Article

Emerging Sustainability Trends in Tourist Facilities: A Comparative Assessment of Multiple Hotels and Resorts

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Abstract: This study presents a comparative assessment of emerging sustainability trends in tourist facilities, focusing on multiple hotels and resorts. By analyzing various aspects, such as energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and community engagement, this study evaluates the sustainability initiatives undertaken by these establishments. Through a systematic review of sustainability reports, practices, challenges, and innovations, it identifies key trends shaping the future of sustainable tourism in the hospitality industry. Initially, two case studies of hospitality developments that are awarded with sustainability prizes have been reviewed. These real estate developments are located in the Maldives and Greece, and following their detailed review, a comparison is drawn with a sample of multiple hotels in Pafos City, Cyprus. This study aims to ascertain the presence of a reciprocal relationship between sustainable tourism destinations and their immediate environs, encompassing the local community. This investigation hinges on an analysis of the sustainable practices implemented by hotels situated within these destinations. Moreover, this study explores the distance of hotels from achieving sustainable development by analyzing their environmental, social, and economic practices. This investigation encompasses a range of hotels in Cyprus and internationally. Recommendations toward a more sustainable approach for touristic real estate units has been made, and it is concluded that the development of sustainable tourist destinations requires active involvement from the local and the government authorities, supported by programs facilitating sustainable tourism. Encouraging synergies among businesses and supporting destination management partnerships are crucial. Sustainable hospitality should adhere to environmental excellence, social responsibility, and economic viability. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, hotel managers, and stakeholders seeking to enhance environmental performance and social responsibility within tourist accommodations.

Keywords: sustainability; tourist destinations; hotels; properties; sustainable tourism; hospitality

1. Introduction

In recent years, the global tourism industry has witnessed a paradigm shift toward sustainability, driven by increasing environmental awareness, consumer demand for responsible travel options, and the need to mitigate the impacts of tourism on natural ecosystems and local communities. In 2015, the United Nations introduced 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 [1]. All UN member states committed to promoting these goals through legislation, private sector incentives, and investment programs, addressing human, social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability [2]. As a result, tourist facilities, including hotels and resorts, are increasingly adopting sustainable practices to minimize their environmental footprint, enhance social responsibility, and improve operational efficiency. The European Tourism Industry, a major economic sector, contributes significantly to GDP and exports. State investments in European tourism development total $83.5 billion, accounting for 3.2% of total EU state investments [1]. Sustainable tourism, though complex, lacks a universally accepted definition, with over 50 definitions proposed

by various scientific disciplines [3]. Sustainable tourism refers to tourism activities that strive to minimize negative impacts on the environment, culture, and communities while maximizing benefits for local people, businesses, and destinations. It involves responsible travel practices that contribute to the conservation of natural resources, preservation of cultural heritage, and enhancement of socioeconomic well-being in destination areas [4].

Government regulations and municipal policies influence real estate development. Collaboration with real estate developers and operators is crucial to incorporating sustainable technologies and practices [5]. Environmental concerns stemming from unchecked economic and tourism growth underscore the importance of local community involvement and awareness in promoting sustainable development. Unchecked economic and tourism growth often lead to negative environmental impacts, such as habitat destruction, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources [6]. These environmental concerns are particularly significant in areas that are heavily reliant on tourism, where rapid development can outpace environmental safeguards [7]. In such contexts, local community involvement and awareness play a vital role in promoting sustainable development practices. Engaging communities in decision-making processes empowers them to voice concerns, propose solutions, and participate in sustainable development initiatives tailored to their needs and priorities [8]. Moreover, raising awareness among community members about the importance of environmental conservation fosters a sense of stewardship and encourages behavior change toward more sustainable practices, and by actively involving local communities in sustainable development efforts, policymakers and stakeholders can ensure that initiatives are contextually relevant, socially equitable, and environmentally effective [9]. This approach enhances the likelihood of long-term success and fosters greater community ownership of sustainability initiatives [10].

Creating sustainable tourist destinations necessitates active engagement from both local and governmental authorities. It entails prioritizing programs that foster sustainable development over mere enhancements to tourism products. Encouraging synergies among local businesses and discouraging extended stays in all-inclusive hotels can foster a deeper sense of loyalty to destinations, surpassing loyalty to individual hotels due to its resilience. Projects, whether in tourism or real estate, must adhere to sustainability criteria covering environmental, social, and economic aspects. Collaborative efforts among governments, institutions, and individuals are crucial for driving sustainable practices and rebuilding the tourism sector in a manner that ensures safety, equity, and environmental friendliness [11].

This paper aims to explore the emerging sustainability trends in tourist facilities, with a specific focus on hotels and resorts. By conducting a comparative assessment across multiple establishments, this study seeks to identify common sustainability initiatives, challenges, and innovations within the hospitality sector. Understanding the current landscape of sustainable tourism practices is crucial for informing future strategies and policy decisions aimed at promoting environmental stewardship and sustainable development in the tourism industry. This study posits a reciprocal relationship between sustainable tourism destinations and their surrounding environments, including the local community. It is supported by findings from previous research, such as [12], which indicate that sustainable practices adopted by hotels within these destinations contribute positively to the local ecosystem, socioeconomic development, and community well-being [13]. Additionally, studies suggest that the effective implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives fosters symbiotic relationships between tourism establishments and their immediate surroundings [14,15]. Another hypothesis examined is the distance of hotels from achieving sustainable development. This is investigated through a comprehensive analysis of the environmental, social, and economic practices engaged by various hotels in Cyprus and abroad. Building on the frameworks proposed by Ricaurde [16], it is hypothesized that hotels' proximity to sustainable development goals can be determined by evaluating factors such as carbon footprint reduction initiatives, community engagement programs, and adherence to fair labor practices. Additionally, studies suggest that a closer alignment

with sustainable development principles correlates positively with improved operational efficiency, guest satisfaction, and long-term profitability in the hospitality sector [17].

Cyprus, which is known for its climate and historical sites, has become an attractive destination for investment and migration, fostering growth in the real estate sector [18]. Tourism, contributing 22.7% of Cyprus' GDP in 2019, intersects closely with real estate. Sustainable tourism strategies aim to enhance visitor experiences, maximize local economic impact, and preserve destination assets and environments. This study aims to evaluate tourism facilities worldwide in a comparison with Pafos City in Cyprus. Tourism is a significant contributor to the economy of Pafos, as it is one of the major tourist destinations in Cyprus. Tourism in Pafos encompasses a wide range of sectors, including hospitality, accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, entertainment, and retail. Through a systematic review of the literature, case studies, and best practices, this study will analyze key aspects of sustainability in tourist facilities, including energy management, waste reduction, water conservation, community engagement, and certification programs. By examining the strengths and limitations of different approaches, this research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for promoting sustainability in hotel and resort operations. Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on sustainable tourism by offering a comprehensive assessment of emerging trends and best practices in tourist facilities. By highlighting successful sustainability initiatives and identifying areas for improvement, this research aims to inform stakeholders and policymakers about the opportunities and challenges associated with promoting sustainable tourism practices within the hospitality industry.

