

## The Role of Intrapreneurship and Environmental Collaboration in Fostering Green Innovation Adoption in the Hotel Industry in Bangkok

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บทบาทของผู้ประกอบการภายในและความร่วมมือด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมในการผลักดันการสร้างนวัตกรรมสีเขียวในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร

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### Abstract

The primary aim of the study is to understand the roles of intrapreneurship and environmental collaboration in fostering green innovation adoption in the hotel industry in Bangkok through semi-structured interviews. Fifteen interviews were conducted with a group of people from academic institutes and hotels.

The findings first revealed that intrapreneurship is a key driver of green innovation adoption through various aspects such as the development of new business strategies and the incorporation of new technologies in product design, service processes, and communications. Also, collaboration with suppliers and customers enhances hotels' adoption of green innovation to cope with environmental issues from different perspectives. The results of this study provided updated empirical evidence to enrich the existing literature. Consequently, recommendations are provided from a practical perspective.

**Keywords :** intrapreneurship, environmental collaboration, green innovation adoption (GIA)

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อให้เข้าใจบทบาทของผู้ประกอบการภายในกับความร่วมมือด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมในการผลักดันให้เกิดนวัตกรรมสีเขียวในอุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร เป็นการศึกษาวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยแบ่งกระบวนการสัมภาษณ์งานวิจัยแบบกึ่งโครงสร้างจำนวน 15 คน ดังนี้จากกลุ่มผู้เชี่ยวชาญวิชาการด้านธุรกิจการโรงแรมและท่องเที่ยวจากสถาบันการศึกษาต่าง ๆ 5 คน และกลุ่มพนักงานผู้ปฏิบัติงานในโรงแรมในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร 10 คน จากจำนวน 275 โรงแรม โดยทำการสุ่มเลือกโรงแรมตามพื้นที่ต่าง ๆ ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร และทำการสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกโดยใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์เป็นเครื่องมืองานวิจัย

ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่า บทบาทภาวะผู้ประกอบการเป็นกุญแจสำคัญที่นำไปสู่การสร้างนวัตกรรมสีเขียวให้เกิดขึ้นภายในองค์กรผ่านกระบวนการต่าง ๆ เช่น กลยุทธ์การพัฒนาธุรกิจใหม่ การพัฒนาเทคโนโลยีใหม่ในการออกแบบผลิตภัณฑ์และกระบวนการด้านบริการใหม่ ตลอดจนความร่วมมือกันระหว่างผู้ค้าส่งและลูกค้าซึ่งเป็นปัจจัยที่จะส่งเสริมให้เกิดนวัตกรรมสีเขียวให้เกิดขึ้นภายในโรงแรมในแง่มุมต่าง ๆ เพื่อตอบสนองให้เกิดการรักษาสิ่งแวดล้อม นอกจากนี้การศึกษานี้ยังได้แสดงผลการวิจัยที่สอดคล้องกับทฤษฎีและหลักฐานการปฏิบัติที่แท้จริงในโรงแรมต่าง ๆ ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร

**คำสำคัญ :** ผู้ประกอบการภายใน ความร่วมมือด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม การสร้างนวัตกรรมสีเขียว

### Introduction

Green innovation has been apparent in recent years to cope with the negative consequences of human actions that have damaged the quality of the earth's ecosystem (Porter & Van der Linde, 1995). Green innovation is a method of incorporating environmental protection into design, process, and production, which has stimulated and applied many new ideas and novel technologies, thereby improving the quality of the ecological system. (Hart, 2005; Mathushan & Pushpanathan, 2020). Thus, green innovation has increasingly become critical to the firm's growth (e.g. improving the corporate image) (Mathushan & Pushpanathan, 2020), maintaining the firm's long-term development effectively (OECD, 2010; Gall & Thompson, 2015; Foster & Green, 2000) and to the country's prosperity (e.g. promoting national economic growth) (Aboelmaged, 2018). Green innovation is divided into two types, which are green product innovation and green process innovation (Chen et al., 2006), applying technological innovation in "energy saving, pollution-prevention, recycling, green product designs, and corporate environmental management" (Mathushan & Pushpanathan, 2020). Since green innovation has attracted the attention of various industries, we give rise to a necessity to understand the role of green innovation in the hotel industry in Thailand particularly.

