

# Part I:

## Where we are now

### The need for action

In this first part, we discuss the business case for creating sustainable hospitality – highlighting the risks and advantages of innovation during recessionary times and crises, and then detailing how guest participation adds to your triple bottom line and overall business performance.

We then discuss if there really is such a thing as a *green* guest. Using research evidence from a wide range of sources, we uncover the reality of functioning in our modern world and the opportunity of targeting guests for more sustainable outcomes.

While cleaner technologies and renewables are a critical part of our de-carbonising journey, we find that conserving is actually more important to start with. Start with a Plan C (for conserving), before going to the expense of over-engineering efficiencies and renewables.

We look into the psychological impacts of relying on technology alone and the threats of greater consumption

Finally, we identify the cost of inaction, the risk of weak action, and action and the benefits of strong action, including customer service and staff productivity.



THANKS  
FOR MY  
GREENER  
STAY



# 1

## The business case for guest participation

This book is a guide to achieving your most important sustainability initiative – achieving guest participation. Guests are key. They make the purchase decision and deliver revenue. They use most of the resources, contributing heavily to our environment footprint. They can act either responsibly or irresponsibly in what they see and do, and where they spend their money in the destination. A negative review can be very harmful to sales; their purchases during their stay can provide much needed additional revenue; and their return visits are very economic from a marketing sense. Yet until now, for some strange reason, we seem to have excluded them in our quest to become more sustainable. Let us address this key challenge now.

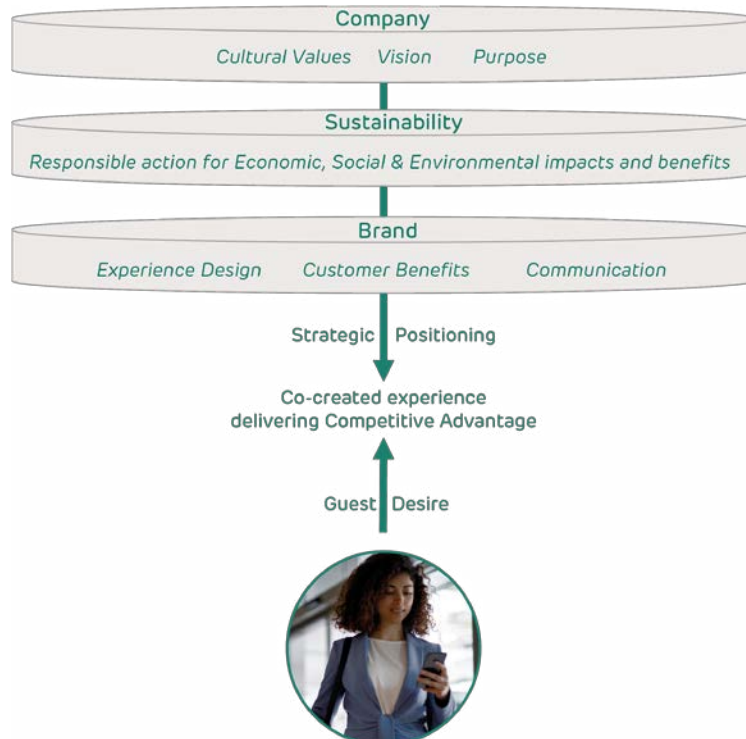
Throughout this book I am going to ask you to reassess the old hospitality adage that we should not bother guests about sustainability. This mantra that, “The guest is King. Long live the guest!” is out of date. Those times have changed through global necessity. I encourage you now to consider inviting your guests to be true sustainability partners. Through this invitation you will create a more successful business, become a sustainability leader, and build a distinctive brand reinforced by shared values of owners, managers, staff, guests, and suppliers (Figure 1.1).

It is a wasted opportunity to simply ‘add on’ sustainability as a marketing *feature*. It should be at the *core* of your business. From a guest perspective, you create a distinctive brand by combining a set of differences covering design, style, facilities, amenities, costs, quality standards, and service delivery to forge a distinctive experience your customers want. Everything is focused on generating that special experience to fit a customer profile. As a business you also seek to deliver the commercial returns the owners want and to progress the company’s values that are beyond profit. These values are an important catalyst for progressing social and environmental actions for your sustainability programme.

Applying sustainability correctly should help create a distinct brand, strengthen your offer, and defend your business against competition. Implementing sustainability is a catalyst for innovation. Sustainability gives you greater distinctiveness

as you should draw on core competencies, location, culture, and vision to flow through the brand experience and build a more resilient competitive advantage. Your commercial strategies and sustainability actions must therefore reinforce each other, work together, and be embedded throughout to broadcast brand values – not contradict them.

Recent events have whipped up plenty of examples of why creating sustainable hospitality has never been more needed, more commercially sound, and more desirable for your shareholders, managers, guests, and staff. Pressures like pandemics, wildfires, droughts, stifling heat and soaking rains, rising costs, carbon-energy legislation, over-tourism and price-cutting all appear to be constricting tourism. But there is a flip side. Yes, owners and managers are under acute pressure dealing with day-to-day challenges, but choosing to apply more sustainable practices can set the wheels in motion to change your trajectory, rejuvenate your business, and enable everyone to flourish. By recognising guests as your sustainability partners, you release massive potential to deliver sustainable hospitality in a positive, delightful manner that fortifies your brand and business.



**Figure 1.1:** Foundations for a sustainable competitive advantage. Company values, vision and purpose reflect what you want to achieve. By identifying your environmental, social and economic impacts and benefits you take responsibility for the way you deliver the service. Your brand communicates the resulting distinctive solutions through an experience design that promotes guests' benefits. Guests co-create this experience meeting their needs more meaningfully.