1.1. Sustainable Tourism and Economic Benefits

Based on tourism arrivals since 2015, the sector demonstrated consistent growth. In 2019, before the COVID pandemic, tourism contributed significantly to the Cypriot GDP, reaching around 12%, with a substantial impact on employment. The sector's dynamism prompted rapid investment in tourism infrastructure, including new hotels, marinas, casinos, and golf courses. The tourism sector was projected to reach up to 25% of the GDP by 2030 without the COVID situation [19]. Tourism plays a crucial role in Cyprus's economy, influencing sectors such as construction, entertainment, employment, and real estate development. The tourism strategy, aligned with sustainable approaches, aims to attract interest in various investment opportunities and infrastructure projects, fostering a holistic and inclusive experience. Cyprus is witnessing a shift toward mega projects related to tourism. Marinas, casinos, luxury hotels, and high-end resorts are particularly appealing to foreign investors, as evidenced by the 16.4% of 2019 building permits dedicated to hotel developments [20].

Many businesses misinterpret the concept of sustainable development, often conflating it with ecotourism in an attempt to appeal to conscientious travelers. This misconception leads to the implementation of environmentally or socially irresponsible policies [21]. While ecotourism focuses on sustainability principles within natural and rural areas, sustainable tourism encompasses a broader relationship between tourism and the environment The definition of sustainable tourism by the WTO Committee on Sustainable Development of Tourism emphasizes the need for a balance between environmental, social, and economic aspects within the tourism sector worldwide [22]. Uncontrolled and unplanned tourist development, coupled with the reckless use of natural resources, necessitates a new model of tourism that respects the natural and cultural environment for sustainable economic, social, and cultural development. Sustainable tourism, as described by Bramwell et al. [23], acknowledges the contributions of people, communities, customs, and ways of life to the tourism industry. It advocates for equal distribution of economic and social benefits among all stakeholders while prioritizing the conservation of natural resources [24]. Subcategories of sustainable tourism such as rural tourism, agritourism, and ecotourism offer alternative forms of tourism development [25].

Guidelines for sustainable touristic development have emerged from international events like the Summits of Rio 1992 and Johannesburg 2002 and declarations such as the Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism 1997 [26]. These events underscore the importance of achieving a balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions in tourism development. The three main dimensions of sustainable tourism—financial, environmental, and social—are integral to the effective management of natural, social, economic, and cultural objectives for future generations [27]. Indicators of sustainable tourism development, developed post-Rio Summit in 1992 and updated in recent publications, provide valuable tools for evaluating current situations and future interventions [28]. Sustainable tourism emphasizes careful planning to avoid environmental degradation and socio-cultural problems at tourist destinations. It advocates for environmentally friendly actions based on the area's carrying capacity and encourages infrastructure upgrades to enhance the quality of life for permanent residents. Furthermore, sustainable tourism aims to distribute socioeconomic benefits equitably among local communities while promoting social justice, preserving historical identity, and respecting cultural traditions [29]. The satisfaction of visitors is paramount in sustainable tourism, ensuring a positive experience for all without discrimination [30]. The active participation of local communities in planning and decision-making processes is crucial for sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable tourism presents numerous economic benefits for stakeholders, debunking the misconception that costs outweigh profits [31]. These benefits encompass economic development opportunities, job creation, enhanced customer satisfaction, improved working conditions, and increased productivity [32]. Economically, sustainable tourism contributes to government revenues through direct and indirect income streams. Direct income includes taxes from tourist businesses, while indirect income stems from charges to tourists for services and goods. Tourism is a significant driver of job creation globally, with one job created every 2.5 s, contributing to 10% of global GDP and providing 1 in 11 jobs internationally [33], while it is expected to reach 15.5% of global GDP in 2033 [34]. Additionally, tourism encourages investment in infrastructure, prompting local governments to enhance drainage, water systems, road networks, electricity, telecommunications, and public transport networks, thus improving residents' quality of life. Moreover, sustainable tourism directly contributes to the preservation of sensitive areas and habitats by leveraging revenues from park entrance fees and other sources for environmental protection and management. It also fosters a competitive advantage for tourism operators by promoting sustainability practices, which are increasingly favored by tourists and tour operators alike [35]. The European Union's overarching objective is to foster sustainable communities capable of managing resources effectively, promoting ecological and social innovation, and ensuring environmental protection and social cohesion [36].

1.2. The Challenges and Legal Framework for Sustainable Tourism

Coastal areas, such as those in Cyprus, demand immediate attention due to their economic, social, and ecological significance. The tourism boom, particularly mass tourism, in Cypriot coastal regions has both positive and negative impacts. While it generates employment opportunities, it also poses threats to the natural and built environment. To mitigate these challenges and harness the sector's development potential, specialized actions geared toward sustainable tourism strategies are imperative [37].

Sustainable tourism represents a paradigm shift in the approach to tourism development, acknowledging the interplay among economic growth, environmental preservation, and societal well-being [38]. The proliferation of large hotel complexes poses a significant challenge to sustainable tourism efforts, as these facilities entail a range of activities that can have profound ecological and social implications. Issues such as construction expansion, waste management, and water and energy consumption demand a sustainable management ethos to mitigate adverse impacts [39]. A critical challenge for sustainable tourism is the ecological footprint of large hotel facilities, which disproportionately strain natural

resources, particularly energy and water. The overconsumption of water in hotel operations, including pool maintenance, landscaping, and laundry services, exacerbates resource scarcity and environmental degradation. Furthermore, the seasonal influx of tourists amplifies pressure on local resources, underscoring the need for sustainable tourism to address these cyclical impacts. Environmental pollution from hotel operations, compounded by inefficient waste management practices, exacerbates ecological degradation, particularly in fragile ecosystems surrounding tourist destinations [40]. The improper disposal of solid waste poses significant environmental risks, contributing to water contamination and soil degradation. The architectural integration of hotel structures within natural environments remains inadequate, further exacerbating soil degradation and disrupting local ecosystems.

