ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, & GOVERNANCE REPORTING IN TRAVEL & TOURISM:

2. OUTLOOK & REPORTING TRENDS
INTRODUCTION

SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING IS CONSTANTLY EVOLVING AND SHIFTING. THIS YEAR’S FIVE KEY TRENDS ARE DISCUSSED BELOW.

TREND 1: GOVERNMENT AND STOCK EXCHANGES
Reporting is becoming mandated by governments and stock exchanges. Overall sustainability reporting is becoming more mandated across the globe, and as such the information will become more subject to auditing and verification.

TREND 2: REFINING TOPICAL COMPANY REPORTS
The topics companies report on are becoming more refined, prescriptive, and streamlined. The mandates and evolution of reporting leads to the need for more robust disclosures on key topics that themselves are becoming more standardised and streamlined.

TREND 3: EVOLUTION OF REPORT FORMATS
While the type of information reported is becoming more standardised, companies are evolving the report formats and content to match audiences. Companies are starting to improve the delivery of report content, making it more engaging and bifurcating the compliance-based disclosure and the unique storytelling.

TREND 4: SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING, TACKLING COMMON CHALLENGES
Sustainability reporting is no longer just about the topics reported, but about how the organisation is tackling common challenges with common aims. Reporting has moved from a focus on applying reporting concepts to demonstrate measurable progress in advancing environmental and social performance as well as addressing common challenges, as characterised by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, sustainability reporting is increasingly contextualised around progress and partnerships to address global challenges.

TREND 5: WIDENING THE GAP BETWEEN LEADERS
The gap is widening between leaders and laggards in reporting. Finally, the movement toward science-based targets and other bold goals and commitments, coupled with the emergence of more compelling and sophisticated reporting methods, is also widening the gap between sustainability reporting leaders and laggards.
1 GOVERNMENT AND STOCK EXCHANGES

Reporting is becoming mandated by governments and stock exchanges.

Sustainability reporting originally emerged as a voluntary exercise, driven by stakeholder pressure. The industry is seeing a gradual shift toward reporting as being defined, requested, and even mandated through governments and market regulators (stock exchanges), which generally implies auditing and verification of the information.

 Approximately 180 laws and regulatory standards in 45 countries call for some aspect of sustainability reporting, and 19 members of the G20 had at least one regulation in place requiring that companies disclose at least some social and/or environmental metrics. Additionally, 12 stock exchanges require aspects of environmental and social reporting for at least some of their listed companies, with 7 of those exchanges including those in Brazil, Malaysia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, requiring such reporting for all listed companies. Fifteen of the exchanges provide formal guidance on sustainability reporting to listed companies.

The EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive is the most significant sustainability reporting mandate to date.

Within the EU, the Council of the European Union updated its directive for the disclosure of non-financial and diversity information for corporate transparency and accountability in 2014 (2014/95/EU), and this is being enacted across EU membership at present. The legislation requires public interest entities (PIEs) with more than 500 employees to annually report on environmental, social, and employee-related material topics and include disclosures regarding the companies’ policies, risks, and performance for the reported topics. Companies that do not have policies in place would have to explain why they do not have these [policies].

The scope of PIEs within the EU authority includes listed companies, banks, insurance undertakings, and any additional companies identified by Member States. Each of the 28 Members can define the scope of the companies that must disclose. EU Member States have the ability to exempt PIEs from disclosing, if the required information was provided in a separate report.

The directive provides companies with the flexibility to also use a multitude of international, European, or national reference frameworks including the United National Global Compact (UNGC), ISO 26000, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, among others. This legislation affects more than 6,000 companies within the EU, and has vastly expanded the prevalence of sustainability reporting.

Currently, approximately 2,500 EU companies currently report on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance on a regular basis. Under this directive, EU members were required to transpose the new rules into national law by January 1, 2017. Companies defined by the Companies Act 2016 are required to report for the fiscal year. The non-financial statement must include information for understanding the company's development, performance, and position, in January 1, 2017. Companies subject to the legislation had to begin reporting under the new directive as of their financial year 2017.

