



Attitudes of Hotel Managers on Sustainable Tourism Through Green Practices: Case Study Countries of the Western Balkans

Merita Begolli Dauti¹, Brunilda Liçaj^{2*}, Mirela Tase², Musa Krasniqi³

¹ Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environmental, University of Peja “Haxhi Zeka”, Pejë 30000, Kosovo

² Faculty of Business, Department of Tourism, University “Aleksander Moisiu”, Durrës 2000, Albania

³ Faculty of Economy, University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, Pristina 10000, Kosovo

Corresponding Author Email: brunildalicaj@uamd.edu.al

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ABSTRACT

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Climate change and environmental pollution are major global challenges that make environmental sustainability a high priority in the tourism industry. Hotels that implement green practices play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism by implementing policies and measures that protect and preserve the environment. This study examines the attitudes of hotel managers towards green practices, with the aim of understanding their impact on the development of sustainable tourism in the region. For this purpose, a survey was conducted that included 618 managers of 3-5 star hotels in the countries of the Western Balkans: Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. Statistical tests applied to analyze differences in managers' attitudes included the Kruskal-Wallis test to identify general differences between groups. To find out which groups were different from each other, Dunn's method was used for post-hoc comparisons. The results reveal significant differences in the attitudes of managers regarding sustainable practices, highlighting the need for broader promotion and standardization of these practices across the region to support more successful sustainable tourism development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and generating new job opportunities. During the past decades, it has experienced continuous growth and diversification, emerging as one of the most fundamental and rapidly advancing sectors on a global scale [1, 2]. The importance of this industry extends beyond developed and developing countries, as it plays a key role in creating jobs, alleviating poverty, promoting gender equality, and conserving natural resources. Due to the unpredictability of future effects and the dynamic nature of the climate, assessing potential risks, feasibility, and financial implications associated with the operation of a hospitality enterprise poses considerable challenges [3]. Sustainability has gained importance across all industries, including hospitality, where it is essential for continuous growth [4]. The primary goal of businesses in the tourism sector is to increase their economic outputs, thereby improving their competitiveness and ensuring their sustainability. While economic indicators have traditionally been the focus, it is evident that tourism practices conducted without regard for the socio-cultural and natural environment will lead to significant losses in the future. The importance of businesses working to build their future in the tourism sector towards the preservation of the socio-cultural and natural environment cannot be ignored, as these are the main resources of tourism supply, and to propel it into the

future while ensuring sustainability [5]. While the rapid expansion of the hotel industry has led some to argue that it contributes to environmental degradation due to high energy and water usage, an increasing number of hotels are adopting environmental policies to mitigate their impact and improve quality of life [6]. In the field of green practices in hospitality and sustainability in tourism, a number of researchers have contributed important research analyzing the impact of green practices on sustainable development and provided a detailed description of them in the context of sustainability [7-10]. Business entities are aware of the environmental consequences during the provision of their goods and services, and they acknowledge their obligation to contribute to mitigating this phenomenon. This statement applies to enterprises across various sectors, including the hospitality industry [7]. On one hand, hotels generally promise comfort, style, luxurious experiences, and unforgettable stays for their guests. On the other hand, they may try to market themselves as environmentally friendly, which may be perceived to involve cutting down on luxury, cost cutting, and inconvenience [11]. Green hotel practices should be reviewed, reaffirming their critical role in sustainable development. It is necessary to apply continuous innovation and a deep commitment to green practices to increase sustainability in the hospitality sector [8].

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and explore the use of green practices implemented by hotels and managers' attitudes regarding these hotel practices, which is a

potential action for promoting sustainable tourism development in Balkan countries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism promotes environmental conservation and takes into account socio-cultural aspects in planning and managing tourism. Sustainable development is based on three pillars: economic development, environmental protection, and social development. This concept presupposes well-formed and conscious relationships among the pillars, aiming to ensure economic, environmental, and social balance within and across generations [12]. Sustainable tourism is tourism that is able to meet the demands of tourists and local communities, taking into account their current and future impacts [13]. Essentially, the primary goal of sustainable tourism is to maximize the benefits of tourism while limiting the negative consequences in destinations. The growing tourism sector has a significant impact on the environment, society, and economic development. Since sustainability is a central aspect of development, the hospitality sector should always consider the three pillars of sustainability when formulating business strategies or implementing new market approaches [14]. Sustainable tourism can enhance a country's economy, stimulate businesses, and encourage efforts to preserve the environment and social and cultural values, both in the present and in the future [15].

In the regional context, Bučar [16] emphasizes the potential of green tourism in the Western Balkans, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices to improve the competitiveness of the region. While Vuković and Ružičić [17] elaborate on the possibilities for the development of sustainable tourism in the Danube region, suggesting ecotourism as an efficient approach to economic development and environmental protection.

Therefore, sustainable tourism is the activity of harmonizing equality, growth, environmental protection, and social justice, requiring coordination among local communities, hotels, and tourists. Hotels are the most significant component in the development of sustainable tourism [18]. Sustainability is currently a key focus in many industries, including the hospitality industry, where it is a critical issue for industry development [4]. Although various studies have illustrated that the rapid growth of the hotel industry significantly contributes to environmental degradation worldwide, as hotels consume large amounts of energy and water for heating, cooling, and lighting, which negatively impacts the environment, some hotels have implemented environmental policies specifically to promote environmental conservation in hopes of improving human quality of life [8].

