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Green Event Management Initiatives in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT: Events are becoming established as an integral and significant part of tourism development and marketing strategies. Due to global warming, most event organizers are in the process of reshaping their attitude towards the environment and resources. Environmental sustainability has become increasingly important in today's business world and introduces several policies and practices to produce environmentally friendly products and make green a part of their tender process. Hence, the central focus of the study was to identify the current green event management practices in Sri Lanka. Primary data was collected through structured interviews from 15 event managers who are members of the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition, and Event Organizers using the purposive sampling technique. A qualitative data analytical method was employed, and the collected data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. The findings of the study reveal that waste management, energy efficiency and dissemination of information are the current green event management practices in Sri Lanka. Further, implications and recommendations are discussed based on the generated codes and categories. Moreover, green events can be used to gain a competitive advantage and maximize the company's reputation, which affects the initiation of a sustainable business growth.

KEYWORDS: green event management; environmental sustainability practices; Sri Lanka

Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in recent years among the countries in Asia (Ranasinghe and Nawarathna, 2018). Particularly, events become an essential component within the tourism industry, and it has always been a part of every culture as festivals, rituals and celebrations. The rapid growth of tourism in the 20th century produced both problems and benefits for destination countries (Deyshappriya and Nawarathna, 2020). Significantly, the event industry might cause economic growth and infrastructure development in many countries. However, within the current global tourism industry, the event industry comes under criticism, especially due to global warming. Thus, events create both positive and negative impacts on the economy, society and the environment. Economically, events might cause thousands of people who will contribute to the local

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economy to generate income but socially and environmentally, events and festivals create vast amounts of waste around the world. At present, environmental sustainability has become a landmark of global issues. Therefore, most of the businesses are highly concerned about the impact of their activities on the environment.

Equally, considering the event industry, most of the event organizers pay attention to reconsider their attitude towards the environment and resources as a result of global warming. Further, in the current world of work, environmental sustainability has become progressively significant, and organizations influence and develop sustainable policies and practices in harvesting the best products that attract the trending markets of environmentally friendly products. The aspects are common and viable in the tourism and event industry leading to a durable industry in the future (Nawarathna and Arachchi, 2021). Some of the event organizers are proceeding to green their events to minimize the impact on the environment. It will improve the quality of an event. Planning a green event is an easy way to open the path towards sustainability. Greening can be defined as the investment in sustainable practices and facilities (Mair and Jago, 2010), and also, it refers to environmentally friendly matters. A green event incorporates environmental considerations to minimize its negative impact on the environment. Currently, many international event companies practice the "event greening" concept to minimise the negative environmental impact. However, less attention has been paid to how large events affect community and the environment (Mair and Whitford, 2013).

Green Event Management practices are widely practiced in the modern world. According to the scholars, major events might bring short-term economic benefits to the community. Still, their long-term impact creates unsustainability. For example, Smith (2009) found that host communities often justify major events for their contribution to economic development but often end up creating an unsustainable development because the long-term impact they leave compromises the ability of the host communities to meet their own needs. Jones and Scanlon (2010) suggested that the major areas of impact from events are energy/power use, transport, waste management, waste reduction and resource recovery, and materials purchasing and procurement. The most serious results of these impacts are pollution, the over-use or wastage of water and energy, waste disposal issues and increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Allen et al., 2012).

The Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry is an important and growing segment of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka (Dilshan et al, 2020). Around 11 percent of the total visitors of Sri Lanka represent the MICE segment, and currently, it stands over 119,000 with a 5-10 percent annual increase. According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2018), the majority of the tourists had visited for pleasure/holiday (84.8%), followed by visiting friends and relatives (10.84%). The rest of the share was distributed among the purposes such as business (3%), MICE (1.2%), Health (0.5%), Sports (0.5%), official (0.2%) and other purposes (0.01%).

Further, Sri Lanka Tourism recommended actions and implementation mechanisms for the last four years, with a long-term view toward Tourism Vision 2025 and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, Wickramasinghe (2018) stated, tourism can be used as a tool to raise awareness and contribution towards preserving natural and cultural assets. For instance, eco-tourism can be used as a sustainable tool in natural forest management.