The UK’s implementation of the EU Non-Financial Reporting Directive through the Companies, Partnerships and Groups (Accounts and Non-financial Reporting) Regulations 2016 demonstrates the upward trend of mandatory reporting. Beginning January 1, 2017, companies defined by the Companies Act 2016 are required to report for the fiscal year. The non-financial statement must include information for understanding the company’s development, performance, and position. In addition to its activity pertaining to the environment, company employees, social issues, and human rights, anti-corruption, and anti-bribery at a minimum. The mandatory regulation also applies to parent companies where the aggregate number of employees for the group is greater than 500. The disclosure requirements must only be fulfilled once if the parent company level; each subsidiary is not required to report given the financial year of the parent and subsidiary end on the same date and the parent company’s disclosure includes the undertaking of the subsidiary.

Table 1: ‘Report or Explain’ Topics Covered in the EU Directive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>SPECIFIC CONTENT INCLUDED IN THE DIRECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Matters</td>
<td>• Current and foreseeable environmental impacts  &lt;br&gt; • Health and safety impacts, as appropriate  &lt;br&gt; • Use of renewable energy and/or non-renewable energy  &lt;br&gt; • Greenhouse gas emissions  &lt;br&gt; • Water use  &lt;br&gt; • Air pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Employee Aspects</td>
<td>• Actions taken to ensure gender equality  &lt;br&gt; • Implementation of fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO)  &lt;br&gt; • Working conditions  &lt;br&gt; • Social dialogue  &lt;br&gt; • Respect for the right of workers to be informed and consulted  &lt;br&gt; • Respect for trade union rights  &lt;br&gt; • Health and safety at work  &lt;br&gt; • Dialogue with local communities  &lt;br&gt; • Actions taken to ensure the protection and development of those communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for Human Rights</td>
<td>• Information on the prevention of human rights abuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Corruption and Bribery Issues</td>
<td>• Information on instruments in place to fight corruption and bribery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in Board of Directors</td>
<td>• Disclosure of diversity policies in relation to the administrative, management, and supervisory bodies concerning aspects such as age, gender, educational, and professional backgrounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The legislation requires public interest entities (PIEs) with more than 500 employees to annually report on environmental, social, and employee-related material topics and include disclosures regarding the companies’ policies, risks, and performance for the reported topics. Companies that do not have policies in place would have to explain why they do not have these [policies].

1 See https://www.ceres.org/investor-network/ncs/sustainable-stock-exchanges
4 Large European Companies Now Required to Provide Mandatory Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Disclosure – http://www.davispolk.com/briefing/corporategovernance/ non-financial_reporting/index_en.htm
6 STOs: www.google.com/search?q=STOs+public+interest+entities
7 https://www.ceres.org/investor-network/ncs/sustainable-stock-exchanges
Mandated reporting is occurring outside the EU as well. The following table provides an overview of current and/or emerging sustainability reporting mandates in Asia, Africa, and North America.

**Table 2: Mandated Reporting Outside of the European Union**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>REPORTING MANDATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Effective 1 January 2016, The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong (SEHK) requires all listed companies to comply with the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Reporting Guide, or provide public reasoning as to why the company does not comply. Additionally, beginning on 1 January 2017 the mandatory reporting for key performance indicators (KPI) will also phase in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>The Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand mandates sustainability reporting for all listed companies. Companies must disclose their corporate social responsibility (CSR) operation on form 56-1 and their annual report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) mandates listed companies to submit Business Responsibility Reports, which are to include Social, Environmental, and Economic performance. In addition, companies must submit Compliance Reports and a corporate governance report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>The Indonesian government requires listed companies to report on effects of the company’s activities on society and the environment, or provide reasoning for not disclosing the information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>The Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) requires listed companies to annually report the extent of their compliance with the King Code, including sustainability and integrated reporting. Companies that fail to comply must submit reasoning as to why they refuse to report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Bursa Malaysia issued amendments to the Main Market Listing Requirements relating to sustainability requirements in annual reports taking effect on a staggered basis over a period of 3 financial years, starting from 31 December 2016 to 31 December 2018. Under these amendments, listed companies are required to disclose a narrative statement of the management of material environmental, economic, and social risks and opportunities in annual reports.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REGULATED DISCLOSURE MAY RESULT IN HAVING ESG DATA VERIFIED OR ASSURED.

