary and secondary drivers or individual and institutional drivers, whereas individual drivers emanate from, or within the control of, the individual organization such as personal values or managerial attitudes and institutional drivers are those that are imposed on the organization by external factors such as compliance with current regulations etcetera.

These factors are specific to one industry and may not be the same in the meetings industry as the meetings sector does not have 'dirty' industrial practices in comparison to chemical, manufacturing, wine, and automotive industries (Mair & Jago, 2009). Lynes and Dredge (2003) found that the vast majority of the literature regarding environmental commitment and corporate social responsibility has concentrated on manufacturing industries and there is limited research in the service sector regarding the greening process and what has been done has focused on accommodation providers. The drivers of greening are specific to each industry and cannot be generalized across an entire industry (Baylis, Connell & Flynn, 1998). Very little academic effort has been directed to the environmental impact of the meetings sector despite its significant environmental footprint (Lynes, 2006). Research needs to move beyond the 'dirty' industries – automotive, wine, and petrochemical (Rittichainuwat & Mair, 2012) and incorporate sectors such as the meetings industry to better understand motivational factors for greening and strategies adopted. Specific research on sustainable meetings is conspicuously absent.

Figure 8. Model: Drivers of Proactive Environmental Behaviour in U.S. Wineries

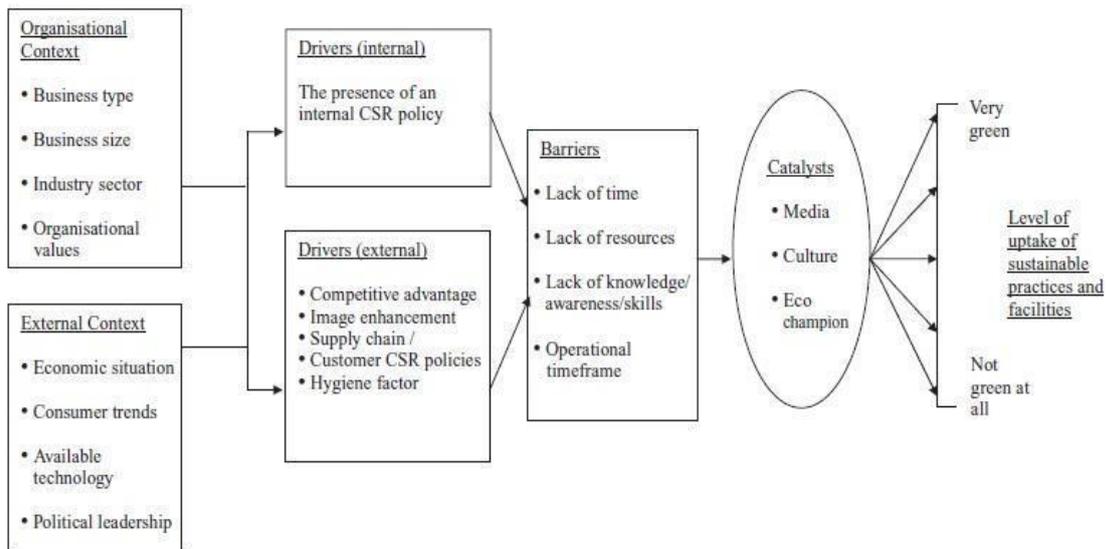


Source: Adapted from Marshall et al. (2005), *Exploring individual and institutional drivers of proactive environmentalism in the US wine industry*.

Mair & Jago (2010) Model of greening

Mair and Jago (2010) have proposed a model of greening into the business events sector, which provides a general conceptual framework to understand the process of corporate greening and suggests the development of strategies to enhance greening. The model represents the interconnections between the aspects that are influential both drivers and barriers and also includes both the organizational context of the individual firm and the role of media and other stakeholders in setting the agenda for the salience of environmental concerns (Figure. 7). The model (Figure. 7) suggests that customer demand, supply chain, competitive advantage, image enhancement, and corporate social responsibility policies are some of the significant drivers of corporate greening in the business events sector (Mair & Jago, 2010). Consumer demand (termed as “hygiene factor”) was also a significant driver of greening in Mair & Jago (2010) model, which refers to factors that or service that is assumed to be there and one without which business in most unlikely to be won (Mair & Jago, 2010). Their research also highlighted that lack of time, resources, and knowledge could also pose challenge to the overall greening in the business events industry (Mair & Jago, 2010).

Figure 7: Proposed model of the drivers and barriers of corporate greening in the business events sector



Source: Adapted from Bansal and Roth (2000), Marshall et al. (2005) and Lynes and Andrachuk (2008)

Even though multiple studies have been conducted on corporate sustainability and environmental management in general, it is not fully understood why some organizations are more environmentally proactive than others and what drivers enhances their environmental performance. Despite its increasing importance, the previous research conducted on sustainable meetings is limited. While much academic and policy consideration appear to have been given importance to the environmental impacts and management of ecotourism, adventure tourism, and other types of leisure related activities that takes place in the natural environment (Mckinley, 2006), less has been focused on the events and meetings sector. And, where previous research has estimated the environmental impacts and economic value of events; little has been undertaken to identifying the drivers and factors that create pressure on the meetings industry to 'go green'. One of the few existing studies that have applied this concept to business events was the Mair & Jago (2010) model. For these reasons this research attempts to fill this gap by gaining a better understanding of the perspective of convention centres about the sustainability of the meetings industry. Also, this research utilized the Mair

& Jago (2010) model to validate the relevancy and applicability of the individual drivers and barriers identified in their study into sustainable meetings and compare the findings of this study to Mair & Jago (2010) model.

Conclusion

Meetings have significant values and benefits for the economy and businesses and can be used to activate the transition towards sustainability in the broader sense. Environmental responsibility has become a great concern for many sectors of the tourism industry; especially those creating significant greenhouse gas emissions. The adoption of sustainable practices in meeting industry is grounded in a stewardship ethic for the conservation of the natural resources, as well as maintaining the integrity of the elements upon which tourism depends. However, the integration of sustainability in meetings is no easy feat. To reach this goal, the concept of sustainable meeting must become widely adopted as common practice. To drive the adoption and expansion of sustainable meetings, there is a need to first explore the understanding of the concept of sustainable meetings from the supplier's perspective - what is driving the greening of the meetings industry, and what are the challenges that the suppliers face in their efforts to move meetings towards sustainability. Thus, to gain an understanding of the perspective and behaviour of suppliers as it pertains to sustainable meetings, this study sought to explore: a) how do suppliers of meetings understand sustainability?; b) how important is sustainability for the meetings that they host?; c) why are convention centres investing in sustainable facilities, products, services, and infrastructure?; D) what are the drivers and barriers associated with the greening of the meetings industry?; e) what methods are used to assess return on investment in sustainable products and services?; and finally, e) who is creating the demand for sustainable products and services?.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the methodology used in this study. First, the purpose of the study and research questions are reviewed. Then the research design is presented. This section then gives an overview of the methods, how the participants were recruited, and how the data was collected and analysed.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the perspective and behaviour of suppliers (convention centres) as it pertains to sustainable meetings. Therefore, this study sought to explore: a) how do suppliers of meetings understand sustainability?; b) how important is sustainability for the meetings that they host?; c) why are convention centres investing in sustainable facilities, products, services, and infrastructure?; D) what are the drivers and barriers associated with the greening of the meetings industry?; e) what methods are used to assess return on investment in sustainable products and services?; and finally, e) who is creating the demand for sustainable products and services?. For this study the selected suppliers are the Vancouver Convention Centre and Metro Toronto convention Centre since they both have incorporated sustainable practices in their operations and management and have been trying to reduce their environmental impact.

Given the scope of this study, the approach used to conduct research relied on qualitative methods to address the limited use of qualitative research in meeting industry's context (Mair & Jago, 2010). The qualitative approach allows for a greater understanding of the perceptions of the participants and a greater depth of information from each source. Moreover, it is argued that there has been a predominance of quantitative research published in the meetings area, and there is an ample scope for qualitative research and very little is known about the meanings that individuals associated to meetings (Mair, 2009). They can also provide reliable, comparable qualitative data that can help in analysing data for a

comparative study (Tellis, 1997). Also the qualitative research approach has the scope of flexibility, which allows emerging data to be iteratively incorporated into the analysis (O'Brien, 2006). This study is exploratory in nature; therefore, qualitative analysis was selected as the most appropriate method for gathering data by using semi-structured interviews with the Vancouver Convention Centre and Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they are an effective, in-depth data collection instrument that more fully explores subjects, stories, perceptions and concerns (Gay et al., 2009). Interviews that are only partially-structured use predetermined and open-ended questions as prompts but allow the conversation to follow the interviewee's guide to unveil his or her experiences and perceptions (Gay et al., 2009). Tellis (1997) also recommends open-ended interviews to "expand the depth of data gathering, and to increase the number of source of information" (p. 11).

This study investigated how the convention centers are impacted by or, conversely, impacting the meetings they host as it concerns sustainable initiatives and modification to generally accepted meeting management protocol and techniques. The study compared Vancouver Convention Centre with the Metro Toronto Convention Centre; however the information was collected on an individual scope and focused on each convention centre's response to sustainable initiatives. These convention centers were chosen for multiple reasons such as their positive contribution in holding environmentally friendly meetings and other kind of events, their ability to offer zero-waste events, some of them have also received LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

The study has some structured and semi-structured questions that are to be of the "how", "why" and "what" variety, thereby demonstrating a need for in-depth analysis of the topic and further supporting the need for a qualitative study. In-depth interviews were

conducted with the sales and service managers of both the convention center's, who are responsible for suggesting and implementing sustainability initiative as a part of their portfolio of duties, and also aims to help the convention centers become more sustainable. These participants were chosen because they have the expertise to discuss the importance of going green or sustainability issues in the planning and management of meetings. Also, the perspective of sales managers vs. service managers are important, since it could expose potential gaps, such as the perception of sales manager who highlight the green value adds, and service managers, who are responsible of delivering on those values.

This research design can be considered both intrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic research aims to better understand the experiences of the study participants, while instrumental research aims to generate insight into the theoretical underpinnings of a greater issue (Hancock & Algonzzine, 2006). Specifically, this research is intrinsic because it aims to look at the particular experiences and perspectives of the suppliers concerning sustainable meetings to identify the challenges and success factors they encounter in adapting sustainability. This research is also instrumental because it aims to generate an understanding of the barriers that the business meeting industry faces in its transition to improved sustainability (Hancock & Algonzzine, 2006).

Selection and contact of the participants

The potential participants were contacted through the email addresses obtained from the websites of the respective convention centers and were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study about the sustainability issues in the planning and management of the meetings, also who is creating the pressure on them to invest in sustainable facilities and services. An email was sent to the participants that include a, brief overview of the interview,

PDF file of the letter of informed consent, and a request to discuss sustainability process of convention centres in an interview. The interviews were held in-person or via phone.

