



# International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

## Green Hotel Model in the World and Lessons for Vietnam

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### Article Info

**ISSN (online):** 2582-7138

**Volume:** 06

**Issue:** 03

**May-June 2025**

**Received:** 09-04-2025

**Accepted:** 10-05-2025

**Page No:** 1112-1116

### Abstract

Tourism and tourism business have been considered a smokeless industry, bringing great profits to the country. In this field, accommodation services play an important role, especially hotels. To develop sustainable hotel services, environmental factors need to be focused on, contributing to promoting the long-term development of the tourism industry. The trend of green hotel business is increasingly being applied by hotels around the world, from which lessons can be drawn to apply to the green hotel model in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Hotel Model, Green Hotel, Sustainable Development

### Introduction

#### 1. Problem statement

Among the industries in Vietnam, tourism plays an important role and has a significant impact on the environment. The strong development of the tourism industry has led to a rapid increase in accommodation services, of which the hotel business accounts for a large proportion. Currently, the trend of sustainable development with a focus on building environmentally friendly hotel spaces is being applied by many businesses in the industry, contributing to minimizing negative impacts on the ecosystem. Although tourism brings in large profits and contributes significantly to economic growth, it also causes environmental problems such as water, air, noise pollution, natural resource depletion and ecosystem imbalance due to urbanization and infrastructure expansion. In the hotel business, the amount of resources consumed is very large, leading to significant impacts on the environment. According to a specialized report, about 75% of the negative impacts of hotels on the environment come from the excessive use of unsustainable imported products, consumption of electricity, water and waste discharge into land, water and air. In Vietnam, some hotels have begun to apply environmentally friendly solutions to their business operations, but this trend is still not really popular and has many limitations. Therefore, this article analyzes the strategies for implementing green hotel models at some major hotel brands in the world, thereby drawing lessons to support Vietnamese hotels in protecting the environment and developing sustainable business.

#### 2. Viewpoint on green hotel

Hotel is a popular form of accommodation in our country. *Green hotel concept* has appeared for a long time and is commonly used today, but there is still no specific general concept to define it. The Green Hotel Association defines: "A green hotel is an environmentally friendly real estate, where its management is always ready to propose programs to save water, save energy, reduce waste while saving costs to protect our earth" [2]. According to APAT, "A green hotel is a hotel committed to implementing measures to minimize negative impacts on the environment and local communities through the efficient use of natural resources, reducing carbon emissions and applying sustainable management measures" [5].

The above definitions all emphasize sustainability, efficient use of resources and minimizing negative impacts on the environment in hotel operations. Depending on the region and certification standards, the approach may be different but all aim at the common goal of environmental protection and sustainable development. The definitions all aim at a common spirit of green hotels, which is to minimize environmental impacts through saving energy, water, and minimizing waste in the service

provision process, requiring the participation of everyone from the board of directors to employees and customers.

### 3. Research methods

This study applies a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth analysis of green hotel models in the world and drawing lessons for the hotel industry in Vietnam. The qualitative approach is chosen to exploit multidimensional perspectives, reflecting the views of experts, hotel managers and organizations related to sustainable development in the tourism industry.

Through the analysis of documents, reports, and case studies on green hotel models in developed countries, the study helps clarify the core elements of this model, including sustainable operation strategies, resource management policies, and community participation. At the same time, the study also identifies challenges and opportunities when applying the green hotel model in the context of Vietnam, thereby proposing appropriate solutions to promote the sustainable development of the domestic hotel industry.

### 4. Green hotel models at some hotels around the world

Faced with the difficult problems of environmental pollution, hotel businesses have researched and introduced more environmentally friendly activities, or "greener", thereby both building a unique mark in the hearts of customers and creating a competitive advantage in the market. Nowadays, people around the world are expressing their concern for environmental issues, and tourists are therefore paying more attention to "green" factors when choosing an accommodation facility. Many surveys by tourism businesses and independent research analysts show that customers now have a greater demand for eco-friendly accommodation.

The green trend has long been present in the hotel business in the world. Many hotels have followed this trend and achieved certain successes. Typical of these are the two famous hotel business groups Accor Group and Las Vegas Sands Corporation. Accor is one of the pioneers in building green hotels and now always emphasizes environmental factors in hotel business activities. Las Vegas Sands is a business that comes after Accor, but Las Vegas Sands always puts sustainable development as the goal and method of operation of the business and has become one of the leading green hotel businesses in the world. These two groups have both achieved many prestigious awards and certificates on environmental protection and sustainable development. This is absolutely an ideal model in this industry for other businesses to learn from.