And also, to the best of the author's knowledge, there is no research on this topic in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this research seeks to fulfill some of these gaps that have been identified and develop effective green event management practices and contribute to the Sri Lankan tourism industry.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background Development

Event Tourism

Events are evolving and are becoming increasingly crucial for activities related to tourism and marketing. The event sector of the tourism industry is young, dynamic, growing and maturing at a rapid rate (Thejani et al, 2019). It has a wide range of celebrations, conferences, meetings, presentations, promotions, sports, and various events, and the environment has become more diverse with increasing norms and size, growth of government, and participation in events.

Events have been recognized as a vital factor in the development process and as a business strategy in decision-making. Event tourism can be used to describe this situation, and it can be defined as improvement, planning, business and event management as per tourism. There are four goals of event tourism: to create a favourable image for a destination, expand the traditional tourist season, spread tourist demand more evenly across an area, and attract foreign and domestic visitors (Tassiopoulos, 2005).

Events tourism is a celebration of the process, development and marketing of festivals and special events such as tourist attractions, cinematographers, incentives for material and economic growth, and exciting events. On one hand, tourism management refers to the development of tourists, which is based on examining the behavior and motivation of all passengers. On the other hand, events management deals with event marketing, event planning and scheduling. In addition, the notion of events management attempts to understand the behavioral experience and control it. Hence, event tourism is in the middle of the two sectors. In other words, event tourism aims to fully exploit the capabilities of events to achieve tourism development of host communities aligning the local celebrations into tourism products, which enhance the experiences of tourists.

Events are a unique form of tourists' attraction, ranging in a scale from mega-events of community festivals to recreational events at parks. It should be regarded primarily as providing a leisure activity that has the potential to attract tourists. Further, events can be regarded as a hybrid, which is a combination of attractions and a range of activities. A principle applying to all events is that they are temporary, and every such event is unique, stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people.

Green Event Management

Green event management is the process where the events are conducted to meet environmental sustainability. The introduction of the green event is relatively a new concept within the event industry. Mainly, this concerns the environmental impact of the event and runs through the event by eliminating such negative environmental impact. Green events are characterized by waste prevention, efficient use of energy, added value to the region and social responsibility.

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The United Nations Environment Programme (2009) defines a green event as an event which has designed, organized, and implemented to minimize adverse environmental impacts and leave a lasting legacy for the community. And also, it is the practice of eliminating harmful environmental impact, as sustainability is associated with environmental, economic and social dimensions. A growing body of evidence shows that green tourism can lead to broad economic, social and environmental benefits for host countries and their communities (United Nations Environment Programme, 2009). However, the term "greening" has an environmental connotation and is used to describe the process of transitioning a product, a service, an activity or an organization into a more environmentally sustainable version (Stettler, 2011).

Economically, events can attract thousands of people who will contribute to the local economy (Ranjan, 2016). However, socially and environmentally, events generate thousands tons of wastes (Case, 2013), consume an excessive amount of electricity, damage land due to overuse, and increase CO2 emissions (Ranjan, 2016). And also, Osterwalder (2015) cited event has produced a lot of waste, high consumption of energy and water and sport event organizers should change the way of managing events by being more responsible whereby the event hosted did not harm the environment. Further, Holmes et al (2015) stated that green practices are important for the bid process of many mega-events. Moreover, Liu (2018) mentioned that green practice would help to sustain the tenders and helping the host to earn more sponsors. Therefore, a balance needs to be found to protect and enhance the destination's resources for the future while managing the complex interaction of all the stakeholders (Chiu et al, 2020).

Implementing the green concept, not only has a positive impact on the environment, but it helps in educating the participants and organizers in terms of saving cost and resources (Ranjan, 2016). Moise and Macovei (2014) cited that when planning and implementing environmentally friendly sporting events, responsible actions, social and environmental protection are essential to meet the needs of consumers and businesses, as well as future needs by agreeing to maintain or increase resources. Further, many sports tourism events have been organized globally yet the understanding about the event greening practices is reasonably low. Therefore, the impact of the sports event on the environment and the communities are exceptionally high (Chiu et al, 2020).

Greening an event becomes a part of sustainability that involves reducing the negative environmental impact. Morelli (2011) described environmental sustainability as a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs while neither exceeding the capacity of its supporting ecosystems to continue to regenerate the services necessary to meet those needs. An environmental sustainability is seen as a strategy for greening the environment. For this reason, the term greening is stated to highlight the green practices implemented during business activities. Event greening is one of the strategies used to achieve the aim of environmental sustainability. This is supported by Mair and Jago (2010), who mentioned that greening an event is an investment in environmentally friendly facilities and practices. The process of an event describes the work before the event begins and ends with the shutdown of an event (Allen et al., 2012). Therefore, greening an event involves the entire process of an event.

