

Industry Analysis

Sustainable Coral Farming in Business Tourism: A Green Project Management Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the sustainability of the Coral Farm by Yayasan Coral Malaysia within the context of business tourism, focusing on the principles of Green Project Management (GPM) and their alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study emphasizes the importance of Green Project Management as a tool to promote sustainable practices and project implementation, showcasing how the Coral Farm initiative aligns with the P5s of GPM (Product, Process, People, Planet, and Prosperity) and contributes to specific SDGs. The research concludes by positioning Coral Farm as a compelling case study for sustainable business tourism, embodying the ideals of sustainability, responsible tourism, and environmental conservation.

KEYWORDS: business, coral farming, sustainability and tourism.

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1.0 Introduction

The world is increasingly recognizing the urgent need for sustainability, and this recognition extends to every facet of human activity, including business and tourism. Within this context, sustainable tourism has gained prominence as a crucial concept. It revolves around the responsible management of resources to meet social, economic, and aesthetic needs while upholding cultural integrity, preserving biological diversity, and safeguarding essential ecological processes (Arteaga, Espinoza, Zuñiga, Espinoza, Villegas, Campos, 2018; Del Carmen Canizares Ruiz, 2020).

Sustainable tourism practices are economically efficient without compromising society's and the environment's well-being (Broccardo, Culasso & Truant, 2017; Swarbrooke, 1999). In Malaysia, coral reefs hold immense economic and ecological significance. They attract tourists, provide a critical protein source for millions of people, and substantially contribute to biodiversity. The well-managed coral reefs in Malaysia are estimated to hold an economic value of around RM150 billion annually. However, the failure to effectively preserve and manage these coral reefs could expose them to various threats, including sedimentation, pollution, overexploitation, and the effects of global warming (Malaysia, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to conserve and protect these reefs for the benefit of future generations.

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In this pursuit of sustainable marine practices, Pulau Bidong, located in Terengganu, is recognized as an exceptional site with abundant resources. These include a 6-acre commercial coral farm, a thriving marine ecosystem with clear, shallow waters, and robust reefs. Coral farming has become a significant aspect of sustainable business tourism due to its innovative and ecological impact. On that note, this paper explores the sustainability of coral farming within the context of business tourism, analyzing it through the lens of Green Project Management (GPM) principles.

2.0 Industry Overview

Yayasan Coral Malaysia is a distinguished non-profit organization deeply committed to marine conservation, environmental education, and promoting sustainable tourism. Nestled on the picturesque Pulau Bidong, situated off the northeastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia, this foundation embodies the core principles of integrated sustainability. It takes an active role in coral propagation, restoration, and ongoing monitoring efforts, all aimed at enhancing the resilience of the coral reefs surrounding Pulau Bidong. Through its comprehensive educational initiatives, Yayasan Coral Malaysia not only fosters greater awareness regarding marine conservation but also instills in both local communities and tourists a profound appreciation for the urgent need to preserve these invaluable natural habitats.

Yayasan Coral Malaysia aspires to be a dynamic and innovative leader in marine conservation, offering unique programs dedicated to restoring coral reefs and their surrounding ecosystems. One of the organization's standout accomplishments is establishing a pioneering tourism attraction, exemplified by the launch of the Malaysia Underwater Gallery on Bidong Island, Terengganu.

Framing this analysis within the context of Green Project Management (GPM) is essential to comprehend the sustainability of coral farming and its impact on business tourism. GPM represents a guiding framework integrating environmental, social, and economic elements into project management. It provides a comprehensive structure to assess the impact and priorities of coral farming, particularly within the marine ecosystem and the tourism industry.

This paper explores Yayasan Coral Malaysia's endeavors in coral farming and their alignment with the GPM framework. The five Ps of GPM - Product, Process, People, Planet, and Prosperity - are pivotal pillars in examining sustainability in coral farming. The "P5" elements offer valuable guidance to project managers on how to deliver a sustainable project. These elements outline specific actions and steps to be undertaken throughout the project's lifecycle to ensure sustainability is deeply integrated into project planning, execution, and evaluation. This encompasses strategies for reducing environmental impact, promoting social responsibility, and maximizing economic benefits for the organization and the local community (Carboni et al., 2018).

3.0 Sustainability and Green Project Management

Green Project Management (GPM) or Sustainable Project Management involves utilizing tools, mechanisms, and practices that lead to positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes during a project's lifecycle. To address contemporary challenges, sustainable project management approaches prioritize responsible resource management, environmental conservation, and stakeholder engagement. These approaches are instrumental in advancing the SDGs by integrating sustainability into project planning and execution (Carboni et al., 2018).

3.1 The Coral Farm Initiative

The Coral Farm is a multi-faceted initiative aimed at marine conservation, coral breeding, and promoting marine tourism. Its core objectives include enhancing public awareness of marine conservation, fostering collaborations with national and international initiatives, partnering with various stakeholders for joint awareness-raising activities, and contributing to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Coral Farm initiative, spearheaded by Jamhariah Jaafar, President of Yayasan Coral Malaysia, demonstrates a comprehensive alignment with the five key elements of Green Project Management (GPM), showcasing a holistic commitment to sustainability:

3.1.1 Product

The Coral Farm initiative offers a range of products designed to promote sustainability and marine conservation. The Coral Farm stands as a sustainable mariculture practice, providing vital support to the marine aquarium industry and exemplifying the creation of a sustainable product. In addition, the Coral Conservation & Education Program is a product centered around knowledge sharing, emphasizing coral propagation and education on marine species. Lastly, the Adoption Program serves as a product with a primary focus on coral breeding, conservation, and restoring damaged reef areas. These product offerings not only cater to the diverse needs of stakeholders but also underscore the project's commitment to the "Product" element of Green Project Management (GPM).