3. ATTITUDES TOWARD GREEN PRACTICES

Attitudes are much more fundamental than thoughts and are consistently manifested in an individual's acts and reflected in a specific situation. These attitudes are not easy to change [19]. The intensive focus on sustainable development principles, driven by consumer demand, compels hotels to adopt environmentally friendly practices [9]. This dual-benefit

strategy enhances resource efficiency, leading to cost savings in energy and water consumption, while also attracting environmentally conscious clientele. Research indicates that an environmentally sustainable perception can lead to a positive attitude towards visits to green hotels [20]. Sustainability is a growing concern for consumers, leading to the proliferation of actions with a strong green marketing component and the increasing presence of environmentally friendly products, also known as green products [21]. The concept of business sustainability has received considerable attention from practitioners as well as academics, and concerns regarding environmental protection have brought about changes in consumer demands and behaviors [22]. Environmentally friendly or green products are ecological products that do not pollute the environment and have less negative impact on the environment than their traditional alternatives [23]. Lanzini et al. [24] emphasized that consumers' willingness to pay for green products is one of the key motivating factors for companies to implement eco-friendliness in their products and services [25]. Many consumers are in favor of green consumption and consider it an effective way to protect the environment [26]. Mangafić et al. [27] have conducted research in the Western Balkans, which examines the relationship between consumer innovation and the purchase of organic products, showing that awareness of these products can promote sustainable consumption.

The willingness of consumers to spend is as important as the responsibility of an industry to produce green products/services. In other words, the supply of green products/services can only become viable if there is sufficient demand for those products in the market [28]. No single factor is sufficient to decipher tourists' willingness to pay more for sustainability. Therefore, each study contributes further to achieving an understanding of the determinants in each specific context [29]. Valuation for green products depends on actual consumer demand for green products or services [30]. If the demand for green products is positive, this demand will increase. The demand for green products depends on whether they are environmentally friendly and offer benefits for consumers, such as improved health and satisfaction. Many studies indicate that tourists view Sustainable Environmental Practices as crucial measures, and they are willing to sacrifice a certain level of comfort and luxury to support environmentally responsible hotels [31].

4. HOTEL BUSINESSES "GREEN"

The "green" concept, which began to emerge in the 1990s, is attracting increasing attention from both hotel owners and consumers [32], attaining greater significance in recent years, environmental sustainability has been identified as one of the most significant challenges facing the service industry as a whole and the hotel industry in particular [33]. To satisfy consumers and create long-term purchases, businesses must invest considerable efforts in market research and product development [34]. Environmentally friendly hotel, eco-friendly hotel, and sustainable hotel are the terms considered synonymous with the term "green hotel" [35]. In recent research, the following terms have been used to describe the products in question: "ecological," "green," "sustainable," "environmentally friendly," "organic," and "environmentally healthy" [36]. However, due to the variability in the meaning

of the term "green," academic literature has provided many different definitions for a green hotel and environmental practices. By the definition of the Green Hotel Association, green hotels are structures designed with an environmental orientation, using ecological strategies to conserve water and energy, as well as to reduce waste generated in their business operations. These practices help conserve financial resources and contribute to the preservation and protection of the environment as a whole. This definition emphasizes responsibility towards the environment, as well as towards the local and global community, for the preservation of our planet [37]. Sustainable Environmental Food Consumption (ESFC) can be defined as the use of food products "that meet basic needs and promote a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and waste and pollutant emissions throughout the lifecycle so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations" [38]. Environmental values include the aim to act in an environmentally friendly manner, for example, by purchasing environmentally sustainable (food) products [39]. Recently, tourism and hospitality clients are increasingly interested in green products such as environmentally friendly hotels and green hotels [40]. Green practices enable companies to save on long-term operational costs by gaining a competitive advantage through developing or enhancing a positive image and reputation [41]. The link between green/sustainable environmental practices and customer satisfaction has been previously examined by various researchers in different contexts. Sustainable hotel practices impact the overall satisfaction of hotel guests from various nationalities [42]. Many hotels have implemented numerous green practices to serve local communities, enhance employee well-being, and preserve the environment [43].

5. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative methodology was used to analyze the attitudes of managers in the Western Balkans regarding the degree of contribution of green practices in hotels to the achievement of sustainable development objectives. The structure of the questionnaire was developed based on the literature review, adapting to previous studies. Green hotel practices, including statements about water conservation, energy reduction, organic food provision, local community, waste management and recycling, as well as the use of certificates, are adapted from the authors' studies [44-51]. For data collection, in-depth interviews were conducted with 618 hotel managers from 6 countries in the western region. To address differences in hotel sizes and classifications, hotels were classified based on star ratings (ranging from 3 - 5 stars). The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire divided into three sections. The first section dealt with the respondents' demographic data, where the participants were asked to provide information on their gender, age, level of education, and experience in hotels. The second section aimed to identify the categorization of hotel stars. The third section aimed to identify managers' perceptions regarding the implementation of green practices. It consists of 10 structured questions, which were developed using a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not important" and 5 represents "Very important". The questionnaire was distributed in two ways: via email and physically, targeting hotel managers in six Western Balkan countries, including

Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. This approach enabled the collection of data from a wider range of respondents and ensured the inclusion of a large number of hotels in the study. Hotel managers in the Western Balkan countries were selected for the survey due to their role in promoting sustainable tourism, green hotels, and environmental protection. This selection is justified by the need to reinforce the gap in the literature, as studies on this topic have not yet been explored in the countries of the Western Balkans.