Two interviews with participants in Toronto were conducted over the phone on 25th and 28th November 2014 and lasted between 30 – 40 minutes and two interviews with participants in Vancouver were conducted face-to-face on 17th and 20th December 2014.

Data collection

There were a number of core variables explored with the interviewees including: :i) the definition and importance of sustainability, the aims and objectives of their mission to ‘go sustainable’, ii) the benefits and constraints that they encounter with respect to sustainability, and iii) motivations for incorporating sustainability into meetings (Appendix C) .

The interviews were recorded partly by a digital audio recorder and partly by notes. For the interview participants, confidentiality was addressed with the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts and final thesis paper. Themes were derived from the existing literature and used to guide the construction of a few semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C). With these pre-determined open-ended questions, each interview was moulded to best leverage the participants unique perspectives and experiences. Interview participants were asked to talk about their perceptions of sustainable meetings and the cost and benefits in adapting sustainability. Further to that, interviewees were asked to discuss, what they felt the main drivers to corporate greening in the meetings industry might be. These open-ended questions were designed to enable participants to share their views and opinions before any specific questions were asked. Lastly, they were asked to comment on a number of dimensions that are arisen from the existing literature as potential drivers such as competitors, media etc. (Mair & Jago, 2010).

Data analysis and coding

Once the interviews were conducted, the interview conversations were transcribed as per the collected audio files and then categorized according to a coding system that helped in identifying key themes from the information gathered. The data was analysed by using the computer software program called 'NVivo'. This software helps in organizing and analysing the entered data, which is generally less structured than quantitative data. NVivo has replaced the proceeding program called 'NUDIST', as the top analytical computer software for qualitative data produced by QSR international and designed by Tom Richards (QSR International, 2014). NVivo opens with a small window referred to as the Launch Pad, which has four core tool functions: (a) create a new project, (b) open and existing project, (c) open a tutorial, and (d) exit the program. All data was arranged around Documents and Nodes-the two main working frameworks within the tool. Documents are simply data that one analyses in the study. All NVivo documents are in rich text format. Nodes are places where one stores ideas and categories. It is important to note the difference between a code and a node, in NVivo terminology. A Node is a physical location where you store the groups of ideas that would be coded. Thus, coding (putting things into codes) is a process; a way to label certain aspects of the data and to sort information in distinct categories. The node on the other hand holds all of the information that has been coded under a certain category. Attributes are properties assigned to nodes or documents. Once attributes are defined, each document or node will have specific values for each attribute. These attribute values can be numeric, string, Boolean or date-time type. These attributes can be usefully applied for better data management and effective searches. The NVivo Search tool can be used to search for string, coding patterns or attribute values in the project database. These features enable the user to search for patterns across their data (Bandara, 2008, p. 8).

The analysis software helped the researcher to identify themes and variations from the interview transcripts of data entries. General themes and variations were coded by the software then examined by the researcher. The researcher then examined the data base to determine if there were specific relationships between the themes. Using unidentified quotes from participants, each category was named and specific examples were drawn. Variations in application were also placed in categories and using quotes from participants and specific examples, categories were named and described.

The aim was to draw out the perspectives and views of the participants in order to answer the main research questions. For example, after reading and reviewing the interview transcripts, I developed a pre-sort, coded by categories, themes, patterns, classified, and then worked back and forth over the categories. Also, while it was important to draw out the themes of the data, it was equally important to gain perspective and retain the context. Thus, In-Vivo coding (coding with the key words identified within the text) was then conducted in an attempt to reveal possible themes, patterns, and other attributes found in multiple nodes. Coding was done as an iterative process throughout the data analysis process. Through the data analysis process, a few Tree nodes and free nodes were created. Tree nodes were used to represent the concept and categories in the project that were logically related as they can be organized in a hierarchical structure. Four categories or Tree nodes were created that corresponded to the six research questions such as Perceptions of sustainability, drivers and challenges and push factors. Another Tree coding was done that addressed the research questions. Similarly, free nodes were created with loose or free ideas that emerged from the data such as the requirement of sustainable initiatives, and best sustainable practices.

To test the validity of the drivers and barriers of greening of the Mair & Jago (2010) model, open coding was done that involved the researcher breaking down the data into its

parts and looking for similarities and differences in opinion within the responses from both the centres. The drivers and challenges were coded according to themes derived both from the literature (mainly using the elements of the Mair & Jago, 2010, model) and from the emergent data. Furthermore, codes were developed in relation to drivers or motivators and then barriers and misconceptions.

Grounded theory

Generally, research moves from the inductive to the deductive approach. Hypotheses in social research often come either from data or the literature review, or sometimes a combination of the two then tested for validation. Given that this study was exploratory in nature, as there is very little theory about sustainable meetings with which to base the study. Grounded theory was used to analyze the data gathered for this study. Grounded theory is a qualitative research design where a theory is developed through systematically gathering and analysing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is a combination of both inductive and deductive method (Stern, 1980). The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory to explain a process when existing theories do not fit or have not been created (Creswell, 2008). Grounded theory provides a mechanism to structure any exploratory research, “When substantive theory-building is viewed from the perspective of “grounding” the hypotheses in qualitative data, it can be defined as “grounded theory”- the discovery of theory from data systematically collected from social research” (Weingand, 1993, p. 6).

Since the theory used in a particular research is allowed to evolve, rather than being the initial driving force behind the research, a universe of possibilities is opened to the researcher to explore (Stern, 1980). The process allows for serendipity and inclusion of the unexpected. It allows the researcher to begin with data collection rather than a hypothesis and

then code the collected data to draw key themes, comparison between similar themes, and organize data with which theories can be generated and used for further study. Since exploratory and qualitative research focuses mainly on interpretative analysis of data, grounded theory helps sort and organize the data to discover relationships and concepts within the data (Heath & Cowley (2004). Also, since grounded theories are mostly drawn from data, they are likely to offer deeper insight, enhance understanding and provide meaningful guide to action (Heath & Cowley (2004). In this study, grounded theory was used to systematically gather and analyze data in order to understand the concept of sustainable meeting from the supplier's perspective. Within grounded theory, data is first analyzed through open coding. Open codes are then focused into various categories, where each category has its own set of properties and characteristics. Properties are then dimensionalized along a continuum (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Properties and dimension are significant in grounded theory because they serve to help the researcher in comparing and drawing conceptual relationships.

Ethical Issues

The interviews involved people who are directly involved in the greening process of convention centers. In order to keep their privacy, the interviewer made sure not to relay any information about their responses to anyone else, or share any private information. All the information was handled with greater confidentiality. The interviewer did not create any pressure on anyone to answer any questions that they were not feeling comfortable with. It was also ensured that all the participants were treated with respect and dignity, and ensured that their fellow peers behave in the same cordial manner. The consent form were sent via Email well in advance and the interviewer also read the consent form for each participant

before the interview, which stated that their participation was confidential, and if they do not wish their names to be published, their names will not be published.

Limitations

Within this study, there were several limitations that stemmed from human error. These limitations included the potential for error on part of the researcher, who had limited experience in conducting in-depth interviews. Also, potential error could occur in the responses from those being interviewed. It had to be accepted that the responses given by those being interviewed were the most accurate and honest to what actually occurs and takes place within their facility and represented their real thoughts and behaviors.

Additionally, limitations might have occurred since this study was qualitative in nature and analysis was based primarily on the researcher's ability to interpret the interviews and the content contained in those interviews. Moreover, since there was not a specific theory to which this study was based upon, there was not a set of standard procedures for examining the case study participants. However, the main limitation of this study is the small sample size. Clearly, the results of this study cannot be said to reflect the views and opinions of the entire meetings industry. However, as the purpose of this exploratory research was a scoping study to explore the understanding of sustainability, and the drivers and barriers of greening in the meetings industry, the findings are of interest in themselves and provide a good foundation for future research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research is to explore the understanding and inclusion of sustainable initiatives in the meetings industry from the supplier's perspective. The research questions examined in this study were used to understand 1) To what extent convention centers incorporate sustainable practices into their facilities for business meetings, 2) To consider the benefits and challenges when accommodating the needs of sustainable business meetings and 3) To investigate the key drivers that motivate the suppliers to invest in sustainable products and services. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings that emerged from this study. The first section of this chapter describes the different interpretation of sustainability perceived by both of the centers, followed by other themes included the definition of sustainable meetings, the drivers and barriers associated with sustainable meeting, the push factors identified by centre representatives to incorporate sustainability, and concluded with the recommendations for future.

Facility Background

Metro Toronto Convention Centre (Centre A)

Metro Toronto Convention Centre is located in downtown Toronto, Canada. The centre has been active in the promotion of its sustainability program since 2005. It has designed its sustainability program around the three pillars of sustainability – planet, people, and profit, and implemented sustainable initiatives into every aspect of their business. This has resulted in an achievement of 89 per cent waste diversion from landfill along with a 14 per cent reduction in the amount of waste and recycling produced by the organization compared to 2012. In 2013 they donated, composted, and recycled over two million pounds of material through their waste management program, and became the first venue in Canada

to be awarded the APEX/ASTM Level 1 certification for Sustainable Meeting Venues. The facility received the 2014 Sustainable Tourism Award from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario for its contributions and continues efforts to the practices of sustainable tourism in Ontario. Beth Potter, President & CEO Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, congratulated the Centre for receiving the Award and stated, "Green initiatives are integral to the growth and stability of Ontario's tourism industry. Centre A is leading the way for event venues to reduce waste, recycle more, and be more sustainable for future generations of tourists". (Xhuli, 2014).

Vancouver Convention Centre (Centre B)

Vancouver Convention Centre is located in downtown Vancouver, Canada. The centre has a commitment to economic, environmental, and social responsibility. The newly built West building has six-acre of 'living roof' houses more than 400,000 indigenous plants and grasses, which makes this facility the largest in Canada and the largest non-industrial living roof in North America. Another unique feature of the living roof is that it is designed to act as an insulator, which reduces heat gains in summer and heat losses in the winter. The roof is also home to four beehives with European honey bees. The bees help pollinate the plants and grasses on the living roof while supplying honey for the kitchen. A restored marine habitat is also built into the West building. Water quality in the area has improved, with the growth of a large variety of sea life. The centre also has also built a black water treatment plant that provides toilet flushing water and rooftop irrigation during warmer weather, which also helps in reducing potable water use by 72.6%. The centre has maximized natural light and ventilation throughout the whole facility and use local BC wood products from sustainably-managed forests (Vancouver Convention Centre, 2013). The West building is the first building in the world to receive the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental

Design) Platinum certification, which is the highest LEED® certification. They received an Environmental Leadership Award by Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) in 2010. The centre also received ‘GO GREEN’ certificate from the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) for environmental best practices.