As discussed by several scholars, the process of greening in linked with several issues. Mair and Jago (2010) discussed green practices in the event industry using the Drivers and Barriers

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model. Further, they stated that the lack of finance and stakeholder support were seen as barriers that needed to be overcome. But this model was applied by Mair and Laing (2012) in understanding the barriers of greening music festivals. Their study found that lack of time and control over venues were barriers in the process of greening an event. Paterson and Ward (2011) stated that event organizers are unaware of the legislations related to the environment and are resistant to learn about sustainability legislations. Laing and Frost (2010) cited that lack of environmental knowledge becomes an obstacle in implementing sustainable practices in an event. However, environmental knowledge is not the main reason for event organizers to apply sustainability efforts during a business event (Park and Boo, 2010).

Novel Corona (COVID 19) epidemic has become a global pandemic at present bringing about radical socio, economic impacts and behavioral changes of individuals and communities. Equally, tourism was a catalyst of spreading the virus all over the globe and was one of the economic activities that affected first and foremost (Ranasinghe et al, 2021). Therefore, we can move beyond merely aiming for more sustainable events, towards maximizing the contribution of events to sustainable development, by thinking about how events might change attitudes and behaviors. As a result of this pandemic, more fundamental issues; climate change, biodiversity loss, social inclusion, accessibility, wellbeing relegated down the priority list (Mair and Smith, 2021).

A more positive forecast is that the crisis has encouraged people and organizations to appreciate the value of natural environments and livelihoods which may drive the adoption of more sustainable practices in the future (Dodds et al., 2020). Crossley (2020) cited that the pandemic may result in increasing desires to repair the ecological damage caused by tourism. Since the onset of the epidemic, hundreds of events have been canceled all over the world and waking up to the news of cancellations or postponements has become the new normal. virtual and hybrid events emerge as two additional options to be considered in the face of disruption and a number of meetings and conferences have been redesigned as virtual events and this format is probably the best alternative in these challenging times. Therefore, green event management is essential to create a long-term sustainability of the event industry.

Environmental Sustainability Practices in Events

Environmental sustainability involves making decisions and using exercises to minimize our planetary degradation. Environmental considerations mainly apply to products used and designed, presented and picked up by the organizers, guests and other parties participating in an event. These factors can directly affect the event planner, but other factors are more responsible to suppliers. It is important to remember that organizing a "green" event does not necessarily make it more expensive right away (Nawarathna and Arachchi, 2021).

The sustainability of the environment lies in making decisions and engaging in practices that minimize our degradation on earth. Sustainability factors mainly refer to products and are used by the organizer, guests and other stakeholders while planning, implementing and participating in events. A critical comment here is that organizing a "green" event does not necessarily mean that it will automatically become more expensive. On the contrary, many environmental plans can reduce costs and increase efficiency if done correctly. It refers specifically to major events such as conferences and sports (Nawarathna and Arachchi, 2021).

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As an awareness that increases environmental problems that arise due to the daily activities of individuals and adopts ecological working methods to reduce environmental damage (Dobson et al., 2010). The word "greening" can usually be defined as an environmental dimension and is used to describe a process of transforming an ecological version of a product, service, operation or organization. According to the United Nations Environment Program (2009), "A green event is planned, coordinated, implemented in a way that reduces the negative impact on the environment and leaves a positive legacy for the host community". There are various green practices, including waste reduction strategies, recycling initiatives and water protection. Still, there are also more and more creative steps through which events can lead to greener activities (Laing & Frost, 2010).

Green practices can include waste minimization and recycling, energy management, pollution reduction, zero emissions, water savings, material use reduction, material life cycle assessment, and toxicity reduction (Braungart et al., 2007). Basic environmental activities include resource recycling, waste management, carbon capture and control, supply chain management, responsible sourcing and biodiversity protection.

Re-cycling waste at an event makes sustainable sense. Still, that waste creates further planet problems by transporting waste somehow for the recycling process, and it requires cheap labor to separate the waste that might cause issues for people. From this, the importance of individual responsibility at the consumer side and organizational responsibility at the supply side of an event can be seen to affect the overall sustainability of an event (Ahmad et al., 2013).