Analyzing the results from the studies of different authors, a selection of specific statistical tests was used, such as the Kruskal-Wallis test [52-55]. To identify differences in managers' responses in 6 countries, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used, a non-parametric statistical test to compare three or more independent groups and determine whether there are s After identifying general differences, Dunn's method was applied to make post-hoc comparisons [56], and to determine which groups (states) were concretely different from each other, maintain the reliability of the analysis statistically significant differences between them. This approach helps to provide a detailed and clear overview of the differences between the groups, contributing to the correct interpretation of the results.

Table 1. Overview of managers interviewed by country and hotel category (Star-Rated) in Western Balkan countries

Western Balkan Countries	Number of Managers INTERVIEWED by Country	Number of Managers Interviewed by Hotel Category (Star-Rated)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	98	Hotel (★★★)-53
		Hotel (★★★★)-28
		Hotel (★★★★★)-17
Serbia	84	Hotel (★★★)-46
		Hotel (★★★★)-26
		Hotel (★★★★★)-12
Monte Negro	121	Hotel (★★★)-58
		Hotel (★★★★)-45
		Hotel (★★★★★)-18
North Macedonia	119	Hotel (★★★)-67
		Hotel (★★★★)-37
		Hotel (★★★★★)-15
Albania	124	Hotel (★★★)-63
		Hotel (★★★★)-41
		Hotel (★★★★★)-20
Kosovo	72	Hotel (★★★)-38
		Hotel (★★★★)-24
		Hotel (★★★★★)-10

The analysis of demographic data shows a different composition of respondents in terms of age, gender, education and professional experience. The participants are mainly aged 31-40 years (46.44%), while in the 21-30 year group there are (39.48%). Accordingly, they have a higher education, with the majority holding a university degree (53.72%), and a significant representation of those with postgraduate studies (32.20%). In terms of gender, there is a clear dominance of men (62.14%) compared to women (37.86%), which may reflect certain differences in the respective sector. Regarding professional experience, participants with 6-7 years of experience (28.16%) and those with more than 7 years

(24.11%) are more represented, suggesting that the survey is mostly filled with individuals with significant experience in the relevant field.

These results are relevant as they suggest a sample represented by qualified individuals with considerable professional experience, making the analysis more reliable and significant in the context of the study (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents' answers according to age structure, gender, education, experience

AGE	N	%
< 20	0	0
21 - 30	244	39.48
31 - 40	287	46.44
> 50	87	14.08
GENDER		
FEMALE	234	37.86
MALE	384	62.14
EDUCATION		
HIGH SCHOOL	87	14.08
UNIVERSITY	332	53.72
POSTGRADUATE	199	32.20
EXPERIENCE		
< 1	19	3.07
1-3	158	25.57
4-5	118	19.09
6-7	174	28.16
> 7	149	24.11

6. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this section, the data collected from the questionnaires are analyzed using statistical methods to identify the main trends and attitudes of hotel managers towards green practices.

Table 3. Questionnaire: Managers attitudes towards the implementation of green practices in hotels

	Question
Q1	How important is it to you that your hotel implements green practices?
Q2	How important is it for you that green practices contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in the region?
Q3	How important is environmental policy in determining consumer choice?
Q4	How important is staff awareness of green practices and environmental conservation?
Q5	How important are investments in green infrastructure for the development of sustainable tourism in your region?
Q6	How important is it for you as managers to participate in local initiatives for the protection of the environment and the development of sustainable tourism?
Q7	How important is it to you that the hotel has a structured recycling and waste reduction program?
Q8	How important is it that green practices affect the hotel's image and reputation in the local and international community?
Q9	How important is it for your hotel to include organic BIO products in its food offerings?
Q10	How important is it for your hotel to have certifications (e.g., Green Key, Green Globe, ISO 14001, and EU Ecolabel) to demonstrate your commitment to sustainable practices?

(• 5-Very important •4- Important •3- Moderately important • 2-Slightly important •1- Not important)

The results show a general positive trend towards the implementation of sustainable practices, with variations between hotel categories and Western Balkan countries.

The results have given a clear insight into the managers' attitudes and have helped to identify possible policies and measures to improve the integration of green practices in the tourism sector (Table 3).

7. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS USING STATISTICAL TESTS

The Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized to examine differences in attitudes toward green hotel practices among different groups. To further explore these differences, Dunn's post hoc test was applied, allowing for detailed pairwise comparisons and identification of specific group differences.

Analysis Q1: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in the perceived 'importance' of implementing green practices in hotels among managers from different countries, χ^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (34.409), p = [.000].

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in the perceived 'importance' of implementing green practices among managers from different countries, specifically: Managers from Albania (ALB) rated the 'importance' of implementing green practices significantly differently compared to those from Serbia (SRB), p = 0.001, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), p = 0.000, managers from Montenegro (MNE) rated the 'importance' of implementing green practices significantly differently compared to those from Serbia (SRB), p = 0.009, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), p = 0.001 and managers from Kosovo (RKS) rated the 'importance' of implementing green practices significantly differently compared to those from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), p = 0.018. However, there was no significant difference in the perceived 'importance' of implementing green practices among managers from the following countries: ALB and MNE p = 1.000, ALB and RKS p = 1.000, ALB and MK p = 0.853, MNE and RKS p = 1.000, MNE and MK p = 1.000, RKS and MK p = 1.000, RKS and SRB p = .070, MK and SRB p = .325, Mk and BiH p = .090, SRB and BiH p = 1.00.

