CSR survey 2024

sustainable hospitality

understanding the
priorities of today's
event attendees

bnetwork

accommodation
specialist

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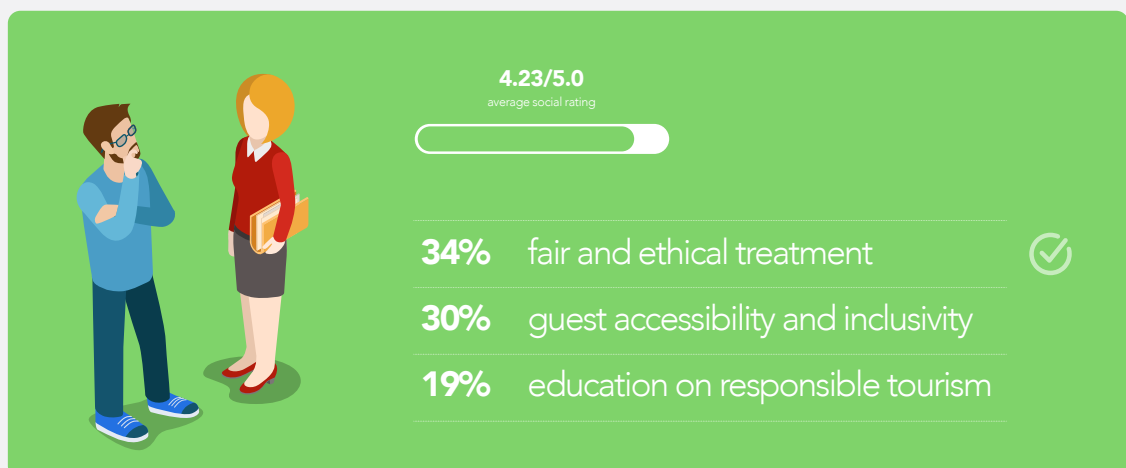
executive summary

as sustainability becomes a central focus in the event and hospitality sectors, corporate planners, event and trade show organisers, as well as **hotels, destinations and venues** are exploring how to align with attendee values on sustainability.

this report presents insights from a recent bnetwork survey of nearly 700 event attendees across diverse industries—including advertising, media, healthcare, technology, retail, and trade—capturing their priorities in ethical, social, and environmental practices within hospitality, with a particular focus on B2B event accommodation. Survey respondents were reached through bnetwork's extensive affiliations with prominent industry organisers, including RX Global, Vitafoods Europe, ISE (Integrated Systems Europe), EASL (European Association for the Study of the Liver), Diversified Communications (Seafood Expo Global) and TFWA (Tax Free World Association).

the findings reveal three core issues that matter most to attendees: **people-first priorities, meaningful ecological actions, and transparency in communication**. These areas represent opportunities for hotels and venues to align with attendee values, strengthening brand loyalty and positioning themselves as sustainable leaders in the industry.

key finding 1
people-first: the top priority

4.23/5.0
average social rating

34% fair and ethical treatment

30% guest accessibility and inclusivity

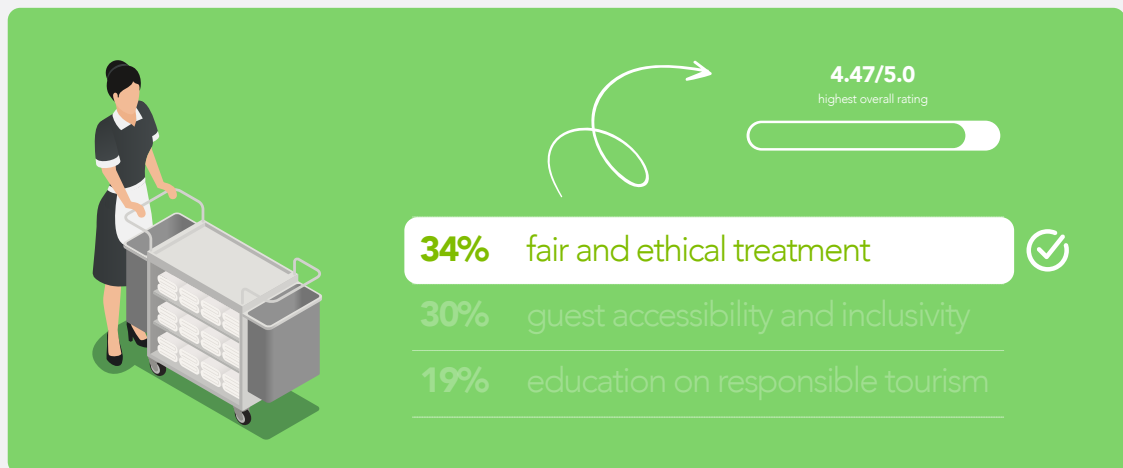**19%** education on responsible tourism

according to survey respondents the **fair and ethical treatment of employees is the top priority**. Employee and guest well-being as well as guest accessibility and inclusivity all rank as primary concerns, well above other considerations.