Thailand has been ranked as one of the most popular destinations for global travelers in the world consistently, with a countless influx of tourists (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012), which has resulted in an increase in hotels. This industry has become a major contributor to environmental problems such as an increase in consumption of water, electricity, energy, raw materials, and recycled waste as well as emissions (Porter & van der Linde, 1995). For this reason, the soaring demand for green innovation has manifested a need to reduce the negative impact on the environment, limiting human consumption cycles and minimizing waste and other unnecessary inputs (McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Chan & Hsu, 2016). Thus, the industry and relevant stakeholders are very eager to respond to the above issues (Chan & Hsu, 2016). As a result, the industry tends to be greener by adopting green concepts and innovative practices in order to sustain the industry's growth. (Chan & Hsu, 2016). It should be noted that the development and deployment of different forms of green innovation will promote positive changes in hotels and green innovation. Applying new technologies in customer service; implementing energy-saving and water-saving measures; actively using various automatic induction lighting and control systems; and advocating waste reduction activities to improve the hotel industry's competitive advantage (McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Schiederig et al., 2012; Chan & Hsu, 2016). Therefore, there is no doubt that the existing structure of the hotel industry needs to be redesigned to minimize the environmental impact on the local community where it operates while maximizing profitability in a green approach (Jaiswal, 2012). Correspondingly, the Thai Hotels Association (THA) has addressed the necessity to adopt green operations for more than twenty years (Lai et al., 2003). The Green Leaf Environmental Standard and the Thai government have advocated the significance of implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the integration of ISO 14001 (environment) certification and ISO 9001 (quality) certification (Green Leaf Foundation, 2020) in the industry.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Consequently, it is our purpose to understand the hotel industry's response to the adoption of green innovation from a management perspective, in which the issues of intrapreneurship and environmental collaboration are addressed. Hence, the objectives of this research are formed as follows:

**Objective 1 :** To reveal the role of intrapreneurship in influencing green innovation adoption by the hotel industry

**Objective 2 :** To reveal how suppliers and consumers cooperate to promote the adoption of green innovation by the hotel industry from an environmental protection perspective

**Objective 3 :** To comprehend the role of intrapreneurship in stimulating cooperation between suppliers and consumers in the context of environmental protection

## Literature Review

### The Role of Intrapreneurship

Intrapreneurship refers to the employees who serve the organization with entrepreneurial spirit and are highly aware of the issues that are critical to the company's success (Souder, 1981; Schollhammer, 1982; Kanter, 1984; Hornsby et al., 1993; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2001; Intarajinda et al., 2011). This type of employee supports the organization in various ways, such as contributing new business ideas that represent new business opportunities and proposing innovative practices that attempt to improve the firm's production efficiency and revenue generation (Zahra & Covin, 1995; Sharma & Chrisman, 1999; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2004). They are highly responsible in the workplace and focus on intrinsically motivated projects (Sharma & Chrisman, 1999).

In the context of the Thai business sector, it appreciates the creation of an environmentally friendly working environment through innovative practices (e.g. technology, design, etc.) that benefit either internal employees or external partners. This has mirrored a tendency to promote the role of intrapreneurship when envisioning the future development of the organization. The purpose of promoting intrapreneurship is to emphasize entrepreneurial employees in the organization who aim to develop the organization into a sustainable orientation (Zahra & Covin, 1995; Atack, 1999; Ewing & Sarigollu, 2000), thereby enhancing the company's competitive advantages through dynamic practices from environmental, social, and corporate perspectives (Kemp et al., 1998).