The analysis showed differences in managers' perception of question Q1. Comparisons after the test revealed that evaluations of the implementation of green practices in hotels varied depending on the countries in the Western Balkans region. These differences suggest that although the implementation of green practices in hotels is important for everyone, the perception of this importance varies by country and may influence how green practices are applied and supported at the local level.

Analysis Q2: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference managers from different countries perceive the contribution of green practices to the development of sustainable tourism in the region, χ^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (26.757), p = [.000].

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant difference in managers from different countries perceive the contribution of green practices to the development of sustainable tourism, specifically: managers from ALB rated the importance of green practices contributing to the development of sustainable tourism significantly differently compared to those from SRB, p = .008 and BiH p = .000, and managers from MK rated the importance of green practices

contributing to the development of sustainable significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .042$ and BiH $p = [.004]$, however, there was no significant difference “in how important” managers from different countries perceive the contribution of green practices to the development of sustainable tourism between managers from ALB and MK $p = 1.000$, ALB and RKS $p = 1.000$, ALB and MNE $p = .258$, MK and RKS $p = 1.000$, MK and MNE $p = .959$, RKS and MNE $p = 1.000$, RKS and SRB $p = 1.000$, RKS and BiH $p = .676$, MNE and SRB $p = 1.000$, MNE and BiH $p = .821$ and SRB and BiH $p = 1.000$. The analysis showed differences in managers' perception of question Q2. Specifically, managers from Albania (ALB) rated the importance of contribution of green practices to sustainable tourism development differently from those in Serbia (SRB) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), while managers from North Macedonia (MK) also differed from SRB and BiH. However, no significant differences were found between other countries.

Analysis Q3: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was no significant difference in how ‘important’ managers from different countries perceive environmental policy in determining consumer choice, $\chi^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (7.182)$, $p = [.207]$. This result suggests that, regardless of their country, managers generally agree on the importance of environmental policy in influencing consumer choices. The results of the analysis showed that there are no differences in the attitude of managers towards question Q3. This result shows that managers from all countries (ALB, SRB, BiH, MK, RKS, MNE) have similar attitudes about the importance of environmental policy in influencing consumer choices.

Analysis Q4: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of staff awareness of green practices and environmental conservation $\chi^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (16.641)$, $p = [.005]$. This result shows that perceptions of the ‘importance’ of staff awareness vary among managers from different countries.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests showed a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of staff awareness of green practices and environmental conservation specifically: managers from MK rated the ‘importance’ of staff awareness of green practices and environmental conservation significantly differently compared to managers from BiH, $p = .005$. However, there was no significant difference in the importance of staff awareness of green practices and environmental conservation compared to managers from MK and MNE $p = 1.000$, MK and ALB $p = 1.000$, MK and RKS $p = 1.000$, MK and SRB $p = .264$, MNE and ALB $p = 1.000$, MNE and RKS $p = 1.000$, MNE and SRB $p = 1.000$, MNE and BiH $p = .064$, ALB and RKS $p = 1.000$, ALB and SRB $p = 1.000$, ALB and BiH $p = .073$, RKS and SRB $p = 1.000$, RKS and BiH $p = .712$, SRB and BiH $p = 1.000$.

This result shows that managers' attitudes towards staff awareness differ between countries, with significant differences observed between (MK) and (BiH), while no differences were identified between other countries.

Analysis Q5: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of investments in green infrastructure for the development of sustainable tourism in their region, $\chi^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (16.418)$, $p = [.006]$.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a

Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of investments in green infrastructure for the development of sustainable tourism. Specifically, managers from ALB rated the ‘importance’ of these investments significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .017$ and BiH, $p = .008$. However, there were no significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive these investments between the following pairs: ALB and RKS, $p = 1.000$, ALB and MK, $p = 1.000$, ALB and MNE, $p = .828$, RKS and MK, $p = 1.000$, RKS and MNE, $p = 1.000$, RKS and SRB, $p = 1.000$, RKS and BiH, $p = 1.000$, MK and MNE, $p = 1.000$, MK and SRB $p = 1.000$, MK and BiH, $p = .983$, MNE and SRB, $p = 1.000$, MNE and BiH, $p = 1.000$, SRB and BiH $p = 1.000$.

This result shows that managers from (ALB) have given a higher ‘importance’ to investments in green infrastructure for the development of sustainable tourism compared to managers from (SRB) and (BiH). Significant differences were observed in comparisons between Albania and these countries, while no significant differences were found in other comparisons.

Analysis Q6: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of participating in local initiatives for the protection of the environment and the development of sustainable tourism, $\chi^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (19.285)$, $p = [.002]$. This result suggests that perceptions of the ‘importance’ of such participation vary among managers from different countries.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of participating in local initiatives for the protection of the environment and the development of sustainable tourism. Specifically: managers from ALB rated the importance of participation significantly differently compared to those SRB, $p = .001$, managers from RKS rated the importance of participation significantly differently compared to those SRB, $p = .013$, managers from BiH rated the importance of participation significantly differently compared to those SRB, $p = .010$ and managers from MNE rated the ‘importance’ of participation significantly differently compared to those SRB, $p = .037$. However, there were no significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive participation in these initiatives between the following pairs: ALB and RKS, $p = 1.000$, ALB and BiH, $p = 1.000$, ALB and MNE, $p = 1.000$, ALB and MK, $p = 1.000$, RKS and BiH, $p = 1.000$, RKS and MNE, $p = 1.000$, RKS and MK, $p = 1.000$, BiH and MNE, $p = 1.000$, BiH and MK, $p = 1.000$, MNE and MK, $p = 1.000$, MK and SRB $p = .095$.