In the context of climate change and the increasing need for sustainable development, many large hotel groups in the world have implemented green hotel strategies to minimize environmental impact and optimize resources. Besides Accor - a pioneer in green hotel management, many leading hotel brands such as Marriott International, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, IHG Hotels & Resorts are also actively implementing environmental protection measures in business operations. Marriott International has proposed the "Serve 360" program, committed to reducing 50% of carbon emissions by 2030 and promoting an environmentally friendly hotel model. The program includes saving energy by installing LED lighting systems, using renewable energy such as solar energy; minimizing plastic waste by completely eliminating mini plastic bottles in the bathroom, replacing them with large reusable containers; Effective water

management through a water consumption monitoring system, utilizing wastewater for reuse in cooling and irrigation. Currently, many hotels in the Marriott group have applied green measures such as JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa (Italy) with a wastewater treatment system and organic garden, or Marriott Marquis Chicago (USA), which saves more than 15 million liters of water per year thanks to a smart water management system.

Hilton has launched its "Travel with Purpose" program, which focuses on sustainability and reducing environmental impact. One of Hilton's key initiatives is the LightStay system, which monitors energy, water and emissions consumption at more than 6,800 hotels worldwide. The program includes using renewable energy through energy recovery from air conditioning systems and installing solar panels to heat water; reducing food waste by partnering with non-profit organizations to donate excess food from hotel restaurants; and optimizing lighting and air conditioning systems by using sensor technology to automatically adjust temperature and lighting in bedrooms. Green shopping: Includes measures such as using biodegradable paper; using eco-labeled products; supporting organic, local products; not buying meat from overfished species; ordering beds made from sustainably managed, FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council)-certified wood; pillows designed from recycled plastic bottles for hotel rooms; soaps, shower gels, shampoos and cleaning products all certified as environmentally safe. Other environmental protection measures: Building a private organic garden for the hotel; reducing the use of pesticides; reducing herbicides; reducing the use of fungicides; using organic fertilizers; watering plants properly; planting locally adapted trees; participating in local environmental protection activities. Some of Hilton's typical hotels in the field of green hotels include Hilton London Bankside (UK) with a "Zero Waste Suite" room made from 100% recycled materials, or Hilton Singapore Orchard, which applies a rainwater collection system to water plants and reduce clean water consumption.

IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) has launched the "Green Engage" program, which uses technology to monitor energy, water and waste consumption to optimize hotel operations. Some of IHG's green measures include using sustainable materials in hotel construction, helping to reduce carbon emissions right from the construction process; energy-saving cooling systems, reducing electricity consumption by optimizing air conditioning technology; minimizing plastic waste by replacing plastic bottles with glass bottles or recycled materials. IHG Use handkerchiefs instead of napkins, encourage electronic documents over printed documents; lunch menus are stripped of wrappers, drinks come in reusable cups and tea bags without strings or labels, and sugar packets are replaced with individual sugar cubes. Employee training: The above features will never be enough to create a culture of sustainability goals throughout the business without the commitment and participation of members. Understanding that, the Board of Directors has launched activities such as environmental campaigns, educational events to help members be aware of what is being aimed at, inspire them to be excited, want to participate in those activities, feel more connected to the business itself; Organize activities to raise awareness about the ecosystem, promote sustainability through many channels such as: orientation sessions, employee handbooks, daily training, pre-shift meetings, bi-weekly newsletters, tours, showing

videos containing sustainability messages, giveaways, special events.

Some hotels under IHG have effectively implemented the green hotel model, typically the InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort (Vietnam) with a solar energy system and conservation of the Son Tra forest ecosystem, or Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong, which applies ecological architecture and an environmentally friendly water filtration system. Not only Accor, but many large hotel groups such as Marriott, Hilton, and IHG are also leading the green hotel trend, applying advanced solutions to reduce energy consumption, effectively manage water, limit waste and protect the environment. These initiatives not only help protect natural resources but also bring sustainable economic benefits, create a friendly resort environment and enhance the experience of tourists around the world.