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this trend suggests that the hospitality sector's reputation is closely tied to how well it treats its employees and clients. Participants indicated that unethical labour practices and lack of integrity erode trust, which is critical in an industry that relies heavily on public perception.

furthermore, the emergence of new digital players, institutional policies, and issues of overtourism in some destinations may be generating negative sentiments that overshadow the reputation of large events. As one respondent aptly put it: "Governments, city councils and tourism departments should make an effort to understand and mitigate the reason for the current anti-tourism movements..."

4.47/5.0
highest overall rating

34% fair and ethical treatment

30% guest accessibility and inclusivity

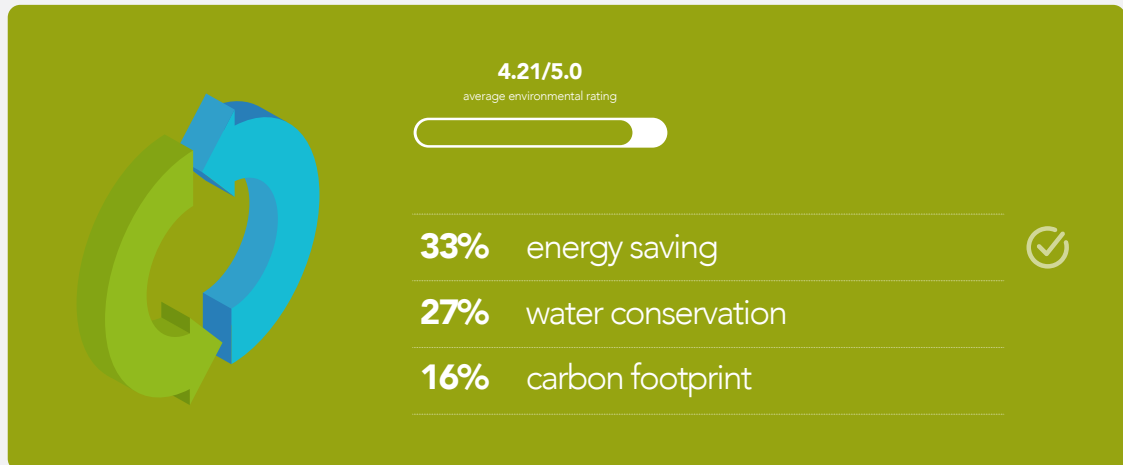**19%** education on responsible tourism

key takeaway: fostering a culture of respect and developing strong people-first policies that respect both workers and guests not only aligns with attendee values but also enhances brand credibility and long-term loyalty.

key finding 2:
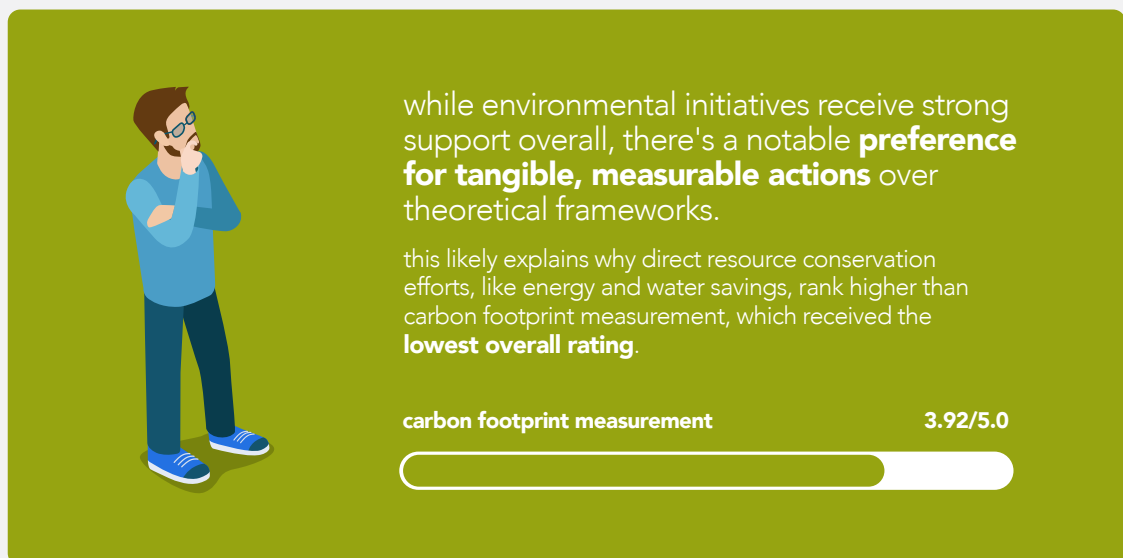## ecological concerns: a call for greater effort