The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed differences in the perceptions of managers from different countries regarding the ‘importance’ of participating in environmental protection and sustainable tourism initiatives ($\chi^2 = 19.285$, $p = .002$). Post-hoc analyses showed that managers from (ALB), (RKS), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and (MNE) had different perceptions compared to those from (SRB). No significant differences were found between other groups.

Analysis Q7: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the ‘importance’ of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program at the hotel, $\chi^2 ([5], N = [618]) = (45.616)$, $p = [.000]$. This result suggests that perceptions of the importance of such programs vary among

managers from different countries.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program at the hotel. Specifically: managers from ALB rated the 'importance' of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program significantly differently compared to those from RKS $p = .025$ and SRB, $p = .000$, managers from MNE rated the 'importance' of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .013$, managers from BiH rated the importance of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .000$, managers from BiH rated the 'importance' of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .002$ and managers from MK rated the 'importance' of having a structured recycling and waste reduction program significantly differently compared to those from SRB, $p = .001$. However, there were no significant differences in perceptions of the 'importance' of such programs between the following pairs: managers from ALB and MNE, $p = 1.000$, ALB and BiH, $p = .170$, ALB and MK, $p = .100$, MNE and BiH, $p = 1.000$, MNE and MK, $p = 1.000$, MNE and RKS, $p = 1.000$, BiH and MK, $p = 1.000$, BiH and RKS, $p = 1.000$, MK and RKS, $p = 1.000$, RKS and SRB, $p = .078$. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that managers from different countries have varying perceptions of the 'importance' of a structured recycling and waste reduction program in hotels ($\chi^2 = 45.616$, $p = .000$). Post-hoc analysis showed that managers from Albania (ALB) rated this program as more 'important' compared to those from (RKS) and (SRB). Additionally, managers from (MNE), (BiH), and (MK) rated the program as more 'important' than those from (SRB). However, perceptions were similar between some countries, such as (ALB) and (MNE), or (RKS) and (MK), with no significant differences in the importance rating.

Analysis Q8: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was no significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of green practices affecting the hotel's image and reputation in the local and international community, χ^2 ([5], $N = [618]$) = (8.116), $p = [.150]$. This result suggests that perceptions of the impact of green practices on the hotel's image and reputation are similar among managers from different countries. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there are no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of managers from different countries regarding the 'importance' of the impact of green practices on the hotel's image and reputation within the local and international community ($\chi^2 = 8.116$, $p = .150$). This suggests that managers, regardless of their country, share similar perceptions about the importance of green practices for a hotel's image and reputation, highlighting that environmental protection is a shared global value in the hospitality industry.

Analysis Q9: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in their hotel's food offerings, χ^2 ([5], $N = [618]$) = (39.119), $p = [.000]$. This result suggests that perceptions of the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in food offerings vary significantly among managers from different countries.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a

Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in their hotel's food offerings. Specifically: managers from ALB rated the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in their hotel's food offerings significantly differently compared to those managers from MK $p = .003$, BiH, $p = .000$, SRB, $p = .000$, and MNE, $p = .000$. However, there was no significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in their hotel's food offerings between the following pairs: managers from RKS and MK, $p = 1.000$, RKS and BiH, $p = 1.000$, RKS and SRB, $p = 1.000$, RKS and MNE, $p = 1.000$, MK and BiH, $p = 1.000$, MK and SRB, $p = 1.000$, MK and MNE, $p = 1.000$, BiH and SRB, $p = 1.000$, BiH and MNE, $p = 1.000$, SRB and MNE, $p = 1.000$. The Kruskal-Wallis test found differences in the perceptions of managers from different countries regarding the 'importance' of including organic BIO products in hotel food offerings ($\chi^2 = 39.119$, $p = .000$). Managers from (ALB) placed a higher 'importance' on these products compared to those from (MK), (BiH), (SRB), and (MNE). However, no significant differences were found between managers from other countries, such as (RKS) and (MK), or between (BiH), Serbia (SRB), and (MNE).

This result shows that managers from (ALB) place a higher value on the importance of including organic BIO products, while managers from other countries may have different priorities, potentially reflecting cultural and economic differences in the demand for such products.