Themes

1. Perceptions of sustainability

Both of the centers were asked to respond to the question “what does the term ‘sustainability’ mean to you?” which elicited various responses from both the centres. Both the centres spoke briefly in response to this question and although many themes emerged, these could all be grouped into overarching themes of environment-, social- or economy/business-related. While centre B named the overarching themes of environment and economy explicitly, however, centre A spoke about all three themes more conceptually:

“Sustainability to me means creating a successful business that can continue on indefinitely in theory with having a positive impact on the triple bottom line where the economic side and social side are taken into account as well as the environmental side. It’s very much the holistic view of this, of how a business runs and in making sure that it can continue on. It can continue on, it makes it a robust and strong organization” (Centre A).

Within the environmental theme, both centres spoke about sustainability and the need to acknowledge the limited resources available and the responsible usage of resources with this fact. This included ideas of living within the means of the environment and acting in responsible ways, for example centre B mentioned, *“It’s about taking what you need and use the natural resources mindfully” (centre B).*

Examples of the social theme of sustainability were more prominent within the responses of centre B in which people and community were explicitly mentioned, *“For us it's really about sort of a really strong commitment to the environment. It's about sort of reducing our carbon footprint. And really doing what's right for our community” (Centre B).*

Similarly, centre A also commented on that, *“I believe for our centre it sort of encompasses a few things, but it would mean a certain longevity in creating the best business practices, in the most resilient way, in a way we can sustain ourselves and our surrounding communities for years to come” (centre A).* Compared to centre A, the theme of social sustainability was more evident within the responses of centre B, for example, when the centre representative mentioned that sustainability is, *“something that we all need to do for the humanity and also morally it's something that we all need to adapt for the younger generation to survive” (centre B).*

In comparison to the first two themes, the theme of economy was the least discussed in both centres. One of the respondents from centre A explicitly mentioned economic sustainability along with social and environmental sustainability, but did not expand on this theme beyond this. Conversely, the respondents from centre B did not mention economic sustainability specifically, but within the discussion it was mentioned that sustainability is *“about running the business in a way that it leaves a positive impact on the community”* and considering whether a business is conducted in an ethical way and *“taking what you need and use the natural resources mindfully” (centre B).* These three themes of the perceptions of sustainability all included the idea of “long-term” or “long-run” thinking and acting and suggest that both centres had a well-rounded idea of what sustainability mean in the context of sustainable meetings within convention centres.

1.1 Defining sustainable meetings

Building on the perceptions of sustainability, both the centres were then asked to define, what a sustainable meeting was to them and how they applied sustainability into the meetings that they host, which elicited various responses and definition from both the centres. Centre A commented: *“if you’re having a sustainable meeting or a green event you are consciously thinking about one or many aspects to reduce your overall carbon footprint”*, and followed up on, *“And I think that as long as there is an effort being put into reducing the environmental footprint of the meeting, then I would consider it a sustainable meeting”* (Centre A).

On the other hand, to define sustainable meeting centre B stated, *“I would say a sustainable meeting would be when an organizer decides to incorporate environmental considerations throughout all the stages of the meeting in order to minimize the negative impact on the environment and contribute to the triple bottom line of sustainability”*. Another response from Centre B included,

“I think when you're talking about what a sustainable meeting is, and it's when an organizer makes very mindful decisions. Sort of from different types of practices, from the venue they select to the type of suppliers that they use, to the type of practices they use to run the meeting that they are considering the environment in every step of the way. So I think that would encompass what a sustainable meeting is” (centre B).

After analyzing the responses from both the centres, it was evident that both the centres focuses more on the environmental pillar of sustainability to define a sustainable meeting. However, they included all three pillars; social, environmental and economic, while defining sustainability in general. Overall, both the centres provided great insight into their understanding of sustainability and defined the concept of sustainable meeting under the

overarching umbrella of triple bottom line of sustainability, which comprises social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability.

2. Best practice implementation

After interviewing both centres and requesting information regarding their sustainable best practices currently in place at their respective facilities, it became apparent that both centres are utilizing some of the well-established sustainable best practices in their facility. These activities are included but not limited to recycling, composting, motion sensor lighting, LED lighting, blackwater treatment plant, scratch kitchen and many others.

2.1. Recycling and composting program

Both the centres had some form of recycling and composting program in place – centre A commented on their recycling and composting program:

“We have recycling in our facility, as well as compost and biodegradable and we also use only a hundred percent compostable products for our retail areas. So if you are getting a sandwich for lunch or soup or a coffee, all of the containers that it comes in are compostable” (centre A).

Centre B talked about their recycling program and mentioned that they recycle all kind of waste including wood and cover tiles,

“We have a very robust recycling program. So, that would be the practices. All sorts of materials that are used in the building obviously to build this place are very sustainable. So anything from the wood features in our building to sort of recycled cover tiles etc. are some examples. So these are just some of the examples of how we are green” (Centre B).

Centre A composted through its convention centre side and some within their catering department and donate the materials,

“Recycling is huge. That’s a very big part of what we have been doing here for a really long time. So we, you know, I’m not sure if you’ve gotten any numbers about what kind of volumes of waste and recycling come out of trade shows and events, but they, you know it’s hundreds of thousands of kilograms. And food waste is a big part of that so making sure that’s all composted and we capture as much recyclable material as possible then also donate and reuse as much as possible. So, materials, physical leftover stuff from events is a huge part of what I do and making sure that’s managed properly” (Centre A).

Centre A also talked a bit about their contract with the hauler, and how does that help in saving cost:

“For our recycling, the way that we have negotiated our contract with our hauler, is that we either don’t pay or we get rebates for all of our recycling depending on the stream where we have to pay for the waste, the stuff that goes to the landfill. So we have a financial incentive to reduce the amount of waste that we send to landfill” (Centre A).

Similarly, Centre B also mentioned about their extensive recycling program, and specifically mentioned about their scratch kitchen program and how does that help them to reduce their carbon footprint by using local products.

“When you look at sort of the green operating practices that we adopt as a team, some examples would be like I said having a really robust recycling program. And of

course we also operate a scratch kitchen here at the convention centre, so our chef and his team our very, it's very important to them to select local and seasonal ingredients so that we're reducing some of the carbon footprint to bring to our door. So that's really important as well” (centre B).

2.2 Environmental purchasing policy

Centre A incorporated green purchasing policy into their sustainable initiative plan, and talked about how it helps them to contribute to their environmental program:

“It also goes through to our procurement program and making sure that we buy sustainable products, we buy ones that have you know, in bulks so we don't have as much waste, we buy ones that are green certified for example or on the food side we tend to go as local as possible and not so much the organics because it's a little bit too expensive at this point but local is a big part of we do, a local food program. So it's really infiltrated a lot of different spaces and every single department in the convention centre has a role to play and a contribution to make to the success of the environmental program” (Centre A).

Centre B also mentioned about their environmental purchasing policy, *“We have a greenhouse keeping program so all of the products that we use are very sustainable. We have an environmental purchasing policy, so we select suppliers who reflect our commitment to the environment. So that would be important as well.”*

2.3 Energy conservation

When it comes to energy conservation, both the centres have implemented some of the best technologies in their respective facilities to reduce their energy consumption. Centre A

has initiated a plan to retrofit their facility and using bullfrog power for the kitchen that has been helping them to reduce their energy consumption and get a return on investment:

“We have also started retrofitting our entire facility with LED lighting which makes a huge difference. We retrofitted just our conference centre and we were able to get a payback within less than a year, which is a huge difference” (Centre A).

Another respondent from centre A further discussed about their energy conservation program:

“Energy conservation is also very big. So bringing forward new and innovative lighting systems or controls or what have you but then also behavioural trainings for, to change behaviours of our staff here and making sure that you know only the areas of the building, the facility that are being used, are, lit and heated or cooled or whatever needs to be done in those areas” (centre A).

Centre B had some of the new technologies in place to reduce their energy consumption and specifically mentioned about the retrofitting their lighting system and putting them all on motion sensors:

“We are the first convention centre in the world that received the highest rating of LEED®. Our building is 100% LEED® approved which includes our lighting system that is based on motion sensors, so if someone is not in a room the lights automatically turn off. We have been able to save a huge amount of energy” (centre B).

Centre B further talked about their highly sustainable infrastructure and facilities and mentioned a few examples:

“I think one of the most visible examples would be the living roof that we have at the top of the building. So we have a very large green roof. As you may know, green roofs have a lot of different benefits that come with it. One example would be the fact that we are really keen on sort of bringing a natural habitat or natural ecology back into downtown core of [xxx]. Green roofs also have a very nice insulation capability. Sort of keeping, reducing heat gain in the summer and reducing heat losses in the summer. So that's something that's green as well. And really being a habitat for different species like song birds and insects right here in downtown. So that's just one example, but of course we have different types of features and technology like the blackwater treatment plant that recycles all of our sewage water in our facility. We are on the harbour so we utilize sea water heating and cooling” (Centre B)

2.4 Employee engagement

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was also found to be another important driver of incorporating sustainability. Both of the centres said that they have implemented a CSR policy as an integral part of their business. Centre A mentioned about their employee engagement program, *““But I would really say that the biggest thing we are doing is our CSR program, which encompasses what we do environmentally. What we do in terms of employing engagements and what we do in terms of community outreach. So it's those three pillars of sustainability that we have here. And I think that's probably our CSR program is the biggest impact that we have had” (Centre A)*. Centre B also talked about their CSR policy and its significance to their sustainable program, *“ We have a very strong CSR policy, which focuses on the three pillars of sustainability (centre B)”*.

2.5 Sustainable meeting guideline

Both the centres have prepared a sustainable meeting guideline to facilitate their clients to choose different initiatives that can be incorporated into their meetings to help reduce the carbon footprint of their meetings. A sustainable meeting guidelines is a checklist that offers solution that are different than daily operational things such as recycling and composting. Some of these initiatives include but are not limited to offering carbon offset, bullfrog power, zero waste event etc. Centre A explicitly mentioned about their sustainable meeting guideline:

“In terms of what meeting planners can do, well they have any number of options they would like to choose from. If they want have a zero waste event, we can plan a sorting station for them. If they want their menu to be locally sourced food we can take that into account and definitely make it hundred percent local for them. So it just depends on what exactly that event is looking for. If they want bullfrog power they can do that. If they want to be more conscious about lighting that gets used, they can do that. We really leave it up to the clients to decide how they want to mould their event to be more sustainable. And we created something that we call our sustainable event guide. Basically what it is we’ve created a tool for clients and planners to use. And it’s basically all of the stuff they can do to creating a sustainable meeting. So it’s laid out for them from the very small things to little bit bigger more complicated things. They can look at our event guide for ideas, resources, anything that will help them create a more sustainable event” (Centre A).