4.21/5.0
average environmental rating

33% energy saving

27% water conservation

16% carbon footprint

while social and ethical practices lead in priority, ecological concerns remain significant for attendees. When asked to rank their top ecological priorities, respondents placed energy and water conservation at the forefront. Waste reduction, recycling policies, and food waste prevention also received high ratings within the environmental category. Conversely, topics such as the safe use of chemicals, sustainable sourcing practices, and carbon footprint measurement, while relevant, ranked lower on the list of concerns.

while environmental initiatives receive strong support overall, there's a notable **preference for tangible, measurable actions** over theoretical frameworks.

this likely explains why direct resource conservation efforts, like energy and water savings, rank higher than carbon footprint measurement, which received the **lowest overall rating**.

carbon footprint measurement **3.92/5.0**

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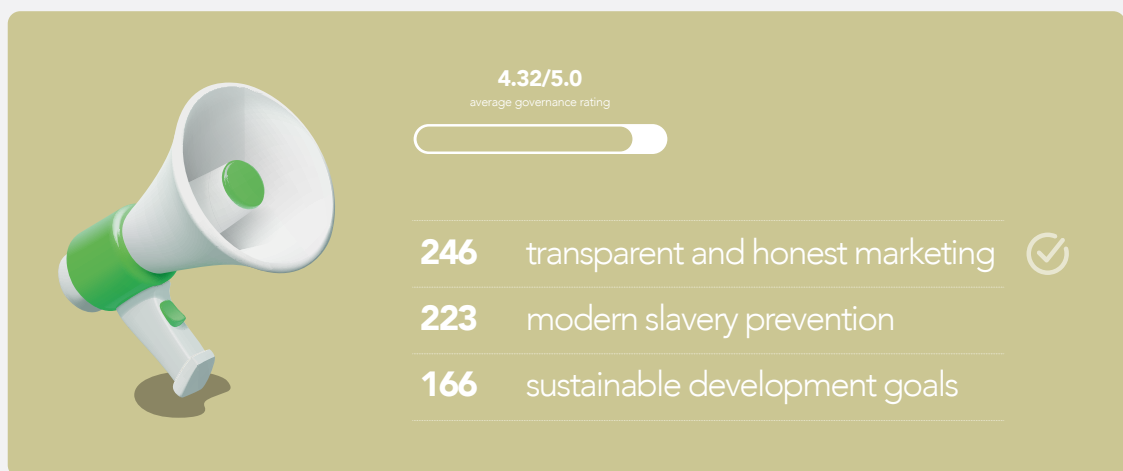understanding the priorities of today's event attendees

attendees are calling on the industry to go beyond mere claims and green marketing by demonstrating clear, measurable outcomes from environmental initiatives. Though progress has begun, one respondent's comment underscores the room for improvement: "Even if sustainability is trending, I won't stay in a hotel where staff are mistreated or where resources are wasted."

this feedback represents an opportunity for hotels and event venues to commit to genuine, impactful ecological measures while improving the communication of these efforts to gain guest trust and loyalty.

key takeaway: by implementing tangible, measurable ecological actions, the hospitality industry can show commitment to sustainability beyond mere "green" claims. Attendees seek initiatives with visible, lasting impacts, making these efforts essential for attracting eco-conscious guests.

key finding 3:
trust and transparency: building an ethical industry

4.32/5.0
average governance rating

246 transparent and honest marketing ✓

223 modern slavery prevention

**166** sustainable development goals

over a third of respondents rank **transparency and honesty** in marketing as their top priority, followed closely by practices around preventing modern slavery and anti-corruption measures. All of these are directly tied to the level of trust conveyed by industry players.

however, survey feedback suggests a gap between industry initiatives and effective communication. Respondents are keen to see more explicit, honest information on sustainability efforts, avoiding the perception of greenwashing. One respondent suggested, "A code of good practices should be established for hospitality operators."