Energy management is a far-reaching concept covering all phases of the sector, from fuels and their extraction to energy generation, systems efficiencies, energy distribution, energy consumption and energy security implications, etc. For example, in the event industry, overconsumption of energy can be reduced by implementing the use of solar panels as an energy alternative, use LED lights (light-emitting diode), which are known to use less energy on the event terrain during productions, and use natural air ventilation instead of air conditioners by opening windows or doors at indoor areas at the event (Kiger, 2015).

The Need for Green Event Management Initiatives in Sri Lanka

Every event is unique and organizers should analyze how effectively it can contribute to global sustainable transition. On the other hand, sustainable event management provides great examples of events that are exceeding expectations and demonstrating best practices in sustainability management (Cole et al., 2017). Accordingly, fulfilling environmental responsibilities can determine an organization to reach a competitive edge within its scale and create greater value for its real owners and employees in the industry through sustainable event management. It could be a reception, a festival, a meeting or a convention or any other event. The requirement of preserving key social and environmental responsibilities within the event lead opportunities to make a positive difference for the environment, community and the economy of a country. Greening is not perfection, but according to the United Nations, it is a properly assigned process and as they prefer, sustainability does not occur with one event, but it flows with every subsequent decision and action that deliver opportunities in the market for continuous excellence and improvement of the industry in a country.

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And also, with the rising issues in the current event industry, it is important to raise green practices across the industry, specifically relating it to each attire of the country. The event industry and its related sectors have gathered much of the criticism for making a large contribution to environmental pollution. With its exponential growth over the past decade or so, the event sector is drawing attention as an increasing contributor to this global problem. Since Sri Lanka is a country with a strong ethnical emphasis, the diversification of events in achieving cultural and economic harmony is essential. So in enabling the attitude of launching green events in the country is significant and it creates the organization to survive in the long run with various segmentations in the industry.

Sri Lanka Tourism Strategic Plan 2017-2020 (Ministry of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs, 2017) highlights the facts that,

> sustainable tourism is founded on sometimes-fragile, intersecting social, cultural, environmental, political and economic ecosystems that, in an island context, are especially challenging to manage and the existing fragmentation of the planning, management and policy-making related to tourism event creation and the associated and overlapping legal, regulatory and institutional responsibilities are core challenges to address in transforming the way sustainable tourism development is planned and managed in Sri Lankan context.

Therefore, the importance of approaching green event management is a very long progress and required to be managed accordingly.

Further, it examines the facts that, United Nations declaring 2017 as the international year of sustainable tourism for development and as Sri Lanka embarks on a journey of transformation of its tourism sector with Sri Lanka's Tourism Vision 2025. They align with core themes under sustainability, as its root philosophy namely, developing sustainable destinations, particularly the Transformative Tourism projects, lifting industry standards and engaging the workforce and communities.

Sri Lanka's Tourism Vision 2025 and Sri Lanka's Roots Philosophy emphasize eco-friendly practices and green principles for tourism and tourism institutions should work closely with the relevant authorities and existing national plans and strategies to achieve sustainable goals and mitigate the effects based on the national economic objectives and guiding principles for the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the event sector to be specified in reaching the above principles in attaining sustainability goals in 2025.

Further, the initial requirement is there to examine the facts that create the event industry in Sri Lanka reachable in a green approach as this study predicts and dictates in an upscale manner. Building on the evidence of social and environmental impacts generated by events, there is a need for research to identify strategies suitable for maximizing event benefits for disparate communities interest in the scale of sustainability (Schulenkorf et al., 2018).

Moreover, Chiu et al (2020) cited;

> Despite many sports tourism events have been organized globally yet the understanding of the event greening practices is reasonably low and there is still a lack of related

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studies about green events. The roles of the event organizers or planners are vital to ensure that the ecological-friendly or environmental-friendly events are engaged.

Therefore, this research aimed to fulfill this gap and identified effective green event management initiatives to ensure the development of the Sri Lankan events industry.