This entrepreneurial behavior in the hotel industry, therefore, can be manifested by implementing new business strategies (Rohracher, 2001) and adapting to the emergence of green innovation (Molina et al., 2007). Even if existing studies are insufficient to understand intrapreneurship in the contemporary business environment (Gundogdu, 2012), especially in the hotel industry, its role in accelerating the adoption of green innovation should not be overlooked. In response to this trend, four dimensions are proposed to better understand intrapreneurship, namely: 1) new business venturing; 2) product/service innovativeness; 3) process/technology innovativeness; and 4) self-renewal (Souder, 1981; Covin & Slevin, 1991; Knight, 1997; Miles & Covin, 2002; Antoncic & Antoncic, 2011).

New business venturing refers to “entering new business by the existing organization without forming new organizational entities” (Zahra, 1993). Product/service innovativeness is defined as “the development or enhancement of products and services, as well as administrative techniques and technologies for performing organizational functions” (Miles & Covin, 2002). As for process innovativeness, it is indicated as “the process/technology innovativeness dimension refers to innovations in production processes, procedures, and techniques, as well as in technologies” (Knight, 1997). Self-renewal refers to “the self-renewal dimension reflects the transformation of organizations through a renewal of the key ideas on which they are built” (Knight, 1997). Thus, an in-depth study of the four dimensions will reveal how intrapreneurship operates to benefit the development of an organization. It will also reveal how employees are motivated to adopt the practices and collaborate with various stakeholders to address environmental, societal, and economic challenges (Hornsby et al., 1993).

#### **Environmental Collaboration**

Collaboration is defined as establishing partnerships with stakeholder groups and working with them to improve the company’s reputation and achieve expected performance (Molina & Callahan, 2009). From an environmental perspective, Thai enterprises believe that establishing and maintaining partnerships with internal and external parties is an effective way to cope with environmental challenges (Orsato, 2006). This can be achieved by reaching an agreement to participate in specific activities to meet industry sustainability requirements or integrating green concepts into business models to make green practices more dynamic and holistic, thereby alleviating or even solving ecological challenges (Carter et al., 2000). As far as the Thai hotel industry is concerned, with the rapid increase in the number of tourists, environmental protection is needed urgently. This shows that not only the Thai government and the hotel itself but also tourists call for urgent action to reduce environmental damage and meet certain standards of environmental protection qualification (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Zhu et al., 2008).

In the present study, we focus on the role of the hotel in strengthening environmental practices in cooperation with customers and suppliers. Specifically, the green innovation practices adopted by hotels in response to environmental challenges deserve our attention. It is interesting that Jenkins & Karanikola (2014) studied how environmental collaboration affects a firm’s performance from the perspectives of customers and suppliers. It addresses the importance of technological integration with suppliers and customers, which triggers the industry’s engagement in green practice. Thus, this finding stimulates us to understand how collaborations with suppliers and customers’ work can promote the adoption of green innovation in Thai hotels.

## Methods

The focus of this study is to understand how intrapreneurship and environmental collaboration drive the adoption of green innovation in hotels (e.g. through product, process, or service). For this purpose, a qualitative methodology was employed through semi-structured interviews conducted from February to March 2021 in Bangkok to obtain rich information and deep understanding about our study. Also, snowball sampling and convenient sampling techniques were applied to approach to the interviewees. More importantly, the saturation technique was applied when conducting interviews, which means that the interview would stop when similar feedback was received (Vachon & Klassen, 2006; Burmeister & Aitken, 2012).

The interview is aimed at academic institutions and hotels, which could provide different scenarios of how hotels adopt green innovation from the perspective of academicians and practitioners. An academic group was encouraged to share information about how green innovation was adopted by Thai hotels and what could be done to facilitate the adoption of green innovation from an academic perspective. The hotel group was encouraged to articulate how different hotel divisions perceive and adopt green innovation. Also, challenges and potential solutions would be discussed accordingly. Finally, we obtained information from 15 interviewees, including 5 interviewees from academic institutions specializing in hospitality and tourism management and 10 interviewees from the hotel sector, who are employees in the Bangkok area. During the interview, sound recording was applied with the approval of the interviewees. More importantly, in order to assure the reliability of the interview, the interviewer repeated the interview transcript after the interview to confirm that the interviewees' information was accurately conveyed, and any ambiguity in the conversation would be classified in real-time. In terms of data analysis, content analysis was employed, and coding was done systematically.