### 5. Green hotel model in Vietnam

The green hotel model in Vietnam is gradually becoming an inevitable trend in the tourism industry, contributing to promoting sustainable development and enhancing competitiveness in the international market. Along with the world's sustainable development trend, "green hotels" and the "green hotel" model in Vietnam have appeared and are increasingly spreading. In fact, this model brings many benefits in helping to save energy and protect the environment. In the future, the "green hotel" model needs to be more popularized and replicated. In Vietnam, there are currently many hotels that have met green hotel standards such as the Sheraton Hotel, the Majestic Hotel, the Caravelle Hotel... Most of these hotels have started to create a green hotel model, through activities to improve performance, save water to reduce costs, and protect the environment. Because creating a green and clean environment not only creates aesthetic beauty for the surrounding environment but also is a standard to ensure the health of tourists and the community. Specifically, Majestic Hotel has replaced high-energy-consuming light bulbs with low-energy-consuming bulbs, adjusted the air conditioner temperature to suit body temperature while saving total power consumption, used an automatic lock to cut off the power when the key is removed from the socket, and trained staff to be aware of saving electricity and water...

For example, Caravelle Hotel has 60% of the surrounding area using glass, taking in natural light and saving a lot of lighting energy. In addition, Caravelle uses an additional layer of coating to prevent heat absorption for the cooling system. However, the most significant achievement of this hotel is that it has built a management system to monitor, check and adjust the energy usage system. Every day, every week, every month, the technical department monitors the building's energy consumption to detect unusual changes in the energy consumption system and makes appropriate adjustments. Thanks to that, Caravelle Hotel has saved more than 1 billion VND/year; thanks to regular maintenance of the air conditioning system to minimize unnecessary energy consumption, it has saved about 500 million/year; regular maintenance of the water heater has also saved 200 million/year.

Some large hotels such as Six Senses Con Dao, InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort or Vedana Lagoon Resort & Spa have pioneered in applying environmentally friendly solutions such as using renewable energy, saving water, minimizing plastic waste and building

spaces in harmony with nature. These hotels not only focus on green architecture, using environmentally friendly materials but also implement programs to protect ecosystems, support local communities and raise tourists' awareness of sustainable tourism. However, the green hotel model in Vietnam still faces many challenges, including high initial investment costs, uneven awareness among businesses and customers, and a lack of specific support policies from management agencies. For this model to grow stronger, there needs to be coordination between businesses, governments and communities to promote green hotel standards, encourage the use of energy-saving technology and increase communication about the benefits of sustainable development in the hotel sector.

In recent years, environmental issues in Vietnam have been increasingly focused on by people. Before choosing a Vietnam tour, many tourists are interested in green hotel standards, but not all hotels are clearly aware of and take practical actions on this. All of these factors have shown that the need to build a hotel that meets environmentally friendly standards is becoming more necessary than ever for hotels in Vietnam.

### 6. Lessons learned on green hotel management for hotels in Vietnam

In the context of the increasing emphasis on sustainable development, hotels in Vietnam can learn a lot from the experiences of international hotel groups in implementing the green hotel model. Important lessons include building a long-term sustainable development strategy, optimizing energy use, effectively managing water, minimizing waste and raising environmental awareness among employees and customers.

#### 6.1 Build a sustainable development strategy with a clear roadmap

One of the important experiences is to build a sustainable development strategy with specific goals. Large corporations such as Accor, Marriott or Hilton all have clear strategies on reducing carbon emissions and managing energy and resources effectively.

Hotels in Vietnam need to learn by building a sustainable strategy with a clear roadmap, including:

- Set specific environmental goals(eg: 30% reduction in energy consumption in 5 years, 50% reduction in plastic waste in 3 years).
- Divide the implementation roadmap into phases, from upgrading facilities to changing operating procedures.
- Applying technology to monitor and evaluate performance, similar to Hilton's LightStay system, which tracks energy, water and waste consumption in real time.

In Vietnam, some hotels such as InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort or Six Senses Ninh Van Bay have taken pioneering steps in building a green strategy by using renewable energy and protecting the local ecosystem. However, the number of hotels applying this model is still limited, requiring more long-term investment in sustainable management strategies.

#### 6.2 Energy optimization and renewable energy use

Optimize energy usage is another important lesson. Major

hotel groups in the world have applied many modern technologies such as LED lighting systems, light and temperature sensors, heat recovery from air conditioning systems for reuse, of which the most prominent are:

- Use LED lighting system and motion sensors to save power.
- Take advantage of solar energy to heat water and supply electricity to the air conditioning system.
- Optimize air conditioning system, recover heat from air conditioner to use for hot water.

#### **Hotels in Vietnam can learn by:**

- Replace the entire traditional lighting system with LED lights to save energy
- Invest in solar panels to reduce dependence on the national grid.
- Apply smart sensor technology to automatically adjust temperature and light according to actual needs.