Centre B had also created a sustainable meeting guideline, which is somewhat similar to centre A, and includes variety of things that can help the meeting planners to host a sustainable meeting:

“If you look at our sustainable event guideline, we have prepared a checklist for the meeting planners to choose from our menu such as food service, composting, cleaning services, recycling initiatives, energy and electricity, carbon offset...so these are kind of things that could be integrated in a meeting to make it sustainable.” (Centre B).

These checklists have been prepared and posted on the websites of both of the convention centres in order to facilitate the clients to plan more environment friendly meetings.

2.6 Daily operations

When the centres were asked whether they extend the sustainable initiatives for the meetings that they host, a theme emerged from this question as ‘daily operations’. Both the centres responded to this question in a way indicating these best practices were actually part of their daily operations. This is noted by centre A, *“It goes on all the time”*. Similarly, centre B also indicated,

“The technology exists in our building and the green practices are something that we do every single day. So when I say that when meetings and meeting planners choose our venue, they already show interest to host a green meeting because they know that we are recycling. They know that when they you know cater their meetings the food that comes from the convention centre is cooked within a scratch kitchen. So yes I think that is it” (Centre B)

Another response from Centre B included,

“I would say, the majority of things that we offer for the meetings and other events are kind of daily operational things. So, the sustainable initiatives are an on-going thing in our convention centre regardless the meeting planners want to extend them or not, however if they want something special for example if they want to measure

the electricity or waste consumed by so and so meeting and event, we can always take it to an extra level and offer them carbon offset and other sustainable ideas to decrease the impact of the event” (centre B).

Both of the centres indicated that the best practices implemented within their respective facilities are not event specific or implemented especially for a meeting, but were rather part of their daily business operations throughout the buildings. However, they also noted that if a meeting planner shows interest in sustainability and wants to extend the sustainable initiatives the centres are willing to take it to the next level and will be able to implement the new initiatives to contribute to the sustainable development of the meetings industry.

3. Motivators

When the centres were asked, why they started implementing sustainable practices into sustainable meetings within their respective facilities, the centre representatives generally mentioned five main motivating factors that led them to incorporate best practices. These included: personal interest, business requirement, reducing environmental footprint, being right thing to do, and cost savings.

Both the centres mentioned on several occasions the idea that it was an imperative to do the right thing: *“I think it's the right thing to do” (Centre A)*. Similarly, Centre B also felt that adapting sustainability is the right thing to do: *“first of all, it's sort of responsibility factor, where you feel that you are doing right thing. I believe it's a right thing to do. It's something you know that morally something you need to do for the humanity” (Centre B)*. Another respondent from centre B added to it: *“the fact that we know that it's the right thing to do. We want to have a legacy that is really positive here in the community. I think being*

green and being committed to the environment is the right thing to do for our community and it's the right thing to do for our industry” (centre B).

3.1 Cost saving

Cost savings also played an important role as motivator for both of the centres to increase their investment in sustainable products and infrastructure. Centre A commented *“It was very much just running things, which saves. What provided savings”*. Centre B had similar opinion: *“I think that you know, it makes business sense. When you have a green operation, at the end of the day it's going to result in costing energy savings as well. So I think it's a very important thing to do, too run very good facility” (Centre B)*

Centre B further elaborated this idea by stating that:

“There are cost savings to it. Due to our efficient energy control system we can control our energy consumption, and our blackwater treatment plant helps us in reducing our water consumption. There is also the financial aspect of it, we recycle almost everything right from cooking oil to furniture, and once you start recycling things instead of sending them to landfill, you can see, how efficient you can become. So, yeah, economically, it's also a right thing to do as well” (centre B).

A unique response came from centre A as they mentioned that personal interest in sustainability worked for them as a motivating factor to adapt sustainability:

“I think it started from really from two people having just an interest in it. So, our director of operations and sustainability and at the time our manager of corporate social responsibility were just interested in their own lives and their personal life and then realized that there was a way to connect it to sort of to the workplace. And you

know it started off with small initiatives that maybe were really easy to get by in with. And then as sort of news of sustainability and how to really help the bottom line came about since there was a lot more interest from the executive staff and then as well as our director of engineering really got a on board of wanting to be more efficient and inline to find ways to reduce use as much as possible” (centre A).

While centre A mentioned about personal interest for ‘going green’, Centre B felt motivated due to their strong commitment to their environmental policy:

“Well, for us it’s about having strong commitment with the environment. It is embedded in our policy and culture to behave in responsible way and do something that is correct and necessary for the environment and, sustainability has always been the first priority for the west building from day one” (centre B).

Motivators emerged as part of the response to an understanding for and extent of implementation of sustainable practices within the two centres.

3.2 Managerial values

One of the main drivers for incorporating sustainability in meetings identified by interviewees was the organizational values or, more often, the personal values. All of the respondents interviewed stated that being interested in sustainability was largely the result of their personal values. To expand on the response to personal interest, the respondents were asked, how important sustainability was for them personally, which yielded the theme of managerial values. The repeated use by most of the interviewees of the term ‘responsible’ clearly indicated that for these people, sustainability is a way of life, not a management choice. Centre A representative expresses their interest in sustainability:

“Personally it's very important I mean it's something I've always been interested since I was a kid, I grew up in a, I would say more sustainable home than others. You know certain practices have been sort of instilled in me, and it's something I am always conscious of. And at the same time I understand it's very difficult to be sustainable in all aspects of life” (centre A).

Another respondent from centre A highlighted the importance of being sustainable,

“Oh, very much so. I would consider myself an environmentalist. So for me the environment, I came from the environmental side of things. Environmental footprints and reduction of the environmental footprint is key and very important to me personally” (centre A).

Centre B representatives also talked about the importance of sustainability and being a responsible citizen:

“It's important. I think the fact that I live in xxx and I'm born in [xxx], it's something that most [xxxites] take pride in. You know when visitors come to [xxx] they see this welcoming city that's very clean and beautiful to look at and I feel like there's a really strong responsibility of being a citizen of this wonderful city to do my part and to make sure that this place remains beautiful not just for us but our visitors as well” (centre B).

Overall, both the centres are investing in sustainable facilities and products since it does not only provide cost savings, but also is a right thing to do for the community.

Interestingly, almost all the participants were interested in sustainability and their personal values played as a motivating factor to continue to do so.

4. Requirement of sustainable initiatives

To further explore the importance of sustainability for the meetings that the centres host, the centres were specifically asked, “What is the requirement of sustainable initiatives”? Exemplifying the theme of ‘requirement of sustainable initiatives’ within the convention centres, centre A stated:

“The push, it comes partly from our clients, we do have some big clients that come to our building to really want sustainable initiatives and a strong environmental program. We hosted the US Green Build, I think this was about three years ago now, and Microsoft was here couple of years ago and we have a lot of smaller events that also do that. When I say a lot, I mean we have a significant amount of people who are interested in it, and a smaller handful of people who will make their decisions based on, like you know they'll choose a venue based on the environmental programs offered there. But the biggest push for us really is on the operational side of things, and reducing operational costs while having environmental benefits as well” (Centre A).

Centre B indicated that there is strong requirement for sustainable initiatives in the convention industry considering the huge carbon footprint of the industry:

“I would say, there is a strong requirement for sustainable initiatives. We host a lot of events and meetings in our convention centre every year and every event that we host produces huge amount of waste that goes to landfill. So, through our sustainable program, we try to minimize the waste and find a home for every item that can be re-used and recycled. So, yeah, there is huge requirement of sustainable initiatives” (Centre B).

Another respondent Centre B included:

“I think for us it's having a big commitment. It's that commitment that extends across our organization. So it's not only just our executives you know our seniors, even the management team really believes in it. Sustainability is really built into the culture of the [xxx] convention centre. So every team member here really takes pride in what we do to support sustainable initiatives, as well as our official suppliers. All of this is built into our culture. It's something that we sort of live and breathe every day”
(Centre B).

With regards to the requirement of sustainable initiatives both of the centres felt that there are strong requirements for incorporating sustainable initiatives into meetings that they host.

They asserted that it partly comes from their clients, but mostly it originates from cost saving and having strong commitment to the environment in reducing their carbon footprint.

5. Benefits

Another purpose of this research was to find out what the cost and benefits in investing sustainable products and services are for the venues. This section includes some of the potential benefits and the next section includes some of the challenges that the centres have encountered in incorporating sustainability. To exemplify the theme of benefits, the respondents were asked to answer to the question, a) what are some of the potential benefits in investing in sustainable products and services; and b) What are the perceived outcomes of going green? A few themes emerged from these questions and can be categorized as competitive advantage, cost savings, and setting trends.

5.1 Competitive advantage

Centre A highlighted the importance of investing in sustainable services since it gives them an edge over other and being green can also be used as a marketing tool to differentiate from other venues:

“I think that especially for incorporating sustainability, you stand out from the crowd a little bit especially now that it's becoming a little bit more popular. especially if you are transparent, I think that by having these green initiatives you do stand apart from the rest then that's great when you know businesses are looking for venues to host events at, I think it you know gives us a differentiating factor from the other venues that might be around us” (centre A).

Similarly, Centre B emphasized the value and importance of adapting sustainability and how does that help in building a green image:

“If you look from the marketing perspective, it really helps in showing that your organization understands the environmental impacts of the events and willing to take actions. It's sort of help in building a green image, which certainly attracts more and more environmental friendly clients. And you know, most importantly, it helps save the planet” (Centre B).

Furthermore, centre A explained the benefits in investing in sustainable products and services,

“You've got the side that will differentiate you from other venues, making sure that you shine and look brilliant and great in comparison. You know very attractive in comparison to other venue options that the clients are presented with” (Centre A).

Cost savings was also mentioned as benefit for adapting sustainability. Centre A elaborated on their cost savings: *“Well I mean you've got the operational side of things.*

You've got the fact that you are running a tight ship and reducing operational costs. Centre B also stated that there are cost savings in going green: "I believe there are many benefits in adapting sustainability. Managing an event sustainably reduces expenses, save resources, and reduces waste. Also, So yeah, there are many benefits in running a highly sustainable facility". And expanded on the idea of doing right for the community, "There are not only cost and energy savings but the fact that you are doing something that leaves a green footprint" (centre B).

An interesting response came from centre B that 'going green' and incorporating sustainability has helped them to set a trend in the convention industry and many other venues are learning from them:

"Well I think one would be really having that dialogue that's really important because we can definitely learn from each other. I think when I say we, I am talking about other venues and other people within the meetings industry. I think there's a lot of learning that can happen. You know over the years we've hosted many delegations from around the world who have come for site inspection and to learn about the different technologies we have here and the way that we run a very green building. I mean we've had countless people come through and learn about our blackwater treatment plant, or how or why we operate a green living roof for example. So I think that it's very important for us to promote what we we've learned so others can do something similar" (centre B).

Interestingly, both the centres are adapting sustainably since there have recognized that sustainable practices are becoming mainstream in the convention industry, and it has become necessary to keep up to maintain competitive advantage.