In response to the imperative for climate neutrality by 2050 and to maintain competitiveness, businesses are increasingly embracing sustainable development principles. The European Union (EU) has long recognized the significance of sustainable development, as evidenced by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001, subsequently revised in 2006 and 2009. The EU's commitment to sustainable development is enshrined in Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, emphasizing the establishment of an internal market geared toward sustainability.

In 2019, the EU introduced the European Green Deal to combat climate change and environmental issues, aligning with the goals of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Subsequent actions by the EU have aimed to integrate sustainable development across legislative frameworks and policy domains, involving all member states, including Cyprus. Key initiatives include the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) and the European industrial strategy, which address socioeconomic impacts and support green and digital transitions, respectively. The "Farm to Fork" strategy promotes sustainable food systems, while the energy integration strategy focuses on low-carbon energy services [41]. The "Farm to Fork" strategy is a comprehensive initiative introduced by the European Union (EU) aimed at promoting sustainable food systems throughout the food supply chain. It encompasses various policies and actions designed to address environmental, social, and economic challenges associated with food production, distribution, and consumption. At its core, the "Farm to Fork" strategy emphasizes the importance of transitioning toward more sustainable agricultural practices, reducing food waste, promoting healthier diets, and improving food safety and traceability. It aims to achieve these objectives by setting ambitious targets and implementing measures to support farmers, promote sustainable food production methods, and ensure the availability of nutritious and environmentally friendly food options for consumers [42].

The Taxonomy Regulation establishes criteria for environmentally sustainable economic activities, facilitating sustainable investment. The EU's Blueprint for 2030 climate targets aims to increase emission reduction targets, while the European Climate Deal mobilizes stakeholders for climate action. The Fit for 55 Package proposes legislative revisions and new initiatives to ensure alignment with the 2030 climate goals, targeting a net greenhouse gas emission reduction of at least 55% by 2030 [43].

2. Methodology

This paper employs a mixed-methods approach to conduct a comparative assessment of sustainability trends in tourist facilities, focusing on hotels and resorts. The methodology involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather and analyze data from multiple sources [44]. Qualitative methods include a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, case studies, and reports from academic journals, industry publications, and governmental organizations. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of sustainability initiatives, best practices, and challenges within the hospitality sector.

Quantitative methods involve the collection of empirical data through structured observations in Pafos hotels that have been selected. This study begins with an explanatory case study methodology to assess the sustainability strategies of two distinct tourism destinations, including Soneva Fushi in the Maldives [45] and Sani Resort in Chalkidiki [46],

which have their sustainable characteristics publicly available through their websites. These strategies are compared with those of five selected hotels in Pafos City. As the seafront area of Pafos is highly touristic, the chosen resorts were taken from the hotels in the seafront area between Geroskypou and Peyia to have a representative example. Another important aspect of the selection criteria was the age of the hotels. Three of the hotels are around 30 years old, representing the higher proportion of resorts in the area of that age. There are only a few newly built hotels in the area, which were certainly built under higher sustainability standards using updated technology and materials during construction. The fourth hotel was built in the early 2000s, and the fifth is only three years old. The older hotels have been renovated since their construction. The aim of the selection was to understand the true situation of the main touristic area of Pafos, despite the small sample size.

<u>Hotels Selected:</u>

1. St. George Hotel [47]
2. Leonardo—Laura Hotel [48]
3. Aliathon Hotel and Resort [49]
4. Atlantica Mare—Hotel and Resort [50]
5. Elysium Hotel [51]

The sustainability reports issued by the aforementioned hotels were analyzed to evaluate the sustainability approaches for units in the Maldives, Greece, and Cyprus. The assessment focused on water and energy consumption, waste management, cultural promotion, and community engagement. Charts and graphs were utilized to visually compare and highlight key findings among the hotels from the Maldives, Greece, and Cyprus, with extra focus on comparing the hospitality destinations in Pafos to examine their level of engagement with sustainability practices. The comparative assessment is structured around key sustainability indicators, including energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, community engagement, and programs. Data analysis techniques, such as thematic analysis and content analysis, are utilized to identify common trends, patterns, and correlations across multiple hotels and resorts [52]. Additionally, this study draws upon theoretical frameworks and models from the fields of sustainable tourism, environmental management, and organizational behavior to interpret the findings and draw conclusions.

3. Data Analysis and Results

3.1. Soneva Fushi Resort, Maldives

Soneva Fushi Resort is a world known luxury resort situated in the Maldives island in the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. This resort is synonymous with luxury, yet at the same time, one of the world's known sustainable destinations for vacations. Soneva Fushi is a family luxury resort with sustainable principles and ethics, and all the information is publicly available on the hotel website.

Sustainable practices in Sovena Fushi Resort are as follows:

1. Community project in which Soneva Namona cleans the Maldives islands of plastic and educates locals on zero-plastic use;
2. Local youth employment program to enhance future employability;
3. Production of drinking water in reusable glass bottles;
4. Specialized biologists regenerate coral reefs near Sovena Jani, a partner resort;
5. Photovoltaic solar panels generate 956,945 kWh annually, reducing diesel use;
6. Sovena Forest Restoration initiative mitigates 255,000 tons of CO_2 across Sri Lanka sites;
7. Program for the reintroduction of extinct Hornbill birds;
8. Villas constructed with minimal impact, using ecological materials like bamboo;
9. Support for local artisans through the use of handwoven fabrics;
10. Exclusive use of sustainably caught fish sourced from local fishermen.

Sovena Fushi sets a benchmark as a carbon-neutral luxury resort and is deeply committed to community and environmental sustainability. It aligns with 12 out of the 30 UN Sustainable Development Goals, surpassing mere compliance with government regulations by spearheading impactful initiatives across the Maldives islands [45].

3.2. SANI Resort Chalkidiki, Greece

Sani Resort, located in Kasandra, Chalkidiki, Greece, features five luxurious hotels and pristine amenities, including exclusive beaches and wetlands, all while upholding sustainability as a fundamental value. Recognized as the world's leading Luxury Green Resort for the second consecutive year in 2021, Sani Resort benefits from support from prestigious financial and business entities, such as Goldman Sachs Alternative Investments and Hermes GPE. The resort's sustainability initiatives are rooted in a profound commitment to environmental, social, and governance issues, as evidenced by its comprehensive sustainability report. Sustainable practices in Sani Resort are as follows:

1. Utilization of 100% renewable electricity, making it Greece's first energy-neutral resort;
2. Conducting waste and plastic pollution seminars for employees and guests;
3. Comprehensive recycling program covering paper, glass, cooking oil, aluminum tins, batteries, and appliances;
4. Promotion of community-driven innovations for zero-plastic solutions through sponsored competitions;
5. Implementation of "xeriscaping" for water-efficient gardening;
6. Collaboration with organizations like the Hellenic Ornithology Society to safeguard wetlands and establish bird trails;
7. Partnerships with NGOs and universities for educational programs on marine life conservation;
8. Guest engagement through biodiversity-focused activities like forest walks, bird-watching, and eco-excursions;
9. Reforestation efforts and forest protection programs;
10. Selection of suppliers based on environmental practices, with 48% of food sourced locally;
11. Extensive philanthropic endeavors, supporting over 40 organizations and donating €250,000 to Greek charities in 2020;
12. Cultural excursions offering guests insights into Chalkidiki's heritage and customs.