Methods

This study is mainly based on the primary data collected via structured interviews selected from the events companies, which are members of the Sri Lanka Association of Professional Conference, Exhibition and Event Organizers (SLAPCEO) in Sri Lanka and their members' database which comprises of 28 members and were used as the study population. Because there is no specific list of event management companies recorded in Sri Lanka and only a limited number of event management companies cover personal, MICE (Meeting, Incentives, Conference and Exhibition), mega and exhibition types of events within the country. Hence, the purposeful sampling technique was used for this research and 15 events planners who are the members of SLAPCEO in Sri Lanka were interviewed for this study as the sample size.

An interview guide was created after establishing the objectives of the research. This guide consists of 11 main questions, and several sub-questions are included wherever necessary for this study. First, the interview guide itself was developed, including general questions about the company background and questions about the green event management practices in Sri Lanka. General questions aimed to get background information about the company and the motivations for organizing a green event.

Questions on how many years in the industry, the number of years in the industry, and the type of events were raised. The main objective of the research was to identify the current green event management practices in Sri Lanka. Further, the last question aimed to determine the respondents' opinion about promoting the green event further and more efficiently to increase the number of green events in the Sri Lankan context.

Interview for the participants were contacted via phone, e-mail, in-person, or as a combination of the previous. All fifteen interviews were held via phone and in person. The length of each interview ranged from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. After the interviews, each conversation was transcribed and reviewed again by the researcher. Every transcript was sent to the respective respondent to get confirmation that the information recorded is correct. Then the revised transcripts were analyzed. According to the research, the researcher has used content analysis as the data analysis method. The most frequently used qualitative data analysis method which focuses on identifying patterned significance across a dataset. It aims to identify meaning patterns across a dataset that answer the research question to be dealt with. Patterns are defined by a comprehensive data familiarization process, data coding, and categories creation and revision.

The researcher coded the data into one code in order to achieve the research objective and subdividing relevant data into subsections under this code as illustrated in Table 1.

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Table 1: Codes Summary

Data	Code	Categories	Sub Categories
Objective 01	Environment sustainability practices	Waste management	Usage of waste bins
			Avoid plastics and polythene
			Usage of technological equipment
			Online registration
		Energy efficiency	Usage of natural air
			Usage of LED equipment
		Dissemination of information	Environmental standards
			CSR activities

Source: Developed by the researcher (2020)

Validity and reliability are considered as the most critical factors in the qualitative research method. To increase the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher used different methods to check and debrief the research. First, the researcher shared a copy of the interview transcript with each respective participant to check the validity of the work. This has been done to ensure participants review on what they said, add more information if they want to, and edit what they said. Further, the researcher shared the interview transcripts, methodology and final report with the impartial peers and feedback to enhance reliability and ensure validity.

Results

Green event management is the process where the events to meet environmental sustainability. The implementation of the green event within the event industry is relatively a recent idea. This mainly concern reducing the event's environmental impact and goes through the event by eliminating such negative impacts on the environment. The first objective of the research was to identify the green event management practices in Sri Lanka. Analyzing the respondents' interview responses, the researcher has identified eight key green event management practices and these practices, based essentially on waste management, energy efficiency, and dissemination of information in events.

The first category of the environmental sustainability practice was waste management which became one of the essential practices around the Sri Lankan event companies. Financial health is important in any organization. The purpose of doing business is to earn more profits and investing them in innovations. To address the sustainability of an organization, event planners must use long-term perspectives in sustainable event management and plan the financial viability before undertaking any event. It is important to determine the most effective methods to reduce the cost without a negative impact on the organization. Event planners must focus on cost reduction measures while pushing growth strategies at the same time. Sustainability can be assured by data-driven insight along with a network of procedures and controls. Some of the event planners adopted different methods as work on a motto like "go paperless", purchase only energy-efficient products for events and practice a thorough waste management plan. And also, they have initiated an "On the go" recycling program to minimize the unnecessary cost.

Waste management aims to understand how waste is made, by whom, where and when, and then to prevent it. Furthermore, waste management allocates the appropriate containers and

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facilitates the separation of waste and environmental friendliness during the process. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain marking or color coding bins to facilitate the separation of waste in this case.

> "Yes, of course. We are allocating waste bins for events that are coordinate by ourselves. But managing waste from an event is not just about getting the right bins; we need to ensure they are labeled clearly and positioned in suitable places to encourage recycling". (Participant 05: Personal communication, 2020)

Further, plastics and polythene are the non-deteriorated materials that extensively harm the ecosystem around the world. The use of polythene and plastics is high for the event industry, especially for the exhibition industry. According to the findings, most respondents mentioned that they had scheduled their events without using polythene and plastics.