6. Barriers and misconceptions

To explore the barriers and misconceptions that the facilities faced in incorporating sustainability, respondents were asked, what have been some of the challenges you have faced when implementing sustainable initiatives? This question yielded themes such as lack of education, payback, lack of interest in sustainability, high initial cost to implement sustainable practices and products. The centres were asked explicitly about challenges they faced during implementation of their best practices and their ability to assess the impact of those initiatives.

A lack of education about sustainability is one of the key barriers associated with the concept of sustainable meetings. This was the least discussed and referenced of the barriers, but was still described as quite a significant challenge and an important need. To elaborate on the theme of lack of education centre A commented:

“It's an education thing partially, and as well getting your sort of especially your initial projects that may cause money. Getting those projects going is difficult because there's going to be extra cost to go with that. But I think that a major challenge is education because, you know when you're working with an executive team that's potentially is a little bit older, if they don't understand sustainability or don't believe in it, it's that barrier of education that needs to be passed right? They need to be educated on how it can change the way businesses run and how it can really improve their bottom line. And without that education you know they're not thinking enough business sense right? They're not thinking that this is necessarily good for business, especially because there is a sort of this stereotype that green costs more, which is sometimes it does and in some instances it might but it doesn't always and eventually sort of the more sustainable you become the more you're going to increase your

bottom line actually. So I think that major challenge especially for me is a lack of education in what sustainability actually is and what it actually means” (centre A).

While centre A felt that a lack of education is the major challenge for them to adapt sustainability, centre B felt that having all stakeholders agreed on common goals was a major challenge they experienced when introducing new sustainable practices:

“The challenge in operating a green facility that everybody should understands and adhere to the goals of the facility’s environmental policy. I mean, we provide training to all our staff and stakeholders but sometimes, it’s challenging to have everyone agreed on the common goals” (Centre B).

Centre A noted that having less or no interest in sustainability could also present an initial difficulty as they mentioned,

“I mean and I think interest too is a part of it. If don't have an interest, if they don't do these things at home then they're not thinking that it's translatable to business. So again, it does come kind of come with an education because until they're educated they're not going to be interested” (Centre A)

Centre A further explained that payback was also an initial obstacle when the facility first started its sustainable program,

“Well sometimes, there's not always a good payback. And when you think about the cleaning products for example, you know sometimes it's really great. We’ve had a couple of examples where we've made some really great changes to products that are known to only environmentally friendly and are safe for our staff. But they are also much more efficient so we don't need to buy as much and that kind of stuff. But one of the trickiest parts is that working, when you're working in an organization that have

different budgets, different people for different departments, then you have to look at different, a broader scope of, for the payback. Making sure that you are convincing people that it's a sound payback is probably the biggest issue here” (centre A).

Centre A further explained that they prefer buying local food over organic food as organic food cost more, “*we buy sustainable products, we buy ones that have you know, in bulks so we don't have as much waste, we usually buy ones that are green certified for example or on the food side we tend to go as local as possible and not so much the organics because it's a little bit too expensive at this point but local is a big part of we do” (Centre A).*

Similarly, centre B felt that buying material that can be recycled cost more than the normal products and that can be a bit challenging sometimes, “*Other thing that I would consider as a challenge is the purchase of recycled material. I mean obviously you know that it's expensive to buy recycled material than buying conventional non-recycled material. So, financially it can be a bit challenging to be sustainable. But, once you start doing it, it becomes easier” (centre B).*

An interesting challenge that centre A faced was the correct usage of technology:

“One of the challenges would be, when we open the doors, it's ensuring that we are operating these technologies to the best of its capabilities and in the most efficient manner possible. Over the years there has been a learning curve for us to ensure that we are using the technologies in a great way and that we are using it in the greenest way possible” (centre B).

Interestingly, both the centres agreed upon the initial cost and education as a primary challenge, but each elaborated on other centre specific challenges, most of which came with buying recycling material, stakeholder commitment, payback and others.

7. Assessing ROI

In the next section, the centres were asked, how they assess their return on investment in investing sustainable products and services, a theme emerged as ‘Assessing ROI’. The responses were quite varied among both of the facilities. Each facility has taken a different approach and relied upon different people/department to carry out this task such as the engineering or operations department. While discussing about ROI assessment tools, centre A representative talked about their director of engineering who works with facility personnel and operations department to implement new strategies and sustainable solution. It was expressed the following way:

“It really depends. It's based on a project by project basis. For example for our lighting, it was, that was something our director of engineering wanted to really do kind of. He has been sort of testing LED lighting for a while so for him to be able to do that it's talking to his current lighting suppliers potentially what products are out there speaking with our energy supplier, local utilities provider on any type rebates that are happening there. Then as well, it is based on what our payback will be because we are privately owned so depending on the length of return on investment, we'll sort of determine whether it's something we'll do right away or something that we need to build into our capital for the following year, two years down the road or our strategic plan for five years” (centre A).

Centre B talked about the diversity of the industry and changing of trends and how does that impact their ROI:

“Our industry is very diverse and trends keep changing. You always need to invest in new technology and facilities that helps to run the business smoothly and efficiently.

You cannot anticipate return on investment for each and everything. But, yeah having said that we have been able to decrease our energy consumption since we have motion sensor lighting system installed everywhere and also our blackwater treatment plant helps us to reduce water consumption. So yeah, these are sort of things that has helped us to achieve our ROI” (centre B).

Both the facilities agreed that they have been able to achieve their return on investment in sustainable products and services. Centre A proudly mentioned that they have achieved their return on investment and other energy and cost savings:

“I definitely would say so. we're an old facility as well so you know we've been around for you know forty five plus years, our building is actually much older than that, so especially for us when it came to energy, water usage, we've been able to get quite a saving because what we had originally was a lot older technology but yeah I would for every project that we have implemented. We have we have received a return and within an appropriate amount of time I would say five years or less” (centre A).

Similarly, Centre B had also been able to achieve their return on investment and created a benchmark from which could continue to improve:

“Most definitely we have achieved a very strong position within the industry. We are already seeing really wonderful cost and energy savings as a result of some of the practices that we adopt here. To give you an example, our blackwater treatment plant, we're reclaiming as much as 45 cubic meters of water every day. So that's a wonderful achievement. And we're using sea water heating cooling system, we are saving tremendous amount of money by not having to purchase municipal water. I mean that's just the cost savings, but when you turn its head and you look at sort of

the benefits that come, the more social, the more intangible benefits, I mean that's really hard to quantify" (centre B).

After discussing with both the facilities about the methods of assessing their ROI in sustainable products and services, it was evident that there is not one single method to assess their ROI and each facility has employed various benchmarks and techniques to measure their cost savings and energy consumption with respect to new and existing sustainable initiatives.

8. Industry pressure

Another aim of this research was to find out, why the convention centres are investing in sustainable facilities and services and who is creating the pressure on them to 'go green'. The main themes that emerged included a) industry pressure along with competition, b) government regulation, and c) industry standards and certification. Industry pressure includes but is not limited to creating and maintain a sustainable facility and meeting the criteria to host sustainable meetings. The following demonstrates responses from participants from both of the facilities as to where their understanding for this category exists.

When it comes to external pressure within the industry to maintain a sustainable facility, responses were mostly indefinite as to such a pressure. Centre A commented,

"To be honest I wouldn't say that there's very much pressure. I think a lot of, from what I've seen from the convention centre side, most of the push is from the, internally, and from the operations department, making better, you know, running a more efficient building and saving money that way".

Centre B had similar opinion,

“I don’t see too much of pressure. For us it sort of inherited in our operations and policy. It’s about adhering to the stated goals of our environmental policy. We have a very strong CSR policy, which focuses on the three pillars of sustainability and also it’s our personal values as we all know it’s a right thing to do. There is no deniability that we as human have over-used the natural resources and there wouldn’t be enough resources available for the coming generations. So, we have to use our resources mindfully and sustainably” (Centre B).

Centre A elaborated further that incorporating sustainability:

“With regards to governmental regulations, there’s not a lot. you know we don’t fall under the mash umbrella, so the [xxx] government, I mean aside from us having to do a waste audit, an annual waste audit, you know city of [xxx] will measure our effluent and our water to make sure we’re not dumping anything bad down the drain. There’s not a lot of enforcement or pressure to reduce your environmental footprint. So it’s mostly pushed, I think from my experience, it’s internally from the organizational standpoint” (Centre A).

Centre B commented that as far as industry is concerned:

“I don’t know if there’s so much of pressure. I think it’s more of a self-inflicted priority. Right from the get-go we recognized the importance of being environmentally sustainable. It’s a commitment that we make ourselves that we want to fulfil” (Centre B).

In addition to a general industry pressure, a subset of that theme emerged as centre A mentioned that a greater pressure was coming from their municipality:

“It depends on if the venue is owned privately or it's publically owned, so there are a lot of venues, especially in the united states that are tied into a city so it's actually a city run organization then I think that's where they are getting the pressure from is because of the cities are looking to become more green and sustainable that they are getting the pressure from there and then that works outwards to all the other venues. So I mean in most ways and in most cases it's really government that's putting pressure” (Centre A).

To further exemplify the theme of industry pressure centre A mentioned that they felt greater pressure, from the industry recognized certification and grading programs that have created pressure on convention centres to adapt sustainability, as they mentioned:

“Within the event industry specifically as a venue, I would actually say that the pressure has probably increased recently in probably the last two years, mainly because there is more certification and grading programs that have come out specific to the hospitality sector, so with that I mean as you have more and more venues that are hoping on to the certification grading program, you definitely feel that pressure because that's something that they can use to stand out” (centre A).

Similarly, centre B felt that having higher industry recognized certification and grading provides you an added advantage and help in standing out in the crowd:

“I definitely think that the trend of sustainable meetings is going to continue growing in popularity and demand. You know, adapting sustainability is the latest trend and I think everyone wants to be a part of it to grow their business. Ten years back, there were only a couple of convention centres, who started this journey. But, now with so many certifications and sustainability programs, the pressure on convention centres will increase to adapt sustainable solutions from green energy to LEED®

certification, and I think everybody's going to have to try to do as much they can, it is the key to the future of green convention centres" (centre B).

Centre A also identified that most of the pressure is also coming actually from other venues,

"I think probably the most pressure you get is from your competition. I think customers and clients unless there, a very sustainable event they will kind of find where they need to go and they'll fall within the proper venue for that. But mostly I would say that it is coming from competitors within the last two years and coming from other venues" (centre A).