Sani Resort exemplifies a luxury sustainable retreat, showcasing prudent financial management to achieve ambitious sustainability objectives and earning acclaim for its endeavors [46].

3.3. Paphos Hotels

All selected hotels are presented in Figure 1. Four of the chosen hotels were built around 1990, and one of them was built in 2019. However, all of these have been recently renovated and applied all the governmental regulations in terms of town planning. Four out of the five hotels are situated directly in front of the beach, while the fifth one, Aliathon, is situated close to the beach without a direct sea view.

Aliathon Beach Resort

Aliathon Beach Resort started as a hotel apartment touristic unit, and later, after multiple additions and renovations, with the latest being finished in 2018, the unit transformed into a 140,000 square meter oasis, including two touristic units and more than six swimming pools, one of them being covering 3000 sq.m. Aliathon Resort implements a variety of sustainable practices that can be reflected on their sustainability analysis.
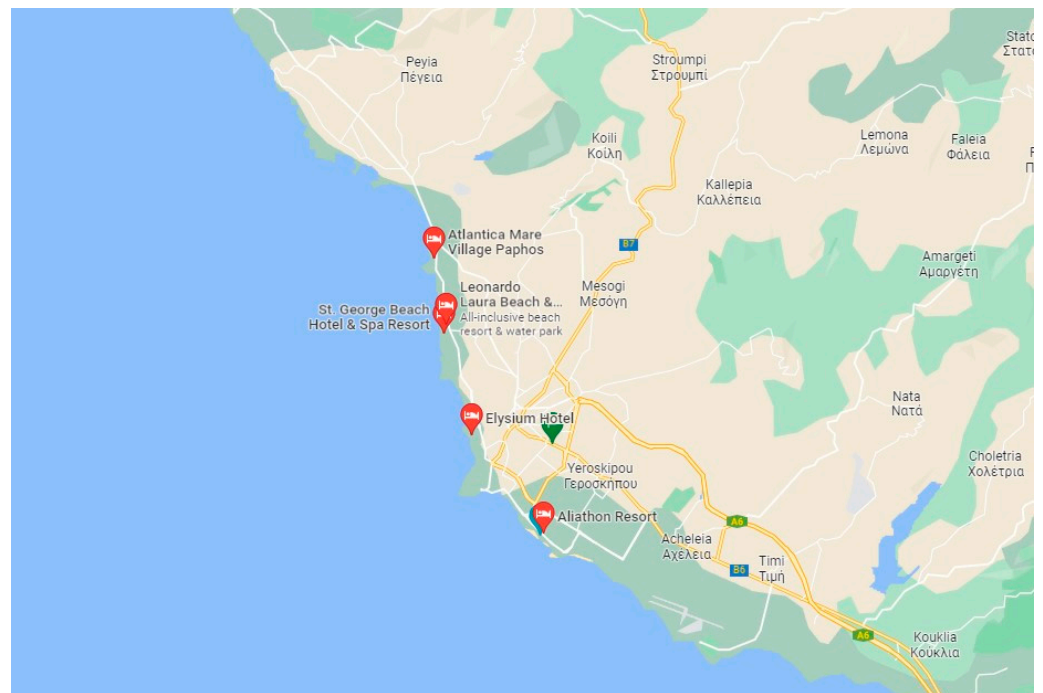
Figure 1. Map of all five selected hotels chosen across Pafos coastline (Source: Google Maps).

Elysium Hotel

Elysium is a five-star unique hotel built in 2002 with a high luxury aesthetic. The hotel was renovated a few times, with the latest being an interior renovation of the common areas and some suites in 2017. Elysium is also a beachfront landmark resort with exceptional architecture, inspired by the Byzantine, Medieval, and Venetian eras of culture present on the island. The following graph is a side-by-side comparison of the five chosen hotels in the specific area of Pafos. The data reviewed were taken from the five sustainability reports published from the hotels and indicate the general sustainability strategies that each hotel adopts. Each attribute is categorized in terms of environmental impact, social responsibility, and general sustainable tactics used for the operation of the hotels. These being energy-saving measures, technological investments for more efficient operation, or maybe social contribution initiatives.

Atlantica Mare Hotel and Resort

Atlanica Mare is a newly built five-star family hotel, which was constructed in 2019 in the area of Kissonerga. The resort offers all the relevant facilities like a spa, six swimming pools, and sports activities with tennis courts. The hotel offers an all-inclusive service. St. George Hotel

Leonardo—Laura Hotel

The four-star hotel, Leonardo Laura Resort, which covers 20,000 square meters, was built in 1991, was last renovated in 2018, and was designed to be the ideal family destination. The hotel offers a waterpark service, which was part of the latest renovation it completed. It also offers spa services and all-inclusive packages for its 412 rooms.

St. George Hotel

The St. George Hotel is a four-star hotel that was built in 1994 by the Church of Cyprus and is situated in the beachfront area of Chloraka. It covers 30,000 square meters of land, 10,000 of which are used for landscaping and garden facilities. The resort has 240 rooms in total. The St. George Hotel was partially renovated in 2015, offering spa facilities with all the amenities like a jacuzzi, a sauna, and various restaurant choices, in combination with an outdoor common pool area.

The following tables are a side-by-side comparison of the five chosen hotels and the data derived from the five sustainability reports published online, which indicate the

general sustainability strategies that each hotel adopts. Each attribute is categorized in terms of environmental impact, social responsibility, and general sustainable tactics used for the operation of the hotels. These being energy-saving measures, technological investments for more efficient operation, and social contribution initiatives. The data presented in the tables are derived from the reports, and we have maintained a consistent format to enhance comprehension and clarity. Figures 2 and 3 serve as summaries and provide a quantitative analysis of these findings through comparative studies. Additionally, Figure 4 offers a qualitative depiction of the impact of sustainable tourism on real estate and local communities.