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> $\checkmark$
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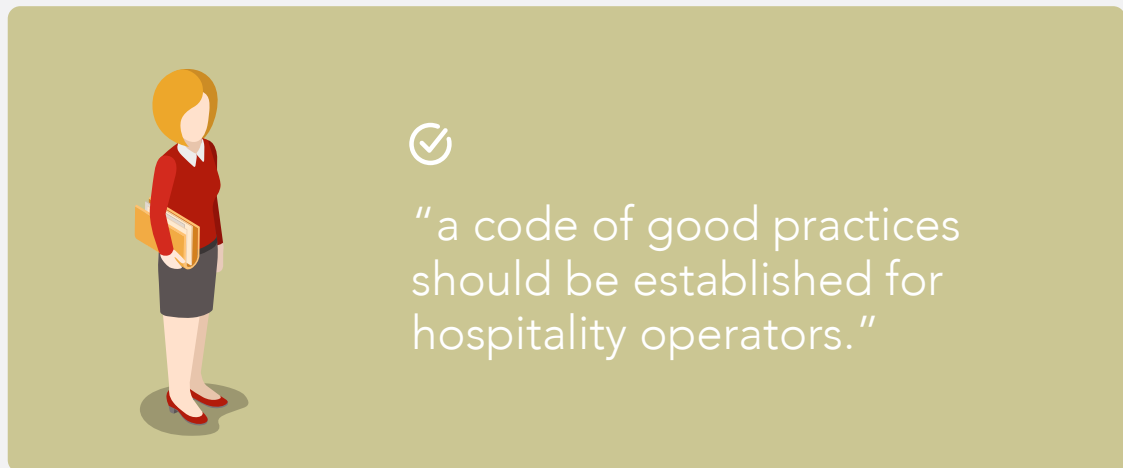
key takeaway: there is a clear need to boost the visibility, integrity and reputation of sustainability initiatives - both at an industry-wide and individual company level. Transparent, honest communication is crucial in meeting the demand for genuine sustainability. By clearly detailing their initiatives, hospitality businesses can effectively counteract scepticism and build a reputation as ethical, trusted providers.

global vision – local action: recommendations for hotels

based on these survey results, hotels and event venues are encouraged to:

- **prioritise transparency:** clearly communicate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, providing specific details about the actions taken and their measurable impact. This can be done through websites, social media, and on-site materials.
- **move beyond greenwashing:** focus on sustainability measures that have tangible and measurable outcomes. Back up claims with data to avoid scepticism around empty promises.
- **balance sustainability with affordability:** find cost-effective ways to implement sustainability initiatives without significantly increasing prices for guests.
- **enhance guest experience** by seamlessly integrating sustainability into a welcoming and comfortable environment. The core of hospitality lies in offering an inviting, restful stay without compromising on environmental responsibility.
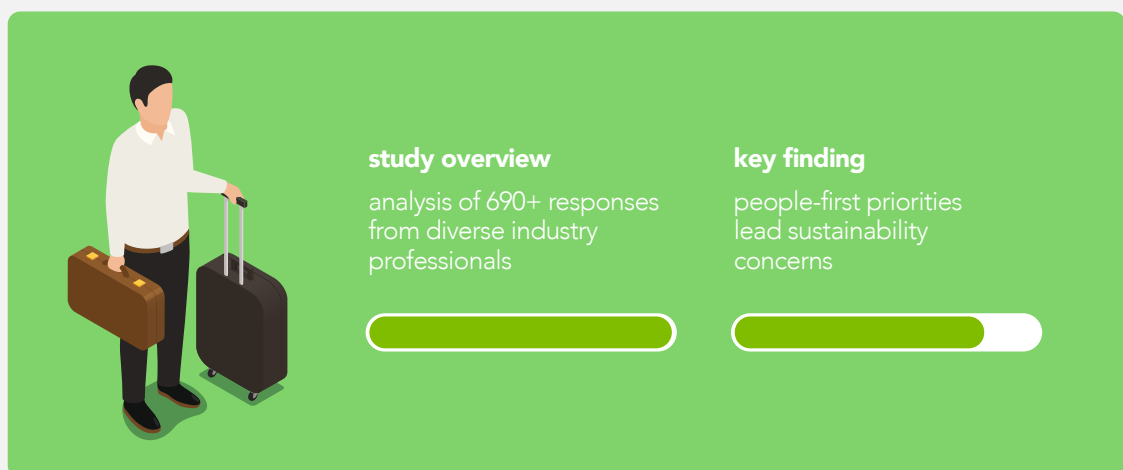
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sentiment analysis: positive yet sceptical

the sentiment analysis reveals an overall positive attitude towards sustainability initiatives, with many appreciating hotels that demonstrate genuine commitment to change. However, the survey reveals notable scepticism, particularly towards hotels that appear to prioritise marketing over action. There is a clear call to action for the industry to avoid superficial efforts and instead focus on meaningful, impactful sustainable action.