Analysis Q10: A Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was a significant difference in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of having certifications (e.g., Green Key, Green Globe, ISO 14001, and EU Ecolabel) to demonstrate their hotel's commitment to sustainable practices, χ^2 ([5], $N = [618]$) = (16.387), $p = [.006]$. This result suggests that perceptions of the 'importance' of such certifications vary significantly among managers from different countries.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's method with a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests indicated significant differences in how managers from different countries perceive the 'importance' of having certifications (e.g., Green Key, Green Globe, ISO 14001, and EU Ecolabel) to demonstrate their hotel's commitment to sustainable practices. Specifically: managers from MNE rated the 'importance' of certifications significantly differently compared to those from BiH $p = .034$. However, there were no significant differences in the 'importance' of certifications between the following pairs: managers from MNE and RKS, $p = 1.000$, MNE and MK, $p = 1.000$, MNE and ALB, $p = 1.000$, MNE and SRB, $p = .063$, RKS and MK, $p = 1.000$, RKS and ALB, $p = 1.000$, RKS and SRB, $p = .504$, RKS and BiH, $p = .367$, MK and ALB, $p = 1.000$, MK and SRB, $p = .304$, MK and BiH, $p = .195$, ALB and SRB, $p = .499$, ALB and BiH, $p = .355$, SRB and BiH, $p = 1.000$. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a difference in the perceptions of managers from different countries regarding the 'importance' of hotel certification. ($\chi^2 = 16.387$, $p = .006$). Post-hoc analysis found that managers from (MNE) rated the 'importance' of certification higher compared to those from (BiH) ($p = .034$), indicating that they place greater value on these certifications as a sign of commitment to sustainable practices. However, there were no differences in the perceptions of managers from most other countries, including (MK), (ALB), (SRB), and (RKS). This suggests that, aside

from Montenegro (MNE), perceptions of the importance of certifications are similar at the regional level (Tables 4-13).

Table 4. Analysis and results (Q1)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P-Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P-Value	Significance
RKS	72	4	1.329	286.59	3-5	34.409	5	0.000	ALB-MNE	-14.096	1.000	No
									ALB-RKS	19.707	1.000	No
									ALB-MK	-41.180	.853	No
ALB	124	4	1.335	266.88	2.25 - 5				ALB-SRB	-96.301	.001	Yes
									ALB-BiH	-104.316	.000	Yes
									MNE-RKS	5.611	1.000	No
MK	119	4	1.226	308.06	3-5				MNE-MK	27.084	1.000	No
									MNE-SRB	-82.205	.009	Yes
MNE	121	4	1.251	280.98	3-5				MNE-BiH	-90.220	.001	Yes
									RKS-MK	-21.473	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.892	371.20	4-5				RKS-SRB	-76.594	.070	No
									RKS-BiH	-84.609	.018	Yes
SRB	84	5	.873	363.18	4-5				MK-SRB	-55.121	.325	No
									MK-BiH	-63.136	.090	No
									SRB-BiH	8.014	1.000	No

Table 5. Analysis and results (Q2)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ2)	Df.	P-Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P-Value	Significance
RKS	72	4.5	1.244	308.87	3-5	26.757	5	0.000	ALB-MK	-10.862	1.000	No
									ALB-RKS	42.360	1.000	No
									ALB-MNE	-50.690	.258	No
									ALB-SRB	-81.730	.008	Yes
ALB	124	4	1.261	266.51	3-5				ALB-BiH	-94.160	.000	Yes
									MK-RKS	31.498	1.000	No
MK	119	4	1.180	277.37	3-5				MK-MNE	-39.829	.959	No
									MK-SRB	-70.868	.042	Yes
MNE	121	4	1.194	317.20	4-5				MK-BiH	-83.299	.004	Yes
									RKS-MNE	-8.330	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	1.178	360.67	4-5				RKS-SRB	-39.370	1.000	No
									RKS-BiH	-51.800	.676	No
SRB	84	5	.774	348.24	4-5				MNE-SRB	-31.040	1.000	No
									MNE-BiH	-43.470	.821	No
									SRB-BiH	12.430	1.000	No

Table 6. Analysis and results (Q3)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic				Kruskal-Wallis Test		
		Median	Standard Deviation	Mean Rank	IQR	(χ^2)	Df.	P-Value
RKS	72	4	1.37	275.40	2-5	7.182	5	.207
ALB	124	4	1.36	307.81	3-5			
MK	119	4	1.21	319.11	3-5			
MNE	121	4	1.24	336.48	3-5			
BiH	98	4	1.34	306.70	3-5			
SRB	84	4	1.19	291.99	3-5			

Table 7. Analysis and results (Q4)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ2)	Df.	P-Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P-Value	Significance
RKS	72	4	1.071	308.57	3-5	16.641	5	0.005	MK-MNE	-16.363	1.000	No
									MK-ALB	17.580	1.000	No
									MK-RKS	29.759	1.000	No
									MK-SRB	-56.296	.264	No
ALB	124	4	1.212	296.39	3-5				MK-BiH	-80.965	.005	Yes
									MNE-ALB	1.218	1.000	No
MK	119	4	1.195	278.81	3-5				MNE-RKS	13.396	1.000	No
									MNE-SRB	-39.934	1.000	No
MNE	121	4	1.243	295.17	3-5				MNE-BiH	-64.602	.064	No
									ALB-RKS	12.178	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.959	359.78	4-5				ALB-SRB	-38.716	1.000	No
									ALB-BiH	-63.384	.073	No
SRB	84	5	.806	335.11	4-5				RKS-SRB	-26.538	1.000	No
									RKS-BiH	-51.206	.712	No
									SRB-BiH	24.668	1.000	No