Energy-saving initiatives are one of the most important aspects of a sustainable tourist facility. Table 1 presents all the energy efficient measures and technologies applied in the five Cypriot hotels. The Aliathon and Elysium hotels use most of the technologies generally used for energy savings, while Leonardo does not apply most of the measures. As a result, all five hotels are partially engaged in energy conservation measures. All the hotels were built using bricks and concrete, without any thermal insulation system in the roof and walls. Four of the hotels were built before 2007, when additional regulations regarding energy efficiency were introduced in Cyprus. At that time, no measures of environmental sustainability were taken. Yet, all five hotels have undergone renovations since then, resulting in upgrades regarding double-glazing windows and thermal insulations. Also, all five upgraded their lighting systems to mostly use LED bulbs throughout the units. As for the water heating systems, 60% use oil burners, thereby increasing energy consumption, while only 40% of the hotels examined have solar panels for water heating. Only one hotel reports yearly energy savings from the measures.

Table 1. Energy-saving technologies used by the hotels in Pafos.

Energy-Saving Initiatives	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
Energy consumption/guest night		29.93 kWh	19.36 kWh	14.7 kWh	15.18 kWh
Reduction of energy from previous year		−3.06%			
Heatin Consumption per guest per night		2.97 kWh			
LED Bulbs	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
PIR Sensor	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Variable Frequency Drives (VFD) on pumps and motors	X	✓	X	X	X
Electric Car Chargers	X	✓	X	X	X
Photovoltaic Systems for heating water	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Building Management system to control temperature throughout the building	✓		X	X	X
Magnetic Key—Air conditioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Double-glazed windows to preserve temperature in the room	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thermal Insulation on the roof	✓	X	✓	X	X
Water in four pools is filtered by solar pumps using the sun's energy	✓	X	X	X	X
Installation of photovoltaics to generate energy	✓	X	X	X	X
Use of chillers and burner for hot water	✓	X	✓	✓	✓

Based on the data presented in Table 2, several conclusions can be drawn. There are variations in water consumption per guest per night across the different establishments. Elysium and Atlantica Mare Village Paphos, both of which are five-star properties, have higher water consumption than the Aliathon Hotel and Resort, Leonardo Laura, and the

St. George Hotel, which are four-star properties. This suggests that higher-rated hotels may use more water per guest, possibly due to increased amenities or larger facilities. Also, most hotels have implemented water-saving initiatives, such as dual-flush toilets and the use of effluent water and pool backwash water for irrigation. However, only the Aliathon Hotel and Resort, Elysium, and the St. George Hotel utilize greywater for garden irrigation, suggesting a more comprehensive approach to water recycling and conservation.

Table 2. Water saving measures and water management at the hotels in Pafos.

Water Management	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
Water consumption per guest per night	252 L	455 L	440	252	242
Water consumption reduction from previous year		−0.88%			
Dual-flush toilet for saving water	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Effluent water and pool backwash water are being used for irrigation	✓	✓	X	X	
Greywater used for garden irrigation	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Encouraging customers to save water	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3 illustrates efforts in recycling and waste reduction. While all establishments have implemented recycling programs for various materials, there are differences in the quantities recycled, with some hotels recycling higher volumes than others. Additionally, measures such as reducing paper consumption in offices and minimizing food waste reflect a collective commitment to environmental sustainability within the hospitality industry.

Table 3. Waste management practices for the hotels in Pafos.

Waste Management Recycling (Paper, Batteries, Plastic, Cooking Oil, Light Bulbs, Electric Appliances)	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
Paper	✓	70 Skips	✓		✓
Glass	✓	403,000 Bottles	✓		✓
Pmd and Plastic	✓	160,000 Bottles	✓		✓
Cooking oil	✓	14.6 Tones	✓		✓
Electric Appliances	X				✓
Cans	X	10,000			✓
Batteries	✓	4700	✓		✓
Light Bulbs	✓	2398	✓		✓
Maintenance and Chemical Containers		620			✓
Reduce and reuse of paper consumption in offices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Buffet Food items not consumed are consumed by the staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From Table 4, it is evident that the Aliathon Hotel and Resort, Elysium, and the St. George Hotel have embraced the use of biodegradable detergents, highlighting their commitment to environmentally friendly practices. However, the absence of eco-friendly pesticides and fertilizers in Leonardo Laura and the St. George Hotel indicates a potential area for improvement in their sustainability initiatives. Additionally, the presence of chlorine-free paper in the Aliathon Hotel and Resort and Elysium reflects efforts toward reducing the environmental impact of their operations compared to the other establishments.

Table 4. Chemical management at the hotels in Pafos.

Chemicals	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
Biodegradable detergents	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Eco-friendly pesticides and fertilizers	✓	✓	X	X	X
Chlorine-free paper	✓	✓	X	X	X

Regarding the purchasing policies used, Table 5 shows that while all hotels have adopted sustainable purchasing practices to some extent, there is variation in their approaches to recyclable packaging. Leonardo Laura could enhance its sustainability efforts by considering bulk purchasing and using recyclable packaging for its products. Aliathon and Altantica Mare are engaged with all the presented sustainable purchasing processes.

Table 5. Sustainability purchasing method applied in the hotels in Pafos.

Purchasing	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
Buy in Bulk	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Buying products with recyclable packaging	✓	X	✓	X	X
Plastic straws and glasses are avoided	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

From Table 6, it is apparent that the Elysium Hotel has the highest number of employees, indicating its larger scale of operation compared to the other hotels. However, Leonardo Laura stands out for its higher percentage of local employees, potentially contributing to stronger community ties. Elysium's comprehensive training program for employees suggests a commitment to skill development and efficiency, whereas the St. George Hotel's focus on staff training for energy conservation indicates efforts toward sustainable practices. Nonetheless, the lack of data for certain categories in some hotels limits a comprehensive comparison across all establishments.

Table 6. Human capital percentage rates between women and men and foreign and local employees.

Human Capital	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★★★★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★★★★★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★★★★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★★★★ (4 Stars)
No. of Employees	No data	510		229	191
Men	No data	47.20%	48%	49.50%	57%
Women	No data	52.45%	52%	50.50%	43%
Local Employee	No data	No data	63%	70%	60%
Foreign employee	No data		37%	30%	40%
Training of Employees	No data	20 h/yr/per person	8 h/yr/per person		
Staff training regarding energy conservation	No data				

Regarding the social responsibility and human capital, Table 7 present that all the hotels provide gender equality in terms of employees, and all of them have over 60% local employees, which helps the local community and local market, offering job positions to locals and promoting the local language. Regarding offering back to the community, some of the hotels give donations to local organizations regarding health issues and sport

activities. Finally, only two of them contribute to activities that promote the local culture and customs, Elysium and St. George. This is an unfortunate conclusion, which could also be a result of the all-inclusive culture used by the remaining hotels, which promotes staying in the hotel all day. The all-inclusive tourist packages do not let the visitors explore the local area and culture. This, however, as highlighted by a study from Ozdemir et al. [53], is short-sighted, as visitors' satisfaction with an all-inclusive resort is enhanced and improved by satisfaction with the local destination. High satisfaction with the resort, all-inclusive or not, contributes to loyalty to the destination in the future.