3.1.2 Process

The Coral Farm initiative follows a systematic process to ensure sustainability across its various components. In the case of Coral Farm itself, the process begins with a well-structured proposal, followed by collaboration with relevant authorities and stakeholders to secure the necessary endorsements and approvals, ensuring legal and environmental compliance. Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) are then implemented to guide sustainable practices in coral breeding and conservation. The continuous construction and placement of coral tables underwater are critical steps in establishing a thriving marine aquarium industry, aligning with the "Process" element of Green Project Management (GPM). Similarly, the Coral Conservation & Education Program commences with a structured proposal and collaboration to ensure compliance. It actively engages the public through effective promotion and marketing using various media channels, providing hands-on activities and education on coral propagation. The program culminates with a closing ceremony and the acknowledgment and certification of participants, aligning with GPM principles. The Coral Adoption Program utilizes technology to create a platform for stakeholder involvement, approaching potential adopters from the public and corporate sectors with well-structured adoption packages. Providing E-certificates and continuous updates further reinforces the engagement process, aligning with GPM's "Process" element.

3.1.3 People

The Coral Farm initiative strongly emphasizes involving and engaging various groups of people, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. The project actively collaborates with various entities, including government departments, universities, companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local community groups, highlighting a commitment to partnerships and cooperation. Furthermore, the initiative extends its outreach to a diverse target audience, including students, fishermen, and local communities, actively involving them in marine conservation efforts and knowledge sharing. This concerted effort to engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders aligns perfectly with the "People" element of Green Project Management (GPM), which underscores the importance of participation and inclusivity in sustainable initiatives.

3.1.4 Planet

The Coral Farm initiative strongly emphasizes the planet's well-being, specifically focusing on coral conservation, education, and sustainability. This is evident in their active community involvement in conservation activities, fostering a sense of environmental stewardship. Furthermore, the project's commitment to four core environmental conservation pillars, encompassing education, conservation, restoration, and commercialization, underscores its holistic approach to marine ecosystem protection and sustainable practices. This dedicated focus on protecting marine ecosystems and engaging the community aligns perfectly with the "Planet" element of Green Project Management (GPM), which underscores the importance of environmental conservation and sustainability in project initiatives.

3.1.5 Prosperity

The Coral Farm initiative demonstrates a strong potential for generating prosperity for the project itself and for a range of stakeholders, including local fishermen, communities, and younger generations. The project promotes decent work and economic growth by creating job opportunities in the marine industry. Additionally, the initiative's focus on responsible consumption and production within the marine industry underscores its commitment to sustainable practices. These efforts align seamlessly with the "Prosperity" element of Green Project Management (GPM), emphasizing economic development, wealth creation, and sustainability for local communities and future generations.

In short, the Coral Farm initiative's strong alignment with these five key elements of GPM positions it as a model of sustainable business tourism, where the creation of sustainable products, structured processes, stakeholder engagement, environmental conservation, and economic prosperity work together to achieve a common goal of marine conservation and responsible tourism.

3.2 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Coral Farm initiative significantly contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), actively addressing critical global challenges. Here is an overview of its contributions to specific SDGs:

SDG 1: No Poverty: The project's potential to create economic opportunities and reduce poverty aligns directly with SDG 1, as it promotes financial well-being for various stakeholders and local communities.

SDG 4: Quality Education: The initiative's strong emphasis on education and knowledge sharing, particularly in marine conservation, contributes to providing quality education in alignment with SDG 4.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: The project's focus on creating job opportunities within the marine industry promotes decent work and fuels economic growth, aligning with SDG 8.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: By actively addressing coral conservation and responsible production within the marine industry, the Coral Farm initiative contributes to sustainable practices and directly supports SDG 12.

SDG 14: Life Below Water: The project's core focus on marine conservation efforts, particularly in protecting life below water, directly aligns with SDG 14, which seeks to safeguard marine ecosystems.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: The initiative's collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including universities and government authorities, exemplifies its commitment to fostering partnerships for achieving sustainable goals, in line with SDG 17.

These contributions underscore the Coral Farm initiative's dedication to addressing global challenges and advancing the United Nations' broader sustainability agenda.

4 Conclusion

The Coral Farm is a compelling case study for sustainable business tourism initiatives. By aligning with the principles of Green Project Management and contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, it embodies the ideals of sustainability, responsible tourism, and environmental conservation. The project's commitment to education, engagement, and innovation positions it as a beacon of hope for marine conservation and sustainable tourism in the years to come. As the industry of sustainable coral farming in business tourism continues to grow, embracing the principles of Green Project Management and the United Nations' SDGs is essential to ensure a brighter, more sustainable future for our planet.

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