Table 8. Analysis and results (Q5)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			χ^2	Df.	P-Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P-Value	Significance
RKS	72	4	1.125	302.37	3-5	16.418	5	0.006	ALB-RKS	34.969	1.000	No
									ALB-MK	-36.681	1.000	No
									ALB-MNE	-41.014	.828	No
									ALB-SRB	-76.863	.017	Yes
ALB	124	4	1.372	267.40	2.25-5				ALB-BiH	-78.739	.008	Yes
									RKS-MK	-1.712	1.000	No
MK	119	4	1.189	304.08	3-5				RKS-MNE	-6.045	1.000	No
									RKS-SRB	-41.894	1.000	No
MNE	121	4	1.150	308.41	3-5				RKS-BiH	-43.770	1.000	No
									MK-MNE	-4.333	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.965	346.14	4-5				MK-SRB	-40.182	1.000	No
									MK-BiH	-42.058	.983	No
SRB	84	5	.796	344.26	4-5	MNE-SRB	-35.849	1.000	No			
						MNE-BiH	-37.725	1.000	No			
						SRB-BiH	1.876	1.000	No			

Table 9. Analysis and results (Q6)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P- Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P- Value	Significance
RKS	72	4	1.023	290.06	3-5	19.285	5	0.002	ALB-RKS	5.571	1.000	No
									ALB-BiH	-10.319	1.000	No
									ALB-MNE	-22.628	1.000	No
									ALB-MK	-29.306	1.000	No
ALB	124	4	1.261	284.49	3-5				ALB-SRB	-93.062	.001	Yes
									RKS-BiH	-4.749	1.000	No
MK	119	5	1.032	313.80	4-5				RKS-MNE	-17.057	1.000	No
									RKS-MK	-23.736	1.000	No
MNE	121	4	1.035	307.12	4-5				RKS-SRB	-87.491	.013	Yes
									BiH-MNE	12.309	1.000	No
BiH	98	4	1.159	294.81	4-5				BiH-MK	18.987	1.000	No
									BiH-SRB	-82.742	.010	Yes
SRB	84	5	.676	377.55	4-5	MNE-MK	6.678	1.000	No			
						MNE-SRB	-70.434	.037	Yes			
						MK-SRB	-63.755	.095	No			

Table 10. Analysis and results (Q7)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P- Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P- Value	Significance
RKS	72	5	.984	329.88	4-5	45.616	5	0.000	ALB-MNE	-31.850	1.000	No
									ALB-BiH	-54.967	.170	No
									ALB-MK	-55.883	.100	No
									ALB-RKS	74.757	.025	Yes
ALB	124	4	1.308	255.13	3-5				ALB-SRB	-146.792	.000	Yes
									MNE-BiH	-23.117	1.000	No
MK	119	5	1.094	311.01	4-5				MNE-MK	24.033	1.000	No
									MNE-RKS	42.907	1.000	No
MNE	121	4	1.157	286.98	4-5				MNE-SRB	-114.941	.000	Yes
									BiH-MK	.917	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.984	310.09	4-5				BiH-RKS	19.790	1.000	No
									BiH-SRB	-91.825	.002	Yes
SRB	84	5	.509	401.92	5-5	MK-RKS	18.874	1.000	No			
						MK-SRB	-90.908	.001	Yes			
						RKS-SRB	-72.035	.078	No			

Table 11. Analysis and results (Q8)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test		
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P-Value
RKS	72	5	1.129	328.42	3.25-5	8.116	5	.150
ALB	124	4	1.427	279.38	3-5			
MK	119	5	1.142	332.17	4-5			
MNE	121	5	1.322	315.14	3-5			
BiH	98	4	1.099	312.75	4-5			
SRB	84	4	1.414	293.71	3-5			

Table 12. Analysis and results (Q9)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P- Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P- Value	Significance
RKS	72	5	1.186	302.83	4-5	39.119	5	0.000	ALB-RKS	67.790	.062	No
									ALB-MK	-76.682	.003	Yes
									ALB-BiH	-99.204	.000	Yes
									ALB-SRB	-105.166	.000	Yes
ALB	124	4	1.238	235.04	3-5				ALB-MNE	-111.212	.000	Yes
									RKS-MK	-8.892	1.000	No
MK	119	5	1.114	311.72	4-5				RKS-BiH	-31.413	1.000	No
									RKS-SRB	-37.376	1.000	No
MNE	121	5	1.078	346.25	4-5				RKS-MNE	-43.422	1.000	No
									MK-BiH	-22.521	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.962	334.24	4-5				MK-SRB	-28.484	1.000	No
									MK-MNE	-34.529	1.000	No
SRB	84	5	.608	340.20	4-5				BiH-SRB	-5.963	1.000	No
									BiH-MNE	12.008	1.000	No
									SRB-MNE	6.046	1.000	No

Table 13. Analysis and results (Q10)

Group	N (618)	Descriptive Statistic		Mean Rank	IQR	Kruskal-Wallis Test			Post Hoc Test (Dunn's Test)			
		Median	Std. Deviation			(χ^2)	Df.	P- Value	Comparison	Test Statistic	P- Value	Significance
RKS	72	5	.901	293.98	4-5	16.387	5	0.006	MNE-RKS	10.206	1.000	No
									MNE-MK	11.845	1.000	No
									MNE-ALB	16.534	1.000	No
									MNE-SRB	-63.644	.063	No
ALB	124	5	1.073	300.31	4-5				MNE-BiH	-64.885	.034	Yes
									RKS-MK	-1.638	1.000	No
MK	119	5	1.143	295.62	4-5				RKS-ALB	-6.327	1.000	No
									RKS-SRB	-53.437	.504	No
MNE	121	5	1.201	283.77	4-5				RKS-BiH	-54.679	.367	No
									MK-ALB	4.689	1.000	No
BiH	98	5	.650	348.66	4-5				MK-SRB	-51.799	.304	No
									MK-BiH	-53.041	.195	No
SRB	84	5	.638	347.42	4-5	ALB-SRB	-47.110	.499	No			
						ALB-BiH	-48.352	.335	No			
						SRB-BiH	1.241	1.000	No			

8. DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the discussion focuses on the analysis of the results of questions Q1-Q10 from the study on the perceptions of hotel managers in the Western Balkans regarding the implementation of green practices in hotels. The study results reveal a wide range of perceptions and differences in the evaluation of the importance of green practices, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities faced by managers in this region. For question Q1, which examines the perception of the 'importance' of implementing green practices in hotels based on the Likert scale, the results show a considerable variation in the perception of 'importance' among managers from different countries. Managers from Albania and North Macedonia expressed a higher level of 'importance' for these practices, demonstrating a greater commitment to their implementation, compared to managers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who provided lower ratings on the same evaluation scale. This phenomenon is supported by Reid et al. [44], who emphasize that perceptions of the importance of sustainable practices are often influenced by economic and cultural factors, helping to explain the differences between countries regarding their commitment to sustainable practices. Regarding question Q2, which examines the importance managers place on the contribution of green practices to the development of sustainable tourism in the region, based on the Likert scale, the results suggest that perceptions vary significantly depending on the country. Managers from

Albania and North Macedonia rate the importance of the contribution of green practices to sustainable tourism development more highly compared to managers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who provide lower ratings on the same scale. For question Q3, which examines the importance of environmental policies in consumer choices, the test results show a broad consensus on the significance of these policies, with no major differences between countries. This consensus is supported by Bohdanowicz and Piotr [46], who emphasize that environmental policies contribute to improving quality of life and are important to consumers, influencing their choices for hospitality businesses that follow sustainable practices. For question Q4, which examines the importance of staff awareness regarding green practices and environmental conservation based on the Likert scale, a significant difference has been observed between managers from North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The results indicate that managers from North Macedonia place a higher level of importance on staff awareness compared to those from Bosnia and Herzegovina. This variation in managers' responses is supported by the study of Millar and Baloglu [47], which highlights that staff awareness is a key factor in implementing green practices and that its impact may vary depending on the local context. For question Q5, which examines the importance of investing in green infrastructure for the development of sustainable tourism in the region, managers from Albania rated this aspect higher than those from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study results suggest that

investments in green infrastructure are rated higher in Albania, reflecting a greater level of awareness and commitment to sustainable practices. This phenomenon is supported by the study of Manaktola and Jauhari [48], which identifies that investments in green infrastructure are often valued higher in countries where environmental awareness is greater, thus contributing to the improvement of tourism sustainability. For question Q6, which examines the importance of managers' participation in local initiatives for environmental protection and sustainable tourism development, the results show significant variations in perceptions between countries. Managers from some countries have expressed a higher commitment to participating in these initiatives, while others have rated this aspect lower. This variation is supported by Radwan et al. [49], who emphasize that participation in local initiatives varies depending on local commitment and available resources. For question Q7, which examines the importance of recycling and waste reduction programs, managers from Albania and several other countries have shown a higher perception of this aspect. This finding is supported by Buunk and van der Werf [50], who emphasize that a higher perception of the importance of these programs positively impacts their implementation in practice. Question Q8 examines the impact of green practices on a hotel's image and reputation, no significant differences were observed between countries. This supports the idea that all managers regard environmental protection as a shared value in the hospitality industry. This assessment is supported by the study of Moise et al. [45], which highlights that hoteliers who implement green practices often benefit from a better and stronger image in the hospitality market, a reputation that is recognized and valued uniformly across different countries. Questions Q9 and Q10, which examine the importance of including organic BIO products in food offerings and certifications for sustainability, reveal significant variations in perceptions between countries. Managers from Albania and North Macedonia rated these aspects more important compared to other countries. This variation in perceptions is supported by the study of Bianco et al. [51], who emphasize that perceptions of certifications and the inclusion of BIO products are significantly influenced by cultural and economic factors. In conclusion, the results of this study reveal a wide range of perceptions and differences among hotel managers in the Western Balkans regarding the implementation of green practices. These changes suggest that a focused strategy is needed for each country in the region to improve the adoption of sustainable practices. The study emphasizes the importance of increasing manager awareness and commitment to address challenges and maximize the benefits of green practices in the hospitality sector.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This research provides an in-depth analysis of hotel managers' perceptions in the Western Balkans regarding the implementation of green practices, helping to understand the variations and differences between countries in the region. The study has identified that managers' perceptions vary regarding the 'importance' of green practices and that these perceptions are closely linked to local experiences and context. The findings of the study are significant for several reasons. Firstly, they helped identify key aspects that need improvement, which are essential for enhancing the

implementation of sustainable practices and creating a positive impact on the environment. Secondly, the study emphasizes that targeted strategies are needed for each country in the region to improve the adoption of sustainable practices. These strategies should account for variations in perceptions and the specific needs of each country within the local context. Increasing managers' awareness and commitment is crucial for addressing challenges and maximizing the effectiveness of green practices in the hospitality sector. In conclusion, this study provides a solid foundation for further research and for developing effective strategies to promote sustainability in the hospitality industry. The study's results contribute to improving sustainable practices and provide valuable insights for creating a positive impact on the environment and local communities. This study is important for researchers and professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry, as it helps in understanding and developing policies and practices that can improve sustainability in the Western Balkans and other countries.

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