

Implementing sustainable practices in Asia

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Story Highlights

Several countries, states and local communities have increased their regulatory oversight for new and existing development.

An interest in green meetings is steadily growing in the U.S.

The governments in Macao and Singapore encourage companies to become more environmentally responsible through certification systems, conservation programs and incentives.



While the adoption of sustainable development or sustainable practices still varies across the diverse and fragmented hotel industry, there is no dispute about its rising importance and awareness.

In varying degrees of prominence, there have been six key drivers that have shaped the sustainability agenda globally. They include the following:

1. **Global context and corporate policy:** At the highest level, a rising awareness and concern about climate change, and growing environmental ethic is reshaping public policy and corporate consciousness.
2. **Sustainability regulations:** Several countries, states and local communities have increased their regulatory oversight for new and existing development.
3. **Standards and certifications:** A proliferation of standards and certifications offered by profit, nonprofit and government entities have made it easier for hotels to obtain green credentials.
4. **Market drivers:** Individual and corporate travelers are becoming environmentally conscious, and vendors and suppliers are providing various products to fit market needs. Furthermore, employees are gravitating to companies with sustainable policies and programs.
5. **Objective measurement and reporting:** Environmental reporting requirements are becoming more stringent and complex, and many organizations are being faced with the challenge of balancing this with existing reporting requirements.
6. **High performance buildings and return on investment:** As individual hotels and companies continue to adopt sustainable development practices and processes, there is an increasing number of cases proving a business case exists for high performance buildings and sustainable practices.

As hotel companies in the United States expand their presence in Asia, they might need to be conscious of these global drivers and monitor their influence in the regions where they are developing hotels. In many cases, the hotel companies have well-established sustainability programs in the U.S. and are assessing the application of these practices in their international locations.



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Las Vegas Sands Corporation, which operates resorts in Las Vegas, Pennsylvania, Macao and Singapore, is focusing on sustainability with its Sands Eco360° program, a

broad, cross-sector work for the company and to protect the local environments, natural resources, climate and communities where it operates.

As the company continues to grow internationally, it is assessing sustainability drivers in its global locations to leverage lessons learned at its U.S. properties to benefit these destinations. Given the size and scale of the company's global operations, the article shares the initial lessons learned as it compares practices in the U.S. with its implementation in Singapore and Macao.

Market drivers

- Guest preferences. From the perspective of the leisure traveler, the hotel's environmental performance is not a primary driver in the customer's purchase decision. Research also endorses that only a small portion of leisure travelers actively seek eco-conscious accommodations. However, an interest in green meetings is steadily growing in the U.S. Many large meetings, incentives, convention and exhibition clients require green meeting destinations to complete sustainability surveys.
- Meeting planner preferences. While offering a minimum number of basic green meeting options is becoming a requirement in the U.S., green meetings are generally seen as an opportunity for differentiation in the Asian markets. LV Sands launched its Sands Eco360° Meetings program in its Asian properties, which allows meeting clients to choose from a menu of sustainable options, such as no pre-set water bottles, pens, pads and wrapped candies; water stations instead of bottled water; paper products with recycled content; and sustainable food options. The banquet teams also serve with china and glassware to minimize use of disposable products in the meeting facilities. Recycling is integrated into the properties' operations.
- Employee preferences. In Las Vegas, more than 800 team members at LV Sands participate in the Club Ride program, an incentive program that promotes alternative modes of transportation. The Go Green Ambassador program at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore aims to engage team members in green events and educate them about sustainability. Each department has at least one Go Green Ambassador that answers questions about how to be green. According to Kevin Teng, director of sustainability at Marina Bay Sands, team members are actively seeking places of work that provide a more balanced approach to their overall wellness and benefits, including corporate programs for wellness, dining, health and community sports.
- Vendors and suppliers as providers of green products. Similar to the U.S., there is a proliferation of vendors that offer green products and services both in Macao and Singapore. However, the challenge is many of these products are not regulated in Asia, and therefore their environmental veracity (and consequent impact) is questionable. As a result, there is an increasing trend toward more stringent monitoring and labeling of sustainable products and services, especially in Singapore.

Standards and certifications

Green standards and certifications programs are emerging in Asia. For example, in Macao, several hotels are participating in the Macao Green Hotel government initiative. The Macao Green Hotel Award encourages Macao's hotel industry to implement environmental measures. Both Sands Macao and The Venetian Macao hold Macao Green Hotel Awards. The Venetian Macao became one of only three hotels in Macao to obtain the coveted gold level. LV Sands chose to adopt regional standards to address local environmental concerns. In Singapore, 11 hotels achieved the Green Mark certification, an initiative to drive Singapore's construction industry toward more environment-friendly buildings; about five more are currently pursuing it. Marina Bay Sands earned the Green Mark Gold level and became the largest gold certified building in Singapore.

Regulations and external stakeholders

The governments in Macao and Singapore encourage companies to become more environmentally responsible through certification systems, conservation programs and incentives. The governments are currently also exploring implementation of environmental regulations and mandates.



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In Asia, there isn't a clear and defined understanding of sustainability among the general public. In addition, sustainability, which refers to financial, environmental and social sustainability, has been replaced by corporate social responsibility in the general discourse in Singapore. However, this situation is expected to change partly as a result of regulations as well as universities and colleges in Macao and Singapore introducing environmental studies programs.

LV Sands' properties work with local schools to support these programs through donations or practical experience opportunities. During the past several years, the Venetian Macao has sponsored a solar boat competition for school teams to design, build and race solar powered model boats. Marina Bay Sands also partnered with a visual media department at a local polytechnic school to produce short videos on property to raise awareness about



sustainability. The resort is also working with the Nanyang Technological University's civil engineering department to identify waste optimization procedures onsite. A group of 10 students shadowed housekeeping, public area department and dock team members

and presented a list of ideas, of which several have been selected for implementation.

According to Teng, with more than 30 Asian nationalities at Marina Bay Sands, one of their most significant challenges is cross-cultural communication and team member engagement. It goes beyond language—it's about how different cultures value natural resources and environmental processes, particularly those team members from lesser means and even small agrarian villages. For example, they had to rethink how we explain water conservation to many of their Chinese staff who come from cities along the Yangtze river, where water is abundant.

Some of their team members also had never seen a green recycling triangle before working at Marina Bay Sands. As a result, their team member engagement activities are focused on education and repetition, similar to going back to school. They organize games that teach team members how to recycle, and place signs that explain the concept and importance of resource conservation.

While all LV Sands' properties have the capabilities to sort and collect recyclables, companies that process recyclable commodities are far and few between in Macao and Singapore. Waste is generally incinerated in waste-to-energy facilities. However, Singapore (as well as other Asian countries) is experimenting with new technologies, such as pneumatic waste systems or more efficient incineration.

View of the future of sustainability in Asia We believe sustainability in Asia is going to get only more prominent because people find it easy to identify with these principles. As Teng of Marina Bay Sands puts it, "Sustainable practices are deeply rooted in Asian cultures—things like eating in moderation, helping your neighbor—these are similar to many of the value systems of different groups here, such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism."

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