Table 7. Community and cultural initiatives derived from the hotels toward local organizations.

Community	Aliathon Hotel and Resort ★ ★ ★ ★ (4 Stars)	Elysium ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (5 Stars)	Atlantica Mare Village Paphos ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (5 Stars)	Leonardo Laura ★ ★ ★ ★ (4 Stars)	St. George Hotel ★ ★ ★ ★ (4 Stars)
Actions giving back to community		_Donations in NGOs for Health purposes _Donating furniture to poor people and churches while renovating	_They support number of local and international organizations like Margarita Liasidou Foundation and Animal Rescue Cyprus	_Extra food is donated to local organizations _Volunteer tree planting for forest department _Equipment and furniture is given to local charity organisations	
Local Suppliers	✓	99% of suppliers are Local	✓	90% of suppliers are Local	
CULTURE					
Activities		_Wine related acitvities to local wineyards	_Beach Clean-up by the hotel staff		_Promoting heritage area and promoting "Boat museum"

3.4. Comparative Analysis of the Hospitality Units

Figure 2 below summarizes four KPIs linked to sustainability, energy consumption, gas consumption, and waste and water consumption as measures of the environmental tactics and performance of each hotel to compare the results of the strategies used. It is also interesting to note that Atlantica Mare, the newest built hotel in 2019, has the second-highest water and energy consumption. This is not something that we would expect from a newly built hotel, yet there are some assumptions that should be made from the above results. The five-star hotel has six swimming pools, which obviously uses a lot of energy; in addition, the garden may need higher maintenance and water consumption because the plants are fairly new and need to be established. It also has spa facilities, which add to the overall energy consumption. In addition, looking at the charts above, it is very prominent that the Aliathon Resort, even though it includes six pools, has water, energy, and gas consumption levels that place it among the top two resorts in terms of sustainability in relation to the rest of the sustainability factors. It is clear that solar panel installation, as well as the solar pumps used for the pools, are reflected in the minimal consumption. Also, the insulated roof gives the building higher environmental efficiency. Finally, a generalization of the above-illustrated data is that the five-star hotels consume more energy, gas, and water than the four-star hotels. This could be rendered to the additional requirements of the Ministry of Tourism in the classification of the four- to five-star hotels. There are some requirements that result in unavoidably increased use of energy. Also, according to the hotels' reports, there are not any advanced technological solutions and practices used for limiting overconsumption, which is reflected in the above analysis.
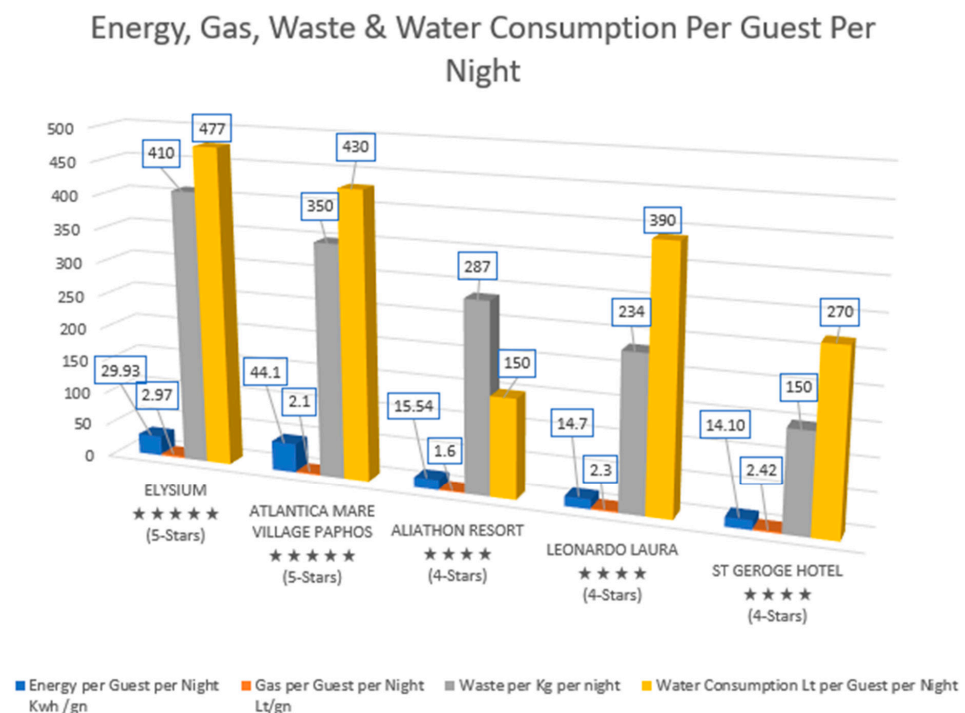
Figure 2. Comparison of sustainability KPIs.

While Paphos hotels exhibit a range of sustainability initiatives, their alignment with established sustainability frameworks, such as those exemplified by Soneva Fushi and Sani Resort, varies considerably. Each hotel in Paphos has implemented measures aimed at environmental conservation and community engagement, yet the extent to which these efforts adhere to recognized sustainability metrics requires further investigation to assess their efficacy in achieving holistic sustainability goals.

For example, the Aliathon Hotel and Resort in Paphos has demonstrated a commitment to sustainability through the deployment of energy-saving technologies, water management strategies, and waste recycling programs. These initiatives, while promising, necessitate rigorous evaluation using standardized sustainability assessment tools to ascertain their effectiveness in mitigating environmental impacts and fostering community resilience. Similarly, the Elysium Hotel, a prominent luxury destination in Paphos, emphasizes environmental stewardship and community involvement in its operations. However, the quantifiable outcomes of its sustainability initiatives remain to be elucidated through comprehensive impact assessments and longitudinal studies to discern their long-term sustainability implications. The Atlantica Mare Hotel and Resort, as a nascent entrant in the Paphos hospitality landscape, presents an opportunity to incorporate state-of-the-art sustainability practices informed by evidence-based research and industry best practices. By leveraging established sustainability frameworks and conducting lifecycle assessments, Atlantica Mare can optimize resource utilization and minimize environmental footprints to align with global sustainability benchmarks. In contrast, the Leonardo Laura Hotel in Paphos and the St. George Hotel along the Chloraka beachfront have embraced sustainability in their operations, albeit with varying degrees of rigor and systematic evaluation. To enhance their sustainability performance, these hotels could benefit from adopting robust sustainability reporting mechanisms and engaging in collaborative research partnerships to generate empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of their sustainability initiatives.