Once mandated, sustainability data will become reported alongside financial data. In the meantime, market pressures continue to increase demand for ESG data to be assured. The assurance process of a report includes a review of sustainability management processes and final disclosures, with the overarching goal of increasing accuracy and reliability of information, while also meeting stakeholder concerns. Data verification is the process of checking accuracy, specifically relating to environmental data. KPMG found that 62% of companies that report on carbon emissions invest in third-party assurance of their data. Assurance is also evaluated as part of the CDP Climate Change scoring process.

As part of the verification process, an accredited third-party reviews both how the data was collected and what calculations were used. As an outcome of the verification process, the third party provides a “level of assurance” – such as limited, moderate, reasonable, or high – based on the standard used to verify the data. For carbon emissions data, leading verification standards include ISO 14064-3, AA 1000, and ASAE 3000. There is a need for better and more accurate reporting, and the verification process has an important role to play. A study conducted by Vienna University of Economics and the Business Institute for Human Resources Management analysed labour and human rights indicators from the GRI framework. Of the 131 companies analysed from Forbes 250, only 11% of all companies that claim to report on labour issues have indicators that support their claims.

For human rights indicators, only 20% of 62% of companies that claim to report the actual report. Another study conducted by Banarra, an Australian sustainability consultancy, also conducted a similar analysis of ten Australian companies, and reported similar results to the Viennese study. In 2011, Leeds University and Brunel School of Management conducted a study of over 4,000 sustainability reports, where the data being reported within these reports was thoroughly examined.

The study revealed “unsubstantiated claims, gaps in data and inaccurate figures” Examples include an energy company reporting carbon emissions equivalent to four times the planet’s entire carbon footprint; an auto company reporting more waste generated at their facility than exists on the planet; and parent and subsidiary companies not reporting on their most material environmental topics and data because they assume the other will claim and report it.

**Singapore**

The Singapore Exchange (SGX) implemented mandatory sustainability reporting for all listed companies on a ‘comply or explain’ basis, to take effect from 2017 for reporting in 2018. The report must include the company’s sustainability actions, identify environmental, social, and governance factors that affect business strategies, explain practices and performance, and set targets.

**Taiwan**

The Taiwan Stock Exchange Corporation (TWSE) implemented mandatory corporate social responsibilities reporting according to GRI G4 guidelines annually beginning in 2015.

**United States**

Released in December 2016, SASB’s first annual State of Disclosure Report aims to better address material sustainability factors in SEC filings. According to the report, 81 percent of analysed disclosures indicate some level of disclosures in SEC filings. The report indicates the need for companies to not only place reporting in SEC filings, but report using tailored language. At present, the SEC or other US regulators do not mandate sustainability reporting as outlined by SASB.
OUTLOOK ON REPORTING TRENDS
ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & GOVERNANCE REPORTING IN TRAVEL & TOURISM

REGULATED DISCLOSURE MAY BE SET AT CERTAIN THRESHOLDS OF SCALE AND MAY NOT AFFECT MOST TRAVEL & TOURISM COMPANIES.

This is most obvious when a country’s requirement originates from the stock exchange, and thus does not apply to those companies not publicly traded or seeking listing on exchange. Other country reporting schemes may have more comprehensive coverage of ESG topics but will set thresholds of income to determine which companies are required to report.

Furthermore, some government-regulated disclosure may have certain thresholds for size or beneficial ownership, excluding Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) or those without public (state) ownership. The proposed EU legislation is an example, with a threshold of 500 employees (the same employee threshold as France’s Grenelle Act).

As the majority of tourism businesses are SMEs, they will not be subject to the same stringency or breadth of disclosure; however, the principles of reporting will still materialise, and some initiatives carry provisions and guidance for SMEs. Likewise, as many SMEs form part of the supply chain of larger tourism businesses, they will be engaged to address key topics when responding to supplier evaluation processes of larger companies. However, when examining these trends, Travel & Tourism companies should be cautious, as much of the bell-sounding itself is done by the sustainability reporting community, which itself stands to benefit from the buzz.

The final format and framework used for disclosure requirements should not be the immediate concern of listed Travel & Tourism companies, which can take preliminary steps to prepare for sustainability reporting that will ultimately be necessary regardless of the format or medium for sustainability reporting (see section 3 for further guidance).