> "We reduce a lot of plastic stuff and provide e-documents. ID cards also; we give cloth one and reusable one for the participants likewise". (Participant 15: Personal communication, 2020)

Moreover, according to the research, all the participants mentioned that they had used the technological equipment's to reduce the wastage, basically, the paper wastage in the event. Their customers are often advised to use cell phones, smartphone devices, iPods, and tabs to access the event apart from ticket issuance.

> "When we use printed material, then it is a problem to the environment. So, we try to propose equipment that is relevant to the technology. So, for example, instead of notepads and paper materials, we recommended clients to use mobile phones, iPods, Tabs like that". (Participant 01: Personal communication, 2020)

In issuing and purchase orders, they have requested products that were eco-friendly and locally manufactured. Further, they have requested food that was local, seasonal, and organic whenever possible. Moreover, they have ensured products that were sustainably sourced. In addition, they have given preference to suppliers and sub-contractors that implemented eco-friendly practices.

And also, within the event industry, almost all companies now moved to do online registration, which benefits them. They have mentioned that now they have done online registration for their events to reduce paper wastage. Therefore, it is vital to provide an opportunity to create an online platform for all the stakeholders to their registration. At the same time, some of the event companies have been initiated this practice in organizing their events.

> In concern with reducing carbon footprint and zero waste, we provide an online platform for visitors and buyers to register and visit events that we are organizing in the Maldives. (Participant 10: Personal communication, 2020)

The second category explains how the event managers use the energy efficiently at the event. Adopting energy-efficient strategies cannot reduce the carbon footprint in full but can make the environmental friendliness to some extent. Further, they have used solar power as the

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energy source to generate light. Therefore, the researcher identified using LED equipment and natural air to save the energy of their events.

> "Due to a small visitor turnout in the Maldives compared to Sri Lanka, we have implemented the virtual presence technologies in the Maldives and the process of enforcement in Sri Lanka. In addition, we use technology to optimize energy efficiency from the registration process to exhibitions, guiding pathways, exhibitor coordinating". (Participant 10: Personal communication, 2020)

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that, there were many ways that the event planners ensure that the event adopts the green concept in their management as follow the green guidelines which encompassed reducing energy and transport usage. In addition, they have requested cleaning crews to use eco-friendly cleaners utilized green power for the duration of the event and promoted reusable traveler mugs, water bottles, and cloth bags throughout the event.

Biodiversity conservation is the duty of every corner of the planet. Companies have the most important role in organizing their events to protect nature through that event. The availability of a wide variety of accurate and appropriate knowledge plays a significant role in decision-making about the environment. The local government should take the lead in protecting the natural environment and disseminating information to stakeholders about it. However, our knowledge on the dissemination among stakeholders of environmental information practices is limited. According to the findings, most of them stated that environmental standards and corporate social responsibility activities make more environmentally friendly events.

Environmental standards, statutory legislation or civil law guidelines are enforced for environmental protection and maintenance. They are set by a government and may include prohibiting specific activities, mandating monitoring frequency and methods and requiring land or water use permits. It produces quantifiable and enforceable laws which promote the protection of the environment. According to the findings of the study, event planners have obtained ISO 14001:2015 environmental management system certification, Carbon Neutral Certification and Travellife Certification. Further, they have emphasized the importance to communicate the value of environmental sustainability to large numbers of people.

> "We have a separate division to monitor the sustainability. We are also 7S practicing company and organizing events based on the environmental protection guidelines". (Participant 02: Personal communication, 2020)

Further, some of the event managers engaged in some activities like tree planting, looking after animals in their events as a CSR activity to protect the environment and be eco-friendly.

> "We made CSR ventures and planted trees, looked after animals and all as an environmentally friendly private company". (Participant 06: Personal communication, 2020)

For sustainable economic growth and the well-being of communities, CSR is essential. Growing social consciousness is pushing corporations to reduce their burden on the environment. Socially responsible organizations are expected to bear the environmental effect of their operations, to aim to reduce waste, to emit hazardous substances and to take action to improve the efficiency of the use of natural resources and to mitigate the negative impact on

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the environment. They may reduce the burden on the environment, safely store, avoid, neutralize, reduce or remove neutralize, reduce or remove pollution and environmental damage.