In conclusion, while Paphos hotels demonstrate a commendable commitment to sustainability, a more scientific approach incorporating rigorous assessment methodologies and evidence-based decision-making is essential to gauge the effectiveness of their sustainability endeavors and ensure alignment with global sustainability imperatives.

Figure 3 provides insights into the extent to which the hotels are involved in various sustainability measures, such as those described in Tables 1–5 above. The chart depicts the level of engagement across various sustainability categories, indicating that hospitality units have considerable progress to make in fully embracing sustainable measures. Notably, only one hotel in the sample is reporting yearly energy and water savings, representing a mere 20% of the total. It is imperative for all units to provide quantitative reports on their consumption and recycling outcomes to achieve tangible results and foster continued motivation.

In terms of energy efficiency, all hotels have room for improvement by adopting additional measures. Concerning water conservation, 60% of hotel units demonstrate partial or no engagement with conservation efforts. Similarly, for waste management, recycling, and chemical management, the distribution shows that 40% of hotels are fully engaged, 40% are partially engaged, and 20% are not engaged at all. Moreover, 60% of hotels in the sample require further measures to fully align with sustainable purchasing practices.

This analysis underscores the pressing need for hospitality units to enhance their commitment to sustainability across multiple dimensions, emphasizing the importance of rigorous reporting and the implementation of comprehensive measures to achieve meaningful progress.
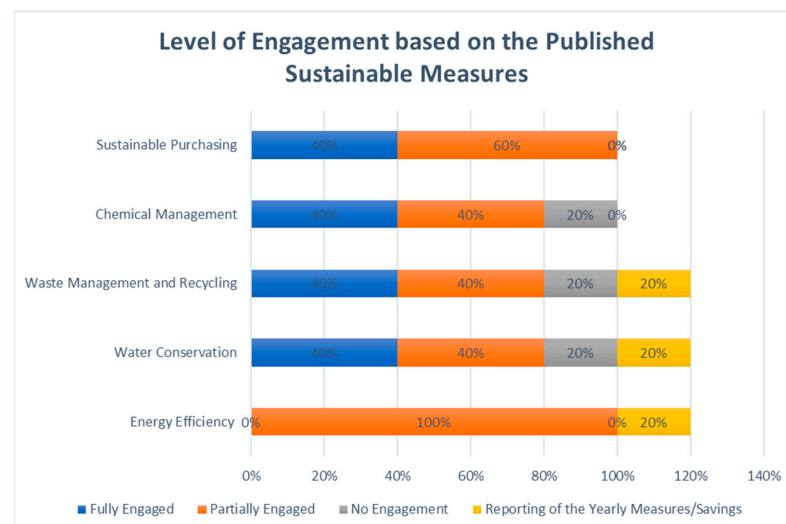

Figure 3. Level of sustainable measure engagement and reporting.

Figure 4 succinctly depicts the interconnected relationship between sustainable tourism practices, real estate development, and the well-being of local communities. It utilizes icons representing eco-friendly initiatives and sustainable tourism activities to illustrate how sustainable tourism stimulates demand for environmentally conscious real estate projects, such as green hotels and eco-resorts. These developments, in turn, contribute to economic opportunities and cultural preservation within local communities, as represented by icons symbolizing job creation, income generation, and cultural enrichment. Arrows connecting these elements underscore the mutually beneficial relationship, demonstrating how sustainable tourism practices positively influence both real estate development and community prosperity [54]. This figure effectively communicates the multifaceted benefits of sustainable tourism for both the environment and society as those derived from the different sustainability reports from the touristic units investigated in this study. For example, the report on Soneva's sustainable initiatives highlights eco-friendly architecture and renewable energy integration, which can influence the design and construction of sustainable real estate projects. These practices contribute to the development of environmentally responsible properties that align with sustainable tourism principles [39]. The Sanikos ESG report presents detailed investments in green building technologies and sustainable

infrastructure for its resort properties. It details the company's efforts in areas like environmental conservation, social responsibility, and corporate governance. By prioritizing environmental sustainability in real estate development, this report demonstrates how sustainable tourism practices positively enhanced interest in investing in real estate and especially real estate that respect and engage with ESG and how the ESG support the overall local community with increased job opportunities, elevated educational levels, and better available services [40]. On the other hand, the sustainability information provided by the St. George Hotel showcases how sustainable tourism is not only a responsible choice but also the key to creating long-term value for the business and the wider community by promoting the local culture [41]. Leonardo Laura's sustainability report discuss its efforts to incorporate sustainable design principles into real estate development projects and highlights how the staff environmental training support to further understand the positive impact not only to the touristic unit but also to the surrounding community [42]. The environmental statement by the Aliathon Resort highlights the integration of sustainable legislation and policy framework into tourism practices and how this positively influence real estate development [43]. Atlantica Mare's sustainability report provides insights into how the company incorporates sustainable features into its real estate properties, as well as how the resort, by providing the highest customer satisfaction at the lowest environmental and social impact, can influence the community and elevated the local's quality of life. It is also evident that destinations become more attractive when they are engaged in sustainable practices, and this results in more jobs and opportunities for services in the area [44]. Finally, the "Treasures" publication by the Elysium Hotel showcase initiatives that enable local business growth by increasing access to tourism and economic benefits, preserving local cultural heritage, and creating and sustaining employment and social capital and opportunities. Also, the report highlights the economic impact of supporting and committing to local suppliers [45]. These reports provide valuable insights into the profound impact of sustainable tourism practices on both local communities and the real estate sector, as illustrated in Figure 4.
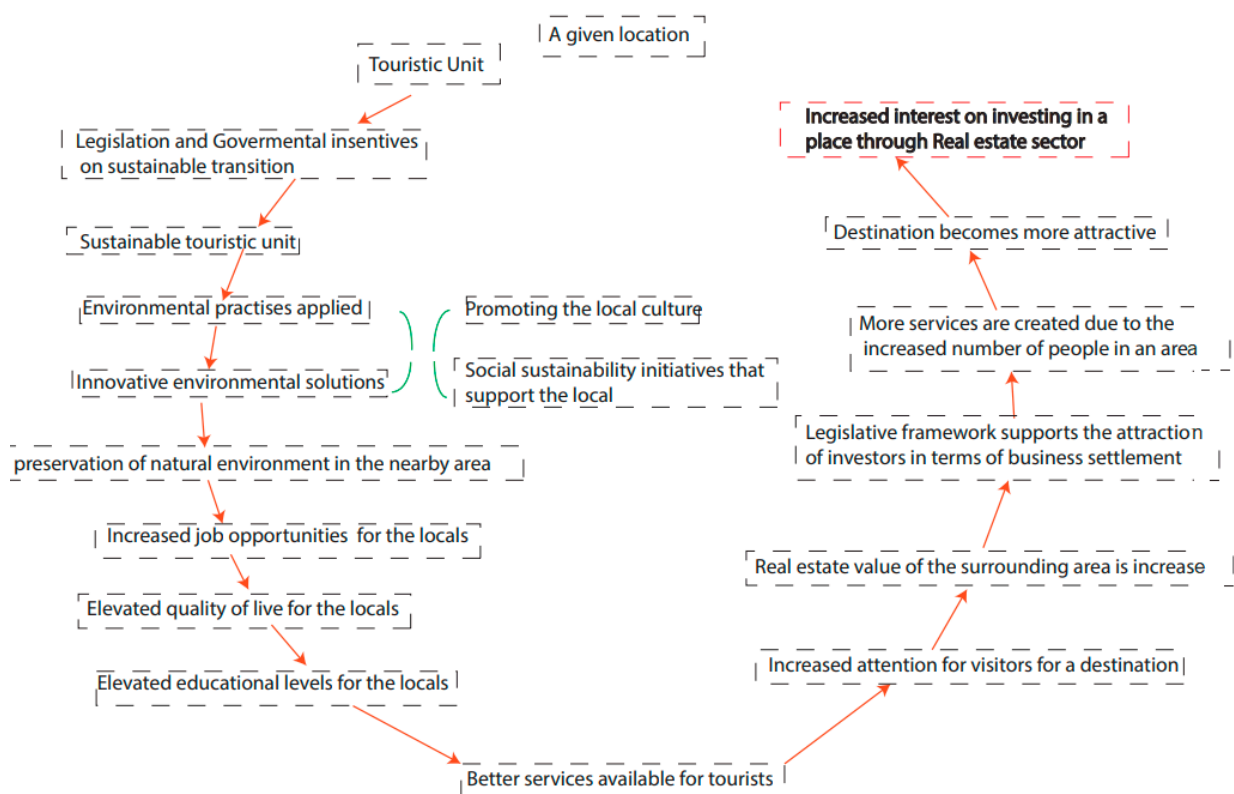