## Results

This section provides important issues revealing how intrapreneurship and environmental collaboration foster hotels' green innovation adoption. The data was categorized into various themes, which are elucidated as follows:

### **Objective 1 : Intrapreneurship Triggering Green Innovation Adoption**

The information provided by interviewees is grouped into 4 themes: new business, product/service innovativeness, process innovativeness, and self-renewal.

### 1.1 New Business

Creating new business practices is important for hotels to keep up with trends because being green has become a mainstream topic among industry participants the public, and consumer groups.

- **Hyatt Regency Bangkok Hotel – Informant 1** : My hotel is in the Sukhumvit area, in the center of Bangkok. For the purpose of environmental protection, our business has been changing to meet the standards required by ISO (Sustainable Business). We formulate new green strategies to capture global environmental trends. We design new seminars and wedding rooms by using ecosystems and new technologies, including digital boards, digital backgrounds, and online–digital conferences. This has saved energy consumption and operation costs.

- **Academician, Assumption University – Informant 1** : Most hotels' businesses have paid attention to the environmental issue since people have a high awareness and strong belief in sustainable development. Therefore, hotels in Thailand try to adjust their business models and even design new business models. For example, hotels usually reduce the use of plastic and paper, and some use local resources to design health care packages.

### 1.2 Product/Service Innovativeness

The hotels tend to establish a new mechanism to implement or strengthen their business activities to satisfy customers while fulfilling the needs of environmental protection.

- **Novotel Hotel & Resort Siam Square – Informant 1** : We always control and reduce waste in the food and beverage division, such as reducing raw material waste, water, and energy supply; reducing plastic packaging; using local natural products such as Thai herbs for food and beverage preparation; and health spa.

- **Academician, Bangkok University – Informant 1** : Product and service innovation uses new technology and networking telecommunications to support hotel facilities. For example, some hotels have their own mobile applications, through which customers can access them easily and express their opinions and comments as well. The hotels can respond to those voices in a timely manner to satisfy customers. This means that hotels are changing to serve customers to create a promising business future.

### 1.3 Process Innovativeness

The hotels have promoted the use of innovative practices such as social media and cloud computing in their service processes in order to improve the efficiency of their communication, operations, and services.

- **Mövenpick Resort & Spa Hotel – Informant 1** : In contrast to the past, our hotel currently uses social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, and Line) extensively in the communication process to reach out to the market and cultivate potential customers.

- **Academician, College of Hospitality Industry Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat – Informant 1** : Effectively promoting hotel operations requires process innovation. For example, through the transfer of know-how from different branches, the hotel chain will operate in accordance with the same standards and develop in the same direction.

#### 1.4 Self-renewal

The hotels are moving in a green direction and emphasize the need for transformation through redesigning business models, knowledge transfer, and sharing activities.

- **The Athenee Hotel – Informant 1** : We have established our teamwork in different departments to create new ideas regarding sustainable development, solve the problems and adjust our existing practices, including the use of green products in guest rooms, local food delivery, alliances with the local community, and the promotion of local products, etc.

- **Academician, Dusit Thani College – Informant 1** : Most hotels in Thailand are trying to develop into green hotels through the 3R model (reduce, recycle, and reuse) and promote environmentally friendly practices. In addition, the hotel renews and improves itself through the hotel's internal management and external communication based on the hotel's capabilities.

#### Objective 2 : Environmental Collaboration Triggering Green Innovation Adoption

The information collected for environmental collaboration is categorized into two groups : suppliers and customers.

##### 2.1 With Suppliers

Suppliers should work with hotels to achieve environmental goals. Without their involvement, green innovation cannot be thoroughly implemented.