For example, Hotel de la Coupole – MGallery SaPa has used a smart energy-saving system, which reduces electricity consumption by up to 20% compared to traditional hotels. This not only helps save operating costs but also enhances the brand image as an environmentally friendly hotel.

#### **6.3 Efficient water management and wastewater reuse**

Effective water management is also one of the important factors in green hotel management. In many hotels of IHG or Hilton group, water consumption monitoring system is applied to reduce water waste in activities such as laundry, dishwashing and irrigation. Common measures include:

- Install water saving devices in faucets, showers and toilets.
- Use treated waste water for irrigation and building cooling systems.
- Rainwater harvesting for use in daily life.

Hotels in Vietnam can adopt a similar model to reduce freshwater waste, while promoting and encouraging guests to participate in water-saving programs, such as reusing towels and bed linens during their stay. For example, The Anam Cam Ranh has implemented a wastewater recycling system, saving more than 30% of its clean water consumption each year.

#### **6.4 Reduce waste and promote recycling**

Waste reduction and recycling is another important lesson. Major hotel groups have implemented a series of measures such as eliminating single-use plastics, sorting and recycling waste, and utilizing leftover food for processing or donating to charities. One of the major problems in the hotel industry is plastic waste and leftover food.

#### **Groups such as Accor and Marriott have effective solutions such as:**

- Eliminate single-use plastic bottles and replace with reusable glass bottles.
- Recycle organic waste from the kitchen for fertilizer or to supply to farms.
- Partner with charity to donate excess food, reducing waste.

#### **In Vietnam, hotels can learn by**

- Use personal hygiene products in dispensers instead of small disposable bottles.
- Waste classification at source to recycle paper, plastic and metal.
- Partnering with non-profit organizations to use up excess food instead of throwing it away.

For example, Six Senses Con Dao has implemented a program to recycle organic waste to fertilize the resort's organic vegetable garden, both reducing waste and creating a clean food source. Hotels in Vietnam can apply this approach by replacing plastic water bottles with reusable glass bottles, using refillable personal hygiene products instead of small bottles, and cooperating with recycling organizations to handle waste sustainably.

#### **6.5 Raising awareness and training employees**

An important but often overlooked element of green hotel management is environmental training for staff. This is one of the key factors that helps hotels operate effectively according to the green model. Large corporations often organize:

- Workshops and Training Courses to make employees understand the hotel's green strategy.
- Environmental Initiative Promotion Program, calling on employees to suggest solutions to save energy and reduce waste.
- Communicate to customers, encouraging them to participate in environmental protection activities such as reusing towels and limiting plastic products.

Enterprises must regularly organize communications to help them fully understand the values that the enterprise is aiming for; organize training programs so that employees can clearly and specifically understand what needs to be done and how to do it. Gradually, those green activities are no longer just company policies, but also become a way of life for each person, become the culture of the whole enterprise, which contributes to the sustainable development of the enterprise. In addition, businesses can bring information about green activities to customers, both promoting environmental protection, raising community awareness, and helping customers better understand the sustainable values that businesses pursue. From there, customers will be impressed with the business with a trustworthy image, creating a great competitive advantage in the market.

Hotels in Vietnam can learn from this by holding regular training sessions and establishing incentive programs for employees who demonstrate effective green initiatives. For example, Fusion Resort Phu Quoc has conducted training sessions for employees on waste classification and water conservation, which has significantly reduced the amount of non-biodegradable waste.

In general, the application of the green hotel model not only helps hotels in Vietnam save on operating costs but also creates a competitive advantage, attracts international tourists and enhances their position in the sustainable tourism industry. Lessons learned from the world's leading hotel groups are an important reference for domestic hotels to develop in an environmentally friendly direction, contributing to the trend of sustainable tourism and improving service quality.



**Conclude**

Implementing green hotels not only helps protect natural resources but also improves business efficiency, reduces operating costs and attracts international tourists. Hotels in Vietnam can learn from the world's leading hotel groups to build sustainable strategies, optimize energy use, manage water effectively, minimize waste and raise employee awareness. Applying the green hotel model will help Vietnam's tourism industry develop sustainably, meet the increasing needs of customers and contribute to protecting the environment for future generations. Hotels in our country need to apply and develop policies that are most suitable to their current capabilities and resources, and regularly monitor and inspect the implementation of those policies. Implementing the green hotel model is to aim for sustainable values, ensure the long-term development of the business as well as demonstrate responsibility for the environment, bring a good image of the business in the community and keep our earth green.

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