8.1 Attendee engagement

Attendee engagement and demand from attendees for sustainable initiatives is imperative to a meeting's sustainability because attendees are active and central stakeholders of meetings industry. Therefore, demand from attendees for sustainable initiatives is important and will influence effective those initiatives will be. To explore the realized pressure from the meeting delegates, the respondents were asked, what degree of demand is there from meeting delegates for sustainable initiatives? When it comes to the realized pressure from attendees, the responses were fairly similar, centre A that not many clients and delegates are interested in sustainability, *"I don't think that there's a very strong push from clients yet. Like I said earlier, it's not something that a lot of our clients, like it's not a make or break, whether they're choosing this venue as the place to hold their meeting" (Centre A).*

Centre B substantiated this idea by stating: *"well not all the meeting delegates that come through are interested in sustainability. But, certainly there are a few clients, they do recognize the waste and the carbon footprint of what they are doing and they definitely want to support us and minimize it" (centre B).*

Another response from centre B indicated that there were changes taking place and there is an increasing demand for sustainable meeting from the meeting delegates:

“I mean if you are talking about the industry itself, the meetings industry, I don't know if there is so much of pressure, but I think that more and more, not only the meeting planners are recognizing the value of having green meetings, more importantly it's their delegate. Delegate and their suppliers have an expectation that they are going to meet in a facility or a destination that is doing something good for the environment. So they don't want to be meeting at a venue that is, that has no green practices. They want to make sure they are hosting a meeting or meetings in a destination that is doing something, making a positive impact” (Centre B).

And followed upon on, “I definitely think we are seeing more and more of a trend where attendees or delegates expect to see green practices adopted within the meeting that they are meeting at really” (Centre B).

The theme of industry pressure and attendee engagement revealed different results in response to the theme-specific question. The responses indicate increasing pressure from the industry as a whole for a sustainable facility and also some degree of pressure from clients and delegates for hosting sustainable meetings.

Within the scope of evaluating industry pressures to incorporate sustainable best practices emerged a theme for future trends as seen for the industry's facilities, clients and delegates. The centres were asked directly where they saw future trends going for convention centres and sustainable meetings within the industry and responses to this question provided insight into the understanding of where these centre representatives see the current facility sustainability now and where they see it going in the coming years.

9. Future Trends

In the last question, both the facilities were asked where they saw the future trend going for convention centres as it pertains to sustainable meetings. Generally noted from the facility responses was the inclination that the trend of hosting sustainable meetings would only continue to increase in the future. From the industry pressure, Facility A noted, “*Well, it's, for sure it's increasing, for sure it's, you know the development of sustainable meetings is really expanding and becoming more of a prominent thing.*” And followed up with,

“I think that it's really expanding and it is going to become more and more of a prominent thing within creating a green event is sort of seeing which event can create the least amount of waste, which event can create the least amount of energy or save the most amount of energy” (centre A).

Facility B had the similar opinion as they mentioned:

“I don't think the interest in being green is going to diminish. I think that it's only going to grow. I think that green planners are only going to get savvier and more knowledgeable in hosting a green meeting and venues are going to be better at adopting very green, efficient practices. So I think that, you know, green meetings is a concept that will only get better” (centre B).

Centre A stated that most of it is actually coming from competitors,

“I think partially, well actually most of it is coming from the venues themselves because it's the first facility you know they, we use a ton of energy, a ton of water a year, so for us it's really a way to reduce our bottom line and to sort of space the money and then I think because so many venues are doing that there's then, making an impression on clients and then as clients travel they are starting to look for similar

attributes of sustainable events in different venues. And I think that originally it comes with us, and they, even within the past two years, learning from different venues about what it is they're doing”(centre A).

On the other hand, centre B mentioned that standard and certification creates will create more pressure on convention centres to adapt sustainability, as they noted,

“I definitely think that the trend of sustainable meetings is going to continue growing in popularity and demand. You know, adapting sustainability is the latest trend and I think everyone wants to be a part of it to grow their business. Ten years back, there were only a couple of convention centres, who started this journey. But, now with so many certifications and sustainability programs, the pressure on convention centres will increase to adapt sustainable solutions from green energy to LEED® certification, and I think everybody’s going to have to try to do as much they can, it is the key to the future of green convention centres”(centre B).

Overall, both of the facilities agreed that there will a demand for sustainable meetings, and thereby adding emphasizing the necessity to understand the industry’s pressure for implementing and incorporate sustainable best practices within each facility.

10 Findings Summary

The results of this study indicated that the importance of the triple bottom line of sustainability has been recognized by the meetings industry as an essential business goal. The industry has started to develop best sustainable practices to minimize the environmental impacts of meetings and contribute to the sustainable development of the industry.

Convention centres are taking significant steps to achieve the industry recognized standards and certification to gain a competitive advantage and building an eco-friendly image as a

marketing tool. The study also revealed that there are many barriers associated with the management of sustainable meetings such as a lack of education about sustainability, stakeholder commitment and initial financial constraints. Nevertheless, the trend of sustainable meetings appears to grow continuously in future and many clients prefer to organize their meetings and events in facilities that has some sustainable practices in place to reduce their carbon footprint. Therefore, managers should look for ways to provide training and sufficient education to their staff and public, as well as implement as many sustainable practices as they can into their respective facilities to keep up with the competition within the industry.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter described the results of the study for the two convention centres interviewed. This chapter discusses the significance of these findings as it relates to the convention and conference industry and centre representatives. Lastly, it discusses the scope of future studies to expand upon this research and its further application.

Under the first research question, while defining sustainability in general, it was noted that both the centres included a sustainability statement and interestingly, it was noted that their statement about sustainability is different from the mission statement of the associations and seems more cultural in nature rather than a formal statement of sustainability. Thus, this research supports the arguments from previous research (Wass et al., 2011; Hunter, 1997; Stettler, 2010), that sustainability is interpreted differently amongst individuals, organizations, governments, often in favor of one's own agenda and interest. From the responses, it also became evident that both the centres used a fairly similar definition of sustainability. Additionally, both of the centres also acknowledged the importance of the triple bottom line approach for running their organization. Recognizing the triple bottom line as an appropriate business goal has become increasingly common in general business environment and this research shows that the meetings industry has also identified its importance and significance for the sustainable development of the industry.

In exploring the link between sustainability and meetings, the centres provided a few different definitions of sustainable meetings. The different definitions and interpretations of the concept of sustainable meetings provided by both of the centres indicated that the term 'sustainable meeting' emphasizes an environmental orientation and is used to describe the process of turning the products, services, activity or organization into a more environmentally conscious actions. Therefore, it became apparent that environmental sustainability has been

the overarching emphasis for both the centres while defining sustainable meetings. They also stated that the decision making process of organizing a sustainable meeting is not entirely in the supplier's hand and they perceive the organizer to bear primary responsibility in leading the initiative and making the ultimate decision.

To help the clients in their decision making process of organizing a sustainable meeting, both of the centres have created a checklist and posted on their website dedicated solely to sustainable meetings. As stated by Crosetto & Salah (1997) and Kloss (1999), one of the roles of the professional associations is to offer specialist advice and specific information. As one of the fundamental services provided by the associations is access to information, having a dedicated page as part of their website would help to make the information easily identifiable to meeting planners who seek it. The information contained on these pages in most cases included a checklist such as centre A prepared a checklist for planners: 'Sustainable Meeting Solutions'; which provide suggestions on how to organize sustainable meetings. Similarly, Centre B has also prepared a checklist: 'Sustainable Event Guidelines'; and offers other tools for investigating on how to calculate the carbon footprint of an event or meeting and also included more information on carbon-offsetting or carbon-neutral events.

When the centres were asked to talk about the sustainable initiatives implemented in their respective facilities, it became evident through the interviews that both of the centres in question were incorporating some of the best practices into the daily operations in their facilities such as recycling, composting, using local and organic food, retrofitting LED lights, bullfrog power, to name a few. There was a fairly broad spectrum within both of the centres in this research as to exactly how much was being done to contribute to the sustainability of the meetings and facility operations. Both of the facilities have established key programs to help them in reaching specific goals of reducing waste, reducing their carbon footprint, and

increasing recycling in various capacities. Each centre fit along a “spectrum” and this spectrum means that facilities going out and contracting with outside companies and vendors for aid in best practice implementation all the way to facilities that rely upon current staff to take on the additional role of researching and implementing facility best practices. Thus, the responses from these interviews supported the conclusions from previous research, including that of Golding (2008) and Robison (2007) that convention centres are doing more in the way of implementing best practices sooner and with more regularity than larger public assembly facilities such as arenas.

To identify the key drivers and barriers associated with sustainable meetings, this study considered the Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening in the business events context. The Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening suggested that there are a number of motivators that would have an impact on the level of uptake of sustainable practices in the business events context. Mair & Jago (2010) model suggested that the drivers were most likely to be the managerial/personal values, CSR policies, media, gaining a competitive advantage, culture, enhancing organizations image, and the presence of an eco-champion. This research has found support for some of these elements, but not all of them. For example, the centres interviewed made no references to the role of media, and culture in influencing sustainable behavior, but the presence of an eco-champion and competitive advantage was mentioned at many incidents by the centre representatives.

Compared to other themes that emerged from the responses, the idea of incorporating sustainability in order to gain a competitive advantage, appeared to be a relatively strong driver of adapting sustainability in the meetings industry. From the responses, it also became evident that the actual competitive advantage appears to be less than anticipated, especially in comments from respondents overestimating the level of demand for sustainable meeting products and services (Mair & Jago, 2010). Nevertheless, the findings from this study

provides further support for arguments made by other authors (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Claver-Cortes et al., 2007; Marshall et al., 2005 cited in Mair & Jago, 2010) that gaining a competitive advantage is a powerful driver of greening.

Additionally, image enhancement was also found an important driver in the meetings industry, but whereas many authors have talked about “image enhancement” (Fineman, 1997; Kusyk & Lozano, 2007 cited in Mair & Jago, 2010) and argued that in the context of events, it may be more of a case of “image manipulation” (Mair & Jago, 2010). Building an image of a ‘sustainable’ organization, emerged as a relatively dominant theme in the responses of both the centres, but whether this implies to proactive actions to enhance image by improved sustainable practices, or rather attempts to avoid negative publicity arising from a lack of these practices cannot be determined (Mair & Jago, 2010). Thus, image enhancement seems to be an important factor of incorporating sustainability in the meetings industry, and in that respect, this study does align with previous research mentioned above.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) was another significant driver in previous event related studies (Williamson et al., 2006 cited in Mair & Jago, 2010). This research also supports the findings of previous research and suggested that CSR is an important driver of incorporating sustainability in the meetings industry. Additionally, the results of this study show that there is a growing consciousness about social responsibility in both of the centres and both centres had implemented CSR policies as a crucial business practice. Generally noted, CSR policies in meetings industry have two major function – there are increasing numbers of organizations who have established their own CSR policies which require more environmental conscious sustainable practices and facilities, and in addition, there are increasing numbers of large organisations with CSR policies which demand that their business events suppliers and venues meet the requirements of these CSR policies (Mair &

Jago, 2009). Therefore, it seems apparent that CSR is an important driver of incorporating sustainability in meetings industry.