Discussions

This research focuses on the green event initiatives in Sri Lanka. It can be identified that there are different consequences of implementing green practices for the events in Sri Lanka in many ways. This section discusses the findings according to the research objective.

The study identified that waste management, energy efficiency and dissemination of information as environmentally sustainable practices. Further, the usage of waste bins, avoid plastics and polythene, usage of technological equipment, online registration, natural air, usage of LED equipment, environmental standards and CSR activities were implemented by the event management organizations to conduct the green events. The event industry is a large consumer of energy and producer of waste, and any effort to reduce, reuse, or recycle materials can significantly impact the environment (Sustainable Event Planning Guide Denver Convention Host Committee Greening Initiative Fall, 2008). Several green practices related to events, including methods for waste reduction, programs for recycling and water conservation (Laing & Frost, 2010). Braungart et al. (2007) cited, green practices include waste minimization and recycling, energy management, pollution reduction, zero emissions, water savings, material use reduction, material life cycle assessment and toxicity reduction. Research findings suggested that most of them used technological equipment (iPods, mobile phones, and apps, tabs, e-systems, etc.) to reduce wastage, especially paper wastage. In such events, increased usage of e-documents, e-certificates, and pen drives instead of the printed materials were promoted to reduce the excess storage, waste minimization, and to be eco-friendly. Findings indicated that organizations used online registrations as the green practice to reduce paper wastage at the event. The Convention Industry Council created a conference website that is advantageous for reducing paper waste. This website can upload information material about the event, presentations, and handouts from the speakers and provide an electronic or online registration.

A three-bin recycling system, which involves using color-coded bins for different types of wastes as tins, bottles and paper, can be implemented at art festivals (Karkanias et al., 2016). The findings suggested that the allocation of waste bins as the green practice encourages waste separation and reduces the negative environmental impact.

Energy consumption plans help to reduce energy use by defining some recommendations and rules (Holmes et al., 2015). It is one of the practices evident by the findings, and it would consider switching to energy-efficient equipment like LED equipment, usage of natural air within an event. According to the findings, the researcher identified that the Sri Lankan events companies used LED equipment to save energy at their events as an environmental practice. To reduce overconsumption of energy, arts festival organizers can implement solar panels as an energy alternative and use LED lights, which are known to use less energy on the festival terrain during productions (Devabhaktuni et al., 2013). Another way of saving energy is by using alternative options like natural air and sun etc. According to the findings, 40% of organizations used solar power and wind air as energy-saving source. Jones and Scanlon (2010) mentioned that alternative options would include energy produced by wind, sun, tidal,

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river, etc. Further, he explained, it is possible to reduce energy through careful planning and different campaigns, but the most sustainable solution is switching to use renewable energy.

Protection of biodiversity is the responsibility of all the people around the world. As the event organizers, they are more responsible in organizing the event by protecting the natural environment. The researcher identified that few companies had introduced environmental standards and environmentally friendly packages for their customers to protect the biodiversity around the event. Further, socially responsible organizations used CSR activities to mitigate the negative impact on the environment. Dickson and Arcodia (2010) mentioned, engaging in environmental CSR activities increases credibility, addresses consumer needs and desires, mitigates negative media coverage and creates a more robust relationship network. Fombrun et al. (2000) stated, this helps to build the reputation, attract resources, enhance its performance and build competitive advantage.

Managerial Implications

The events industry, including festivals, meetings, conferences, exhibitions, incentives, sports and a range of other events is rapidly developing and contributes to business and leisure-related tourism (Nawarathna, 2017). The findings elucidate compelling managerial implications for event organizers, government and residential communities where events are held (Nawarathna and Arachchi, 2021). The first recommended strategy for improved green event management is maximizing the awareness of attendees with green education. The study results showed that attendees are the critical stakeholders in events, and most of them are not aware of the green concept in Sri Lanka. Their mentality adapted to the green concept is at the minimum level yet. Therefore, it is necessary to improve attendee engagement, education, and perception about the green concept to adapt to green initiatives.

Adapting to technological advancement is much essential to implement the green event. The study results showed no proper technology to organize green events in Sri Lanka, and most of the attendees were not familiar with this technological advancement yet. Therefore, as Sri Lanka is a developing country and one of the tourist attraction destinations in the world, it is crucial to invest to acquire green-related technology and become familiar with this technology. Both the private and public sectors should be collaborating to acquire the technology to the country for being green.

