Young Vikings - Sustainability

Session #2 28/10/2025
Moderator Patrick Richards | Terraverde Sustainability

1. Sustainability in Travel and Tourism
• Patrick Richards from TerraVerde introduced the meeting, emphasizing the need for action on sustainability in the travel industry.
• He highlighted the gap between discussions on sustainability and actual actions taken by companies.
• Statistics show that only 65 out of 170 countries are meeting their COP Paris targets, and CO2 levels are at record highs.
• He discussed the economic losses attributed to climate change, which have been increasing over the years, and the importance of sustainability regulations emerging globally.
• He also noted that tourism accounts for 8-11% of global emissions and is projected to grow by 64% over the next decade which is incompatible with a net-zero goal - making it crucial to address sustainability in this sector.

2. Challenges and Opportunities in Sustainability
• Participants discussed the perception that sustainability initiatives may lead to reduced profits, with some companies hesitant to invest due to perceived costs.
• Eva Rudzite expressed that her company has not taken significant sustainability actions, citing time and resource constraints.
• Fran from XperienceSTHLM argued that while travelers may not prioritize sustainability, they expect it when they arrive at their destinations.
• Harry Söderlind from BWH Hotels shared that location and price are the primary factors for customers when choosing hotels, but emphasized that sustainability can also lead to cost savings.
• Irena from Icelandia highlighted her company's efforts to maintain a fleet of newer, less polluting vehicles, including electric buses, which have reduced operational costs over time.

3. Practical Examples of Sustainability Initiatives
• Harry mentioned a partnership with Too Good To Go to reduce food waste in hotels, allowing customers to purchase leftover food at a reduced price.
• Irena shared that Icelandia has implemented a policy to use newer buses and has transitioned to electric vehicles, resulting in lower maintenance costs and reduced emissions.
• Patrick encouraged sharing successful sustainability practices among participants to foster collaboration and improvement in the industry.

4. Future Directions and Next Steps
• Patrick called for participants to share their companies' sustainability actions over the past year and discuss barriers and successes.
• The meeting aimed to create a collaborative environment for sharing ideas and strategies to enhance sustainability in the travel industry.
• Participants were encouraged to consider how they can implement good practices and support each other in addressing sustainability challenges.

• Participants were encouraged to rate how they think their companies are performing on their sustainability goals and how involved they are personally in the process

Philip - Visit Group: 2 / 4
Irena - Icelandia: 4 / 4
Harry - BWH: 3 / 4
Julie - Bilberry: 2
Evija - Baltic Travel Group: 2 / 2
Sofie - Visit Group: 2 / 2
Simon - Scandic: 3 / 2
Tia - Helsinki Partners: 4 / 5
Eva - Osa Group: 2 / 2

Other takeaways and action

• The Young Vikings (YVs) do not believe that their companies are doing enough on sustainability. Exceptions exist mainly among hotels & NTO's – however when it comes to DMC's, transport companies and visitor attractions, (many of whom are SME's & lack resources) younger employees are looking for their employers to do much more.

• Similarly travel technology companies are lagging behind in sustainability. Opportunities for these businesses are twofold, both to control their own emissions (especially in the face of rapid ultra-high emission AI growth); as well as working to make key sustainability data more available to their customers.

• Objections to sustainability adoption commonly in use; such as, "it's less profitable and we are too busy," were challenged by other members of the group. For example Harry from BWH referenced their initiative to control food waste from breakfast buffets. This both save money and carbon emissions. A "objection handling" cheat sheet was proposed. This could help YV's to challenge preconceptions both in the workplace and in life outside. Please can YV's share the objections they encounter and Greenmatters can compile the cheat sheet.

• Many YV's stated that sustainability education should be a priority for Greenmatters to tackle. Irena highlighted Iceland Travel's work to decarbonise their transport by purchasing electric coaches. This initiative has both saved carbon and saved costs in maintenance and running expenses. Hence this delivers a strong ROI on the investment. Any further details Irena can share will be welcome.

• Given battery life electric buses are best used for short haul traffic, such as city sightseeing or airport transfers. For long distance work coach operators & DMC's should explore piloting Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) which is a "drop-in" fuel saving around 70% of emissions https://premaenergy.co.uk/what-is-hvo/#:~:text=HVO%20is%20a%20term%20used,chemical%20properties%20to%20fossil%20diesel. For Irena: though HVO is not widely available on Icelandic fuel stations, we suggest to contact Icelandic fuel distribution company, Olíudreifing, who have a database of "HVO Ready" projects.

• Fran highlighted the unfairness that her company's genuine attempts to reduce environmental impact is often devalued by (larger) businesses who employ greenwashing techniques which overstate their activities. This simply confuses customers. We believe that increasingly such practices will be exposed and EU Greenwashing regulation is being introduced to support this. However, it is an area where we can work together to build awareness among consumers & B2B clients around the right questions to ask.

• It would be interesting to get more details around Evija's observation that "Green Key" hotels scored lower ratings than others. Sustainability and customer quality should go hand in hand and it is important to understand where this might not happen.

• Businesses should look to bring together their sustainability initiatives into a strategy. This can be very simple at first. A company carbon measurement is highly effective in bringing a foundation to this.