Furthermore, to explore the barriers and misconceptions in the meetings industry this study considered the previous discussed Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening in the business events industry. Mair & Jago (2010) model suggested that the barriers were likely to be the lack of time, lack of resources, lack of knowledge/awareness/skills, operational timeframe. This research has found support for most but not all of the aspects found in the Mair & Jago (2010) model and align with the study.

One of the challenges included in the greening model of Mair & Jago (2010), was the lack of time and resources. This study found that interviewees made several implications that financial issues such as initial high cost of implementing sustainable initiatives, receiving a good payback and lack of time were the potential barriers in incorporating sustainable initiatives. However, as discussed by Lynes (2004, cited in Mair & Jago, 2010), most of these implications may not be directly related to the potential future cost and efficiency benefits of environmentally sustainable practices. Rather, they implied that cost, along with limited time should be considered as barriers or misconceptions in the meeting industry, which has also been supported and aligned with the findings of Lynes (2004); Kusyk & Lozano (2007), and Mair & Jago, (2010). This may suggest to the industry associations and the managers in the meetings industry that some time and effort could be well spent on educating businesses on the advantages of incorporating sustainability into meetings and other events, such as improved efficiencies, long-term cost reductions and extending the social engagement of stakeholders (Mair & Jago, 2010).

A lack of education about sustainability and support of stakeholders was another barrier identified by the centre representatives. Education about sustainability is considered as

an important aspect in order to become sustainable, since there are so many misconceptions around the concept of sustainability mentioned by interviewees. According to Arcodia & Reid (2003), education is increasingly evolving as a key factor within associations as a means for members to improve their knowledge. Similarly, Getz (1997) stated, there is a growing need to develop event managers who are able to manage events to ensure professionalism in the industry remains constant and of the highest possible standard. This is supported by the findings of this research in the sense that both of the centres interviewed offered some form of training program to their members to overcome the challenge of 'lack of education'. This ranged from behavioral training to training about different sustainability programs. An interesting aspect of this comes into play when reviewing the entity responsible for making decisions and implementing new practices. Interestingly, many convention centres have hired environmental coordinators or sustainability coordinators, whose primary focus is to suggest and incorporate sustainable best practices in their facility (Jeter, 2010). Both of the centres are making progress tend to have dedicated specific resources to the implementation of their sustainable initiatives and have hired a sustainability consultant who is responsible for training for other employees, suggesting innovative sustainable ideas, and showing how sustainability could help in improving the triple bottom line. Thus, the findings of this study supports the findings of previous research by Jeter (2010).

While exploring any specific assessment tool and methods that the centres may be utilizing to assess their return on investment (ROI) from their sustainable initiatives, it became apparent that the facilities are working rigorously towards organizing sustainable meetings with incorporating best practice techniques. However, there was no regulated method mentioned/ and or implemented for monitoring and tracking the impact of meetings, which makes it challenging and extremely difficult for facilities to adequately measure where they stand in comparison to other venues. The industry has developed some very advanced

standards such as ISO 14001 and ISO 20121 to monitor and track the impacts of events and meetings. Thus, the findings of this study supported the results of the Green Venue Report (2014) that the tracking of events is challenging for the convention industry. Moreover, the results of this study also indicated that there is a lack of awareness in the industry about the standards that could help the industry in tracking the impacts of events and meetings.

Finally, questions based upon the guiding research question which looked to identify the push factors, establish a foundation of understanding on the part of the facility to the necessity for sustainable meetings and sustainable best practices, presented information and key concepts such as the pressure within the industry seen at the facility level, and the demand from attendees. The facilities commented that they felt there to be an increasing industry pressure for facilities to be sustainable, which supported the arguments of Hoffmann (1999) and (King & Lenox (2000), that industry associations play a significant role in setting industry norms for environmental conduct and the aim of these norms is to protect the collective reputation. Additionally, both of the centre representatives agreed to the fact that the most of the pressure that they are seeing in the convention industry, is actually coming from their competitors, which aligns with the findings of Abrahamson & Rosenkopf (1993), that competitors can also create great pressure on industry for environmental responsibility and firms aim to enhance their legitimacy by imitating successful competitors. From the interviewee's responses, it also became evident that industry certifications such LEED® are becoming mainstream within the convention industry, and it has become necessary for venues to keep up to maintain competitive advantage. Interestingly, one particular finding that deserves to be highlighted is the fact that not all attendees have the same perception, attitudes and interest towards the idea of sustainable meetings. Both of the centres agreed to the fact there is not much customer demand for sustainable initiatives in the meetings industry and they further commented that not all the meeting delegates are interested in

sustainability. Yet, there are a number of environmentally conscious clients, who prefer to host their meetings in venues that have incorporated some sustainable practices and are willing to implement initiatives that help clients reduce the carbon footprint of their meetings. However, it is also important to consider that the ‘lack of consumer push’ could only be related to the reputation of the venues interviewed in this study.

Theoretical contribution

This study used grounded theory to understand the concept of sustainable meetings, therefore, it provided many theoretical contribution to further develop the concept of sustainable meetings. First, it explored different perceptions of sustainability; how sustainability is interpreted differently at different levels, which aligns with the arguments made by Hunter (1997) that sustainability is interpreted differently by every organization since there is no universally accepted definition of sustainable development. Additionally, the definitions of sustainable meetings provided by both of the centres supported the statement provided by Laing & Frost (2010) that sustainable meetings is a concept where sustainable practices, ideas; design, awareness, and theory are fully incorporated into all levels of management, logistics, operations, and production. Based on the responses from both of the centres, this study proposes a new theory that sustainable meetings is a process, which requires commitment from both the suppliers as well the organizers to reduce the environmental footprint of the meetings by using the natural resources mindfully and ethically.

Furthermore, this study utilized the Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening in the business events sector to construct new theory to guide research, facilitate learning about what is presently known about sustainable meetings and suggest strategies to enhance the

sustainability programs of convention centers with regards to sustainable meetings. Mair & Jago (2010) noted while the conceptual model of greening in the business event sector is the initial step towards standardized development of drivers and barriers of greening in the business events sector, there was also a need to validate its relevancy by testing it in different corporate sectors such as meetings, incentive travel, and trade shows. The results of this study are aligned with the Mair & Jago (2010) model and provide additional insights about greening in the meetings industry. The findings suggest that similar driver/motivators, and challenges/barriers are present in both business events sector and meetings industry such as corporate social responsibility, competitive advantage, image enhancement, managerial/personal values. However, the findings of this study can also be distinguished from those of Mair & Jago (2010), in that the role of media was identified as one of the main drivers of greening, which was not identified as a significant catalyst in meetings industry. Barriers to greening identified in this study were the lack of education, stakeholder commitment, and initial investment to incorporate sustainable initiatives, which were also mentioned by Mair & Jago (2010). This study also indicated that both of the convention centres have benefitted from the presence of a manager whose personal values/ethos espouse greening and who acted as a steward in incorporating sustainability in meetings. Thus, the results of this study complimented the drivers and barriers identified in the Mair & Jago (2010) model of greening and identifies specific drivers and barriers associated with the management of sustainable meetings.

Managerial implications

There are many implications arising from this research to enable the meetings sector to incorporate sustainable practices into daily and event specific operations to avoid slipping below other venues in their ability to accommodate sustainable meetings. There seem to be

less requirements from delegates for sustainable initiatives at the moment. However, this study also indicated that the demand for sustainable initiatives is continuously growing and facility managers simply need to follow the trend to fulfil the requirement of the clients in future. Additionally, to gain a competitive advantage over other venues, it is extremely important for managers to implement sustainable practices to capitalize on the prediction that the trend for demand for sustainable meetings is going to grow in popularity and that venues providing sustainability options will be at a competitive advantage. This study indicated that there are minimal challenges to the initial implementation of these practices and attractive benefits such as cost savings in running an efficient facility. The industry should establish event specific standards so that these programs can act as a foundation for providing a certification system to increase the incentives such as demonstrated by introduction of the LEED® certification program for buildings as a reward incentive to add value to the facility. Additionally, each facility should provide necessary education to both employees and their clients about sustainability and how these individuals can contribute to the success of their initiatives. Also, since the meeting industry is heavily dependent on air travel, managers should consider include the carbon offset as an integral part of any meeting that they host, for instance through a corporate travel agreement.

Future Study

Given the narrow scope of this study, it would be interesting to attempt to replicate the study on a larger scale and in other industry sectors in order to ascertain how generalizable the results are. Given that, future research should examine the perception of other suppliers of meetings such as hotel associations and validate the applicability of individual drivers and barriers identified in this study, both in order to understand their roles more clearly and perhaps to rank them in importance. Additionally, it would also be

interesting to explore the perceptions of the clients/ guest - *How customers' view 'green image' of hotels?; what factors affect the decision making process of customers' while choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel?; or, what factors influence the decision making process of delegates to choose a venue that has incorporated sustainable practices over conventional venue and whether delegates are interested in or willing to pay extra for sustainable products and services?* To conduct study considering the above mentioned questions, the researchers should use qualitative research method such as observation and semi-structured interviews, since qualitative methods provide greater insights in measuring perceptions and values and these aspects cannot be measured in numbers. A questionnaire survey can also be implemented to explore the opinions and perception of the clients/ hotel guests.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION PRODUCT

Knowledge mobilization plan

Due to the limited amount of research on sustainable meetings, this study will contribute to the literature in numbers of areas: understanding of sustainability from the suppliers' perspective, industry specific interpretation of sustainability, drivers and barriers associated with the concept of sustainable meetings, and the recommendations for managers to overcome the challenges. This research will be of value to academics that are interested in researching on meetings, conventions, events, sustainability, and business tourism. As the findings of this study provided many insights that contribute to a better understanding of sustainability drivers and challenges within the meetings industry, disseminating the results to the appropriate audience is important. Based on the results of this study, it is important to ensure that the industry practitioners are able to access the information generated. The findings of this study will also be shared with academic audiences, practitioners, industry professionals and future researchers. In order to share my research with the selected audience, I have chosen several knowledge mobilization techniques:

- a) The first open presentation of this thesis will take place at the Vancouver Island University on April 8th, 2015. This research will be presented to my thesis panel, classmates, faculty, family and friends. After the presentation, the thesis panel will provide me valuable feedback to assist me in finalizing the thesis before publications.

- b) Academically, the findings will be shared through the form of an academic article, which will include an abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, findings, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations for future studies. Due to the limited literature on sustainable meetings, it is important that the findings of this research should be shared to contribute to the body of knowledge of the literature. The *Journal of sustainable tourism* as well as *Journal of convention and event tourism* have been identified as potential journals to submit an article. Dr. Leo Jago, who is the external reviewer for my thesis has written many articles about events and sustainability, therefore, it would be beneficial to share the results with him.
- c) Additionally, it is also important to share the results with the respondents those who participated in order to create this product. Copies of thesis will be sent to the facility managers of both of the centres interviewed. This will allow the management to read the thesis and see what came out of it. The managers of these convention centres can use the findings of this thesis to better inform themselves on the challenges and benefits of incorporating sustainability, at the same time, they can also learn from each other. It will allow them to identify the key barriers in their respective facilities and therefore, they can train their staff and vendors to overcome those barriers in order to minimize the impacts of their events and contribute to the viability of the facilities.
- d) Some presentations of this research may happen in the future as any opportunity arise.