- **Novotel Hotel & Resort Siam Square – Informant 1** : We have close relationships with suppliers, and we are an alliance of chain hotels. We support each other. Our suppliers are required to abide by the rules set by us to ensure that the products they provide meet environmental protection requirements. In addition, they can propose to us any new supplies or new practices, such as environmentally friendly ones. In this case, we learn from them.

- **Academician, Bangkok University – Informant 1** : To achieve this environmental goal, hotels need to contact their suppliers to obtain support throughout the operation. For example, the supply of raw materials should meet green requirements (e.g., natural grown vegetables, plastic-free packaging, natural detergent, natural fabrics, etc.); otherwise, the hotel cannot claim itself to be a green hotel.

## 2.2 With Customers

If customers are ignored, green innovation cannot be successfully adopted. Therefore, hotels need to invite customers to cooperate when implementing green innovation practices.

- **Marketing Department, Shangri-La Bangkok Hotel** – *Informant 1* : We focus on cooperating with customers to keep up with trends and needs. For example, we create new technological infrastructure to better promote the use of energy-efficient appliances, reduce waste, recycle materials and used products or facilities, etc. This has strengthened our hotel's environmental image and positive word-of-mouth. In addition, we encourage our customers to participate in environmental protection practices, such as not changing towel labels, rejecting plastic bags, using resources, etc., to protect our Chao Phraya River.

- **Academician, Assumption University** – *Informant 1* : Collaboration with customers is good practice in the hotel business. It is a process in which the hotel communicates with its customers on organizational goals (e.g., green hotel expectations, green corporate social responsibility) to achieve better changes, and customers can adapt to the hotel's environmental practices.

### Objective 3 : Intrapreneurship Facilitating Environmental Collaboration

The findings reveal the important roles of teamwork and leadership in stimulating the adoption of green innovation adoption by parties from their internal circle to external parties.

- **Novotel Hotel & Resort Siam Square** – *Informant 1* : Employees from different departments carry out sustainable development projects through brainstorming and sharing ideas. In this step, different voices are respected, and new ideas are selected to promote green practice under the guidance of the quality assurance manager.

- **Academician, Assumption University** – *Informant 1* : Green-oriented leadership and efficient teamwork are very important to promote and strengthen the hotel's green innovation practices, which can lead the entire organization and other stakeholders (such as suppliers, customers, and investors) to a green future.

## Discussions and conclusions

This research first confirmed our proposal that intrapreneurship and environmental cooperation trigger different forms of green innovation in hotels. The information provided by the academic group and the hotel group depicts the hotel's green practice scenes and innovative elements from different aspects.

From an intrapreneurship perspective, innovating business practices, new mechanisms to improve the efficiency of hotel business activities, and the necessity of redesigning business models and sharing know-how are essential for hotels to successfully adopt green innovations.

From the perspective of environmental cooperation, both groups emphasized the importance of cooperation with suppliers and customers. For example, academic groups emphasized the importance of working with customers, indicating that customers are regarded as partners. While inviting customers to cooperate, they are also exposed to environmental education. For suppliers, they should abide by the rules or standards set by the hotel to meet environmental qualifications. In this case, the supplier's behavior is shaped to be greener, which is reflected in the way they deliver goods, materials, or ingredients that require green. Therefore, without strengthening partnerships with suppliers and customers, green innovation cannot be successfully adopted.

### **Managerial Implications**

Based on our findings, we will provide the following suggestions to the hotel industry from a practical perspective. First, it is necessary to promote innovative intrapreneurship so that hotels can rebuild new business models, develop new products and services, and emphasize innovation. This can improve efficiency and generate revenue in the long run. Secondly, it is strongly recommended to establish contact and active cooperation with suppliers and customers, because both parties can support the hotel in achieving environmental goals by learning and adopting green innovation practices together. Third, organizing cross-departmental training will promote knowledge sharing and innovative practices and cultivate green thinking internally, linking employees at all levels to maintain the development of the hotel.

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