Figure 4. Impact of sustainable tourism on real estate and local communities.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The implementation of sustainable tourism practices not only affects economic dimensions but also profoundly influences social dynamics and environmental factors within real estate markets. This conclusion is thoroughly analyzed in Figure 4 and corroborated by findings in other studies [55]. For instance, acclaimed sustainable resorts like Sani Resort and Soneva Fushi prioritize community engagement and environmental stewardship, setting benchmarks for similar projects. Successful sustainable resort developments necessitate a trifecta of environmental compliance, economic viability, and supportive regulatory frameworks to attract real estate investments and catalyze destination growth [56].

The current evaluation of sustainability practices across Paphos hotels underscores concerted efforts toward environmental stewardship. However, there exists untapped potential for further advancements, particularly in renewable energy adoption and waste management strategies. This study aimed to uncover the intricate relationship between sustainable tourism destinations and their surrounding communities, emphasizing the symbiosis that exists between them. Hotels, as key players in the tourism sector, wield significant influence in shaping sustainable practices that not only benefit tourists but also contribute to the well-being of local residents. However, our findings suggest that there is ample opportunity for hotels to strengthen collaboration and engagement with the community, thereby maximizing the positive impact of sustainable tourism initiatives.

Through this investigation, several significant conclusions and recommendations have emerged for fostering a more sustainable tourism sector. While many hotels in Cyprus prioritize energy efficiency, it is evident that further steps are necessary. Hotels can leverage successful practices outlined in European and international guidelines, as well as learn from successful examples, to bolster their sustainability initiatives and make more positive contributions to their communities and the environment [57].

Paphos hotels exhibit a range of sustainability initiatives, but their alignment with established frameworks varies considerably. While each hotel has implemented measures for environmental conservation and community engagement, further investigation is needed to assess their adherence to recognized sustainability metrics. This entails rigorous environmental risk assessments, meticulous infrastructure planning to accommodate local populations, and adherence to internationally recognized environmental management standards. Furthermore, collaboration with entities like the Cyprus Energy Regulatory Authority is pivotal for hotels to stay abreast of renewable energy advancements and adhere to energy production regulations. Compliance with the National Action Plan for Renewable Energy 2020–2030 [58] fosters alignment with broader sustainability objectives [51].

While hotels like the Aliathon Hotel and the Elysium Hotel have shown commitment to sustainability through various initiatives, their effectiveness needs rigorous evaluation using standardized assessment tools. Quantifiable outcomes and the long-term sustainability implications of these initiatives remain to be elucidated through comprehensive impact assessments. The Atlantica Mare Hotel presents opportunities to incorporate state-of-the-art sustainability practices informed by evidence-based research. Hotels such as the Leonardo Laura Hotel and the St. George Hotel could enhance their sustainability performance by adopting robust reporting mechanisms and engaging in collaborative research partnerships.

A more scientific approach incorporating rigorous assessment methodologies and evidence-based decision-making is essential to gauge the effectiveness of sustainability endeavors and ensure alignment with global imperatives [59]. This analysis underscores the pressing need for hospitality units to enhance their commitment to sustainability across multiple dimensions. This includes rigorous and quantitative reporting and comprehensive measures to achieve meaningful progress. These conclusions highlight the current state of sustainability efforts in Paphos hotels and emphasize the importance of further evaluation, improvement, and scientific approaches in advancing sustainability goals.

In addition to the aforementioned findings, this study encountered some limitations. Although our methodological approach provided valuable insights, its reliance on publicly

available data from a limited sample of Paphos hotels imposed certain constraints. To address this, future research endeavors could broaden their scope to include a more diverse array of tourism establishments and incorporate direct survey methods to gather richer insights.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need for future investigations to delve deeper into the socioeconomic impacts of sustainable tourism initiatives. By examining their contributions to local infrastructure and community development, researchers can unlock valuable insights into the broader implications of sustainable tourism practices. This holistic understanding will not only enrich our knowledge base but also inform strategic decisions aimed at fostering sustainable tourism growth [60]. Ultimately, by shedding light on these multifaceted dynamics, the tourism sector has the opportunity to position themselves as pioneers in sustainable practices. Embracing and promoting sustainability will not only yield long-term economic benefits but also foster environmental stewardship, thereby ensuring a brighter future for both the region and its inhabitants.

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