KMB outputs and Timeline

- Report sent to participants (July, 2015)
- Research article submission to the *Journal of sustainable tourism* and *Journal of convention and event tourism* (December, 2015)

- Presentations as any opportunity arise (on-going)

APPENDIX B: REFLECTIVE CHAPTER

What were the major findings of the research?

The findings of this study indicated that the importance of the triple bottom line of sustainability has been recognized by the meetings industry as an essential business goal. The industry has started to develop best sustainable practices to minimize the environmental impacts of meetings and contribute to the sustainable development of the industry.

Convention centres are taking significant steps to achieve the industry recognized standards and certification to gain a competitive advantage and building an eco-friendly image as a marketing tool. The study also revealed that there are many barriers associated with the management of sustainable meetings such as a lack of education about sustainability, stakeholder commitment and initial financial constraints. Nevertheless, the trend of sustainable meetings appears to grow continuously in future and many clients prefer to organize their meetings and events in facilities that has some sustainable practices in place to reduce their carbon footprint. Therefore, managers should look for ways to provide training and sufficient education to their staff and public, as well as implement as many sustainable practices as they can into their respective facilities to keep up with the competition within the industry.

What were the major practical implications of the research?

There are many implications arising from this research to enable the meetings sector to incorporate sustainable practices into daily and event specific operations to avoid slipping below other venues in their ability to accommodate sustainable meetings. There seem to be less requirements from delegates for sustainable initiatives at the moment. However, this study also indicated that the demand for sustainable initiatives is continuously growing and facility managers simply need to follow the trend to fulfil the requirement of the clients in future. Additionally, to gain a competitive advantage over other venues, it is extremely important for managers to implement sustainable practices to capitalize on the prediction that the trend for demand for sustainable meetings is going to grow in popularity and that venues providing sustainability options will be at a competitive advantage. This study indicated that there are minimal challenges to the initial implementation of these practices and attractive benefits such as cost savings in running an efficient facility. The industry should establish event specific standards so that these programs can act as a foundation for providing a certification system to increase the incentives such as demonstrated by introduction of the LEED® certification program for buildings as a reward incentive to add value to the facility. Additionally, each facility should provide necessary education to both employees and their clients about sustainability and how these individuals can contribute to the success of their initiatives.

Reflection on the research process

From my proposal to the final project, I made various changes during the data collection stage of the study as well as during the analysis. The literature review helped me to connect research from various fields that initially looked less relevant to my topic, but that are, in fact, had linkages to it. Identifying clear questions was challenging; there was so much I wanted to research and narrowing down on my focus was difficult. However, my supervisor Tom Delamere suggested me to focus on one particular aspect of the area that I was

interested in and focus on that. Once questions were selected, selecting the methodology was much easier, since the scope of this research was very qualitative in nature. So, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews.

Preparing the ethics review application was not so simple, as I thought it would be. It took me enormous time to fill ethics application since it required specific details about different questions such as how would you make sure to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the study participants in different scenarios. I found this process a bit monotonous and time-consuming but later I realized the importance of it and how does that help in conducting research without breaching the ethical boundaries.

The most exciting part of this whole process was to get into the field and conduct interviews. I connected deeply with most of my participants and built a good rapport with them in a short span of time. Through, the interviews I developed a few industry network connections, which may be useful in the future. The participants were very knowledgeable and taught me a lot about the sustainable development of the meetings industry. Most of them were also very flexible in terms of timing and procedures. I asked them to fill out the research consent form in advance, however, I read the consent form prior to each interview.

Data analysis was quite challenging, since most of my interviews lasted more than 40 minutes and the transcriptions were minimum 10 pages each. I was proud that I attended a few workshops to learn about NviVo well in advance, else it would have taken me longer than it actually did, to analyse the data.

The most challenging part of this whole process, was writing the discussion. The discussion part is usually the “so-what” section, which deals with the meaningfulness of the findings – in other words, what does your findings mean? To find a connection of your

findings could be really hard sometimes, but if you look back at the literature review, you can see the link between the literature review and your findings.

What would I do differently if I could go back in time?

If I were to redesign this research in any way, I would broaden its scope to include a couple of more convention centres in order to see the similarities and differences in different provinces and municipalities. Also, I would like to interview other staff members such as food and beverage, audio and visual, and others, to see, how different their opinion and perception will be as compared to the sales and service managers, whom I interviewed for my research.

Did you change anything between the proposal and the final product?

I had to fill an amendment form during the data collection process, since I planned to conduct only about face-to-face semi-structured interviews initially, but I actually conducted two telephonic interviews with participants in Toronto, since I could not go to Toronto to conduct those interviews.

Challenges faced during the research process

The most challenging situation I went through was during the data analysis part, when my supervisor Dr. Tom Delamere suffered from a heart attack. I first lost the hope of finishing my research on time, but as soon as Dr. Nicole Vaugeois stepped in to help me in finishing my thesis, I overcome that challenge and finished my thesis before the deadline with her supervision and guidance.

What are you most proud of with your research process?

Other than the fact that I somehow managed to finish my thesis within the given timeline and wrote over 100 pages, I am really proud that I got in touch with some of the well-known industry experts such as my co-supervisor Shawna Mckinley, who is the director of the company, Meetgreen. Having her as a co-supervisor is a big achievement in itself. Also, I am proud that I learned something useful to my future and that I may be able to make a difference in the future in whatever industry I would pursue my career.

What impact would you like your research to have?

I would like my research to be a useful resource for convention and conference industry to utilize to develop their understanding about sustainability and the challenges they face in their transition towards sustainability. As this research found many motivators and challenges as it pertains to sustainable meetings, I hope it can help suppliers, facility managers, and vendors to address the challenges in incorporating sustainability into meetings and other types of events.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does the term ‘sustainability’ mean to you?
 - a. How do you define a sustainable meeting?
 - b. How do you apply sustainability into the meetings that you host?
2. What are some of the environmentally friendly initiatives that your convention centre is currently doing?
 - a. What is the requirement of such initiatives?
 - b. Do you extend these initiatives specifically for meetings that you host?

3. When did you start implementing these initiatives into meetings?
 - a. Why did your convention centre start implementing these initiatives?
 - b. Why do you continue to carry out these initiatives and implement new ones?
4. What have been some of the key factors in your convention centre's pursuit of its sustainable initiatives?
5. Do you think it is the responsibility of the organization to promote sustainable initiatives?
Why or why not?
6. What are some of the potential benefits of promoting sustainable initiatives?
 - a. What have been some of the challenges you have faced when implementing sustainable initiatives?
 - b. Is "adapting sustainability" easy to accomplish? Why or why not?
 - c. What are the perceived outcomes of going green?
7. How important is sustainability to you personally?
8. What type of pressure is out there for adapting sustainability?
 - a. Who is creating the pressure on the conventions centres to adapt sustainability?
 - b. What degree of demand is there from the attendees of the meetings to adapt sustainability?
9. Where do you see the trend going in the future for convention centre's as it pertains to Sustainable meetings?
10. Is there something that you would like to share?

APPENDIX D: SCRIPT FOR CONTACTING PARTICIPANTS

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Manish Kumar. I am a student of Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia, studying Masters in Arts in 'Sustainable Leisure Management'. As part of my master's degree I am conducting a comparative case study of convention and conference centres in Metro Vancouver and Greater Toronto Area on Sustainable Meetings: A comparative venue perspective - exploring drivers, challenges, and impacts of sustainability programs for meetings, to understand the importance and value of such events and to investigate why conventions centres are investing in green products and services and who is creating the pressure on them to 'go green'.

Your participation and valuable opinions will be highly appreciated, since your convention centre has taken leadership in organizing and managing green events and meetings. I would be really thankful to you, if you could give a little of your time for an interview.

Your participation will be completely voluntary and strictly confidential. I will not share your identity or any other information with anyone except my supervisor without your permission.

Once I have heard from you, it will be anticipated that we will find a mutually satisfactory place, date and time for the interview.

More information regarding this study and your participation is outlined in the attached research consent form. Please review this information prior to our interview and don't hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Best Regards,

Manish Kumar,

Student of Masters in Sustainable Leisure Management

Vancouver Island University

Email: Rathormanish20@gmail.com

Contact no: 604-250-9467

APPENDIX E: RESEARCH CONSENT LETTER



VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY
EXPLORE. DISCOVER. EXCEL.

Sustainable Meetings

A case study - exploring drivers, challenges, and impacts of sustainability programs for meetings

1st April, 2014

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The purpose of this study is to explore the a) understanding and inclusion of greening or sustainable initiatives in business event industry from the supplier's perspective, b) To what extent do convention and conference centres incorporate green practices into their facilities for business meetings and events, c) What are some of the benefits and challenges when accommodating the needs of a green business event and d) finally to investigate the key drivers that motivate the suppliers to invest in green products and services.

During this study you will be asked to respond to a series of structured and semi-structured interview questions regarding green meetings and business events that you host in your convention centre. With your permission the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. Some hand written notes may also be taken during the interview. It is anticipated that participation in the interview will last approximately 30 - 60 minutes at the maximum. There are no known harms associated with participation in this research. It is assured that the information will not be shared with any third party. Permission to use direct quotations from of the transcriptions is requested.

The names of the participants will be known initially but will be removed and replaced in the final paper with code numbers and pseudonyms to protect your identity. There is a possibility of being directly identified by the information that you provide as there are few staff working in some of the convention centres. We request you to please provide us permission, if you are willing to be directly identified in the report and provide identifiable quotes and information. Only members of the research team including me and my supervisor will have access to the research data. Data will be stored on my personal computer. Upon completion of the research and presentation and publication of the research findings, the data will be destroyed in January 2015. The data will not be available to other researchers for examination.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty. You may choose not to answer any interview question for any reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any point, the information you have already provided will be removed from the study results and destroyed and you will be requested to either return or destroy the consent form.

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail addresses below:

Manish Kumar

Student of Masters in Sustainable Leisure Management,

Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, British Columbia

Rathormanish20@gmail.com

Phone. 604-250-9467

I have read and understand this research consent form, specifically noting that the interview will be recorded and that some of my words may be quoted directly. I also understand that I can ask questions during the interview or withdraw at any time. I consent to participate in today's research study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness's Signature

Date



Centre of Excellence

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at vancouver island university

The Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management
is an initiative of the World Leisure Centre of Excellence
in Sustainability and Innovation at Vancouver Island University.