2 REFINING TOPICAL COMPANY REPORTS

The topics companies report on are becoming more refined, prescriptive, and streamlined. As the practice of sustainability reporting matures, reporting frameworks, guidelines, and standards are becoming more specific, so that industries will hone in on the most material topics. The concept of materiality has become prevalent across leading sustainability reporting frameworks, including GRI, SASB, and CDP. GRI sets forth a recommended procedure wherein organisations assess which topics are most material as part of the sustainability report development process21.

Companies also consider topics and indicators covered in available GRI sector supplements.

SASB represents an important evolution where sector-based materiality assessments would inform sustainability reporting in financial filings.

For example, in previous iterations of GRI guidelines, sector supplements had been developed for Airport Operators, Construction and Real Estate, and Event Organisers22. For Airport Operators, additional topics include Business Continuity and Emergency Preparedness, Noise, Service Quality, and Provision of Services or Facilities for Persons with Special Needs23. For Event Organisers, additional topics include Food and Beverage, Soft and Hard Legacies, and Inclusivity. Additional indicators and disclosures include (i) post-event initiatives, outcomes, and long-term impacts, (ii) types of impacts of initiatives to create a socially inclusive event and an accessible environment, and (iii) percentage of food and beverages that meet the organiser’s policies or local, national, or international standards24.

SASB utilises a materiality map wherein more than 40 sustainability issues are analysed in the context of the industries in its Sustainability Industry Classification System (SICS)25, which maps to the Bloomberg Industry Classification System (BICS)26. SASB has identified ten thematic sectors: Health Care, Financials, Technology & Communication, Non-Renewable Resources, Transportation, Services, Resource Transformation, Consumption, Renewable Resources & Alternative Energy, and Infrastructure27. For each thematic sector, SASB Industry Working Groups have been established covering a set of industries within the sector. Travel & Tourism is largely grouped within the Services sector. Airlines are grouped within the Transportation sector.

21 Note that the GRI defines materiality as “the threshold at which Aspects become sufficiently important that they should be reported. Beyond this threshold, not all material Aspects are of equal importance and the emphasis within a report should reflect the relative priority of these material Aspects.” (Part 2 of G4 Implementation Manual, pp. 11)
23 https://www.globalreporting.org/resourcelibrary/GRI-G4-Airport-Operators-Sector-Disclosures.pdf
25 www.sasb.org/materiality/determining-materiality/
26 www.sasb.org/industryclassification/sics/
27 www.sasb.org/industryclassification/sics/
CDP IS ALSO EVOLVING TO FURTHER EMPHASISE MATERIALITY AND MAY DEVELOP SECTOR-BASED REPORTING.

The concepts behind materiality have been embedded within the CDP information requests for several years, as companies have to report on prioritisation process and select from a series of potential risks and opportunities to describe. The CDP information requests now include more prescriptive dropdown menus to encourage companies to explicitly describe the degree of materiality for energy, water, and climate change to the organisation. The CDP also have modules for further information requests now include more prescriptive dropdown menus to encourage companies to explicitly describe. The CDP

OUTLOOK ON REPORTING TRENDS

Additionally, GRI has transitioned from guidelines to standards, creating the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), which may assist in the aggregation of emerging sector-based reporting standards.

Announced in 2014, the GSSB will have a separate governance structure to GRI and be tasked with “developing and approving the [GRI’s] Sustainability Reporting Standards.” With the advent of SASB and more detailed sector-based disclosures, GRI’s leadership has stated that “its [the GRI’s] role to ensure that there is cohesiveness in the marketplace with standards around the world.” In 2016, the new GRI Standards were announced with active 2017 working groups to update Water, Occupational Health & Safety Standards, Economic Performance, Human Rights, and Waste in 2018 and beyond.

Supply chain reporting is also becoming more prescriptive.

The supply chain has always been part of a company’s sustainability reporting and strategies; however, in recent years, a greater emphasis on supply chain responsibility has emerged – driven in part by GRI’s addition to deeper supply chain disclosures. As part of the GRI process, organisations have to assess whether these aspects are material to them or their stakeholders, and suppliers are often considered to be key stakeholders.