conclusion: a path forward for sustainable hospitality

this report demonstrates that sustainability, when implemented authentically, can offer significant business advantages. Attendees are no longer satisfied with superficial claims — they seek genuine, measurable practices that reflect a true commitment to people and the planet. By aligning with event attendee values, hotels and venues can improve their reputation and position themselves as industry leaders in sustainable hospitality. As the MICE and corporate travel landscape continues to evolve, embracing sustainable practices is not only an ethical choice but a strategic business decision that sets a path forward for impactful, lasting change.

study overview

analysis of 690+ responses from diverse industry professionals

key finding

people-first priorities lead sustainability concerns

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annex 1
strategic recommendations

1. operational excellence

priority implementation areas:
- employee welfare programmes (response to 4.47/5 rating)
  - implement transparent wage policies
  - establish clear career progression paths and comprehensive training programmes
  - create inclusive workplace environments and community engagement initiatives
- resource management (based on 33% priority ranking)
  - deploy smart energy monitoring systems
  - install water conservation technology
  - implement waste reduction programmes with measurable targets

2. communication strategy

evidence-based approach:
- transparency metrics
  - publish quarterly sustainability reports
  - share specific, measurable outcomes
  - document progress against stated goals
- stakeholder engagement
  - regular updates on initiatives (addressing 36% priority for transparent marketing)
  - clear communication of environmental impacts
  - employee and guest feedback integration

3. investment
- infrastructure and resource management
  - invest in renewable energy infrastructure
  - develop and implement circular economy practices

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annex 2
voice of the customer analysis

1. core service quality vs. sustainability

"hotel should provide quiet comfortable rooms and never forget that its role is to provide a good night's sleep"
"please think about the reason why a guest is at your hotel. Business or vacation."

key insight:
balance between sustainability initiatives and core hospitality services is crucial.

2. price sensitivity

"any business should value the practices described and it should be a given that they are applied in proportion to the financial resources of the business. These practices should never be an excuse to make guests pay more."
"all measurements should keep hotels affordable as well."

key insight
sustainability initiatives should not significantly impact pricing.

3. authenticity in sustainability

"even if sustainability is trending, I won't stay in a hotel where staff are mistreated or where resources are wasted."
"I would appreciate a hotel that, even if it is not connected to green energy… actually sorts its waste efficiently, for example, and has a programme to avoid food waste."

key insight:
preference for practical, visible sustainability actions over marketing claims.

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4. local integration

"the best thing for a hotel to do is to be local, to advise where to go and how to behave in a particular place. Reducing waste, which is huge in the hotel business, is also very important."
"PLEASE, prioritise real small actions, good impact in your community, support entrepreneurship and local businesses."

key insight
strong emphasis on local community integration and practical environmental actions.

5. implementation challenges

"a code of good practice for the hospitality industry should be established for operators to follow."
"it's a great survey, but could be challenged by the local regulations depending on where the hotel / hotels are located."

key insight
need for standardised industry practices while considering local context.

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annex 3
the methodology employed in the survey on sustainable hospitality practices

a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining rating and ranking questions to provide a comprehensive understanding of participant perspectives.

rating questions
these questions utilised a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Not at all important") to 5 ("Extremely important"). This scale allowed respondents to quantify their perceived importance of various sustainable practices across three key areas: governance, environmental responsibility, and social responsibility. This approach facilitated a quantitative analysis of the relative importance assigned to different sustainability initiatives.

ranking questions
to further explore respondent priorities, ranking questions were incorporated. These questions prompted participants to rank specific considerations within each of the three key areas. For instance, within environmental responsibility, respondents ranked the importance of carbon footprint measurements, energy-saving initiatives, water-saving initiatives, waste management initiatives, and sustainable sourcing policies. This ranking exercise provided valuable insights into the relative prioritization of different sustainability efforts.

survey scope and open-ended feedback
the survey encompassed a broad range of sustainability practices, with over 20 individual questions. This comprehensive approach aimed to capture a holistic view of attendees' priorities when it comes to sustainable hospitality. Recognising that pre-defined questions may not capture all relevant perspectives, an open-ended question concluded the survey. This allowed respondents to provide additional comments and insights, enriching the qualitative data collected and offering a deeper understanding of individual viewpoints and overall sentiments.

response rate and implications
the survey achieved a robust response rate with nearly 700 completed questionnaires. This high level of participation strengthens the reliability and generalisability of the findings, providing a solid foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions about event attendees' perspectives on sustainable hospitality practices.