The tourism industry will become the number one income generator in Sri Lanka. This is because events are the highest income generation tool in the tourism industry. And also, the world is moving fast towards green events at a time where Sri Lanka has not yet realized the importance of green events for the economy, society and environment. Therefore, Sri Lanka should develop a complete green event model considering future infrastructure and human capital development requirements related to the event industry in Sri Lanka.

Green venues and new technological practices for events could be a highlight. Sri Lanka has been a tropical country; we could build a venue that runs totally from solar power. Also, recycling paper and waste and water purifying are some other possible areas that we can adopt. Therefore, making these available and using that as a marketing tool to promote events in Sri Lanka could be a value adds to the events industry.

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The international event management industry is mainly depending on tourists. The tourism industry mainly depends on the government stability and security of the country. As a result of the Easter attack and COVID-19 Pandemic, the event management field will be the last to recover due to events not being a human's first-hand need. People will attain events only if they are happy. Therefore, the security of the country and government stability is a primary concern to green event management. And also, the concern about green event management is not only related to event organizers. The government also needs to be aware and provide its support to the industry. Further, Sri Lanka needs more regional and international events coming towards the country, and there should be a guideline for green event management and register event management organizations. Hence, making a policy framework is important to promote green events in Sri Lanka.

As a collective, if all event management organizations practice green event management strategies with creativity, we have all other natural resources to host some of the significant and best events in the world. Therefore, private and public sectors should get together and analyze the potentials and build required infrastructure and other integrated services to make Sri Lanka as one of the well-recognized destinations for green events in the world. Further, the private, public partnership creates long-term legacies for host communities and the development of green event management in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

Events are becoming an integral part of tourism development and marketing strategies (Ranasinghe and Nawarathna, 2020). Greening is becoming increasingly important to long-term strategies for the events industry, customers, and other stakeholders. It can offer wide-ranging opportunities for events and improve financial performance while fostering public support. It is high time that Sri Lanka showcases green practices in events as well as in other industries. Tourism will be the number one income generator in Sri Lanka, and events are the highest income generation tool in the tourism industry in the future. Globally, more and more events are hosted in an environmentally responsible way. Sri Lankan event industry is applying environmental practices in their operations.

The main objective this study was to identify the current green event management practices in Sri Lanka. The findings revealed that many of the event management organizations are aware of the green concept and implement green practices to some extent. Usage of technological equipment, waste bins, online registration, and avoid plastic and polythene could be identified as the waste management practices at the event. And also used natural air and LED equipment to save energy and introduced environmental guidelines and environmentally friendly CSR activities to protect biodiversity. Further, results indicated that Sri Lanka could not organize a fully green event due to some barriers associated with the green initiatives. Therefore, implementing green event management practices with a proper mechanism will result in the long-term development of the Sri Lankan event industry.

Contributions

Events and festivals including the MICE industry have become an important aspect of the emergence of the tourism industry as one of the major revenue generating businesses in Sri

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Lanka. Green practices can lessen the negative consequences in which society makes on the environment and turn these into positive ones; it can create a positive and lasting impression on a destination and benefit the communities and economy as a whole. In terms of event management, it can create a positive lasting legacy and encourage event attendees to be more environmentally, economically and socially aware.

The study approaches the paucity of academic literature on green event management initiatives in Sri Lanka. At the same attire, the study addresses the empirical gap in the industry that caters to the modern trend of organizations in highlighting their green credentials in a highly sophisticated market. This is occurring in which are known to be suspicious of claims that cannot be substantiated in the long run.

And also, the research is more significant in revealing the evidence that are more realistic in diversified event organization, irrespective of size, scale or scope, that are interviews with the accurate flow of inputs and outcomes that reveal sustainable responsibility can be seen as a fundamental aspect of events and a mechanism to the longevity of the organization within a changing event environment, that lead to management competency and an aspect of organizational excellence.

Future Research Directions

This research was conducted to study the green event management practices in Sri Lanka; event planners' perspective. Future researchers can be conducted the same arena in a wider manner based on all the event stakeholders as attendees, responsible government organizations, local community and private event management organizations. Since the study was conducted in a qualitative method, it cannot provide significant proof regarding the green event management framework. To validate the framework, future researches related to this study can be conducted in a triangulation method and quantitative analysis method.

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