CDP is an important lever through its Climate, Water, and Forestry programmes. CDP works with large corporate purchasers to request supplier data (for both public and privately held companies) through its CDP Climate programmes. Supply chain disclosures are prevalent across all three CDP questionnaires: Climate Change, Water, and Forests. CDP Forests is uniquely supply chain driven, as it focuses on ‘commodity-driven deforestation’ – notably the purchases of timber, cattle, soy, and palm products.

For social supply chain topics, the UK Modern Slavery Act is another lever. Under this Act, companies are required to disclose the steps, if any, taken to prevent slavery and human trafficking from taking place within operations or supply chains.

13 Michael Meehan and the future of sustainability reporting
16 [https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/toolkit-program-and-standards-overview/]
17 [https://www.greenbiz.com/article/michael-meehan-and-future-sustainability-reporting]
HARMONISATION OF INFORMATION IMPLIES APPLICATION OF SPECIFIC CONCEPTS AND ISSUES RATHER THAN FRAMEWORKS.

Though reporting will increase, it is highly unlikely that one specific sustainability reporting framework will satisfy the reporting needs of all Travel & Tourism businesses of various sizes globally (especially since inherent competition will exist among framework bodies and standards for their adoption). Thus the application of key reporting concepts and inclusion of common issues themselves can at least become harmonised. As a result, businesses could follow some type of reporting process and disclose content on a set of common issues.

Here Travel & Tourism is likely to see a general shift of focus away from the frameworks themselves and more on the discussions of key topics. As the current trends involved identifying a set of industry-specific material topics and reporting on the respective risks, opportunities, management approach, and generally accepted KPIs for those topics, information is becoming increasingly harmonised across leading ESG frameworks. The frameworks may serve a distinct but often complementary purpose to one another. These frameworks may also compete for investor audiences and strive to fulfill their own business models.

INTEGRATED REPORTING HAS EMERGED IN VARIOUS FORMS, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY USING THE <IR> FRAMEWORK.

In its Corporate Responsibility Reporting Surveys, KPMG cited general acceptance of integrated reporting as the “next destination for corporate reporting”; however, far-reaching adoption remains slow. While some companies included ESG information, particularly related to climate change, in financial reports, 11% of reporters published what they consider to be an integrated sustainability report and financial report in 201636.

Integrated reporting can be considered shorthand for the phrase integrated financial and non-financial reporting whereby the comprehensive scope of ESG issues and reporting concepts are embedded in the same reports where companies publish financial performance information. The term Integrated reporting has been championed by the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) and its International <IR> Framework. This framework represents a forward-looking design to “adopt integrated thinking as a way of breaking down internal silos and reducing duplication and improves the quality of information available to providers of financial capital to enable a more efficient and productive allocation of capital37”. The <IR> Framework centres on the concept of value creation in the context of capital flows among the following types of “capital”: financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social and relationship, and natural capital. It also seeks to streamline current financial reporting mechanisms and lessen their complexity.

A difference, however, should be noted between the use of the term integrated reporting and the <IR> Framework, which can create confusion in the marketplace and requires clarification38. While many large companies are participating in the <IR> Pilot Programme, the use of the <IR> Framework is not mandatory to produce an integrated report. The companies presently publishing integrated reports do not necessarily follow this framework, nor is it embedded into current country stock exchange requirements. France is an example of a country that has had what can be considered integrated reporting for over a decade through its Grenelle Acts for “extra-financial reporting” requiring environmental and social performance to be included in annual reports; however, these requirements are not aligned with the <IR> Framework.

---

37 www.theiirc.org/international-ir-framework/
38 For an example, see the Johannesburg Stock Exchange Guidance Letter on Integrated Reporting dated 27 June 2013
3 EVOLUTION OF REPORT FORMATS

While the type of information reported is becoming more standardised, companies are evolving the report formats and content to match audiences.

There is a growing acknowledgement that few people read long reports page by page. Most audiences want key information that can be absorbed easily, clearly, and succinctly. This includes regulators and stock exchanges with sustainability reporting requirements as well as investors, analysts, customers, and often employees.

The result has been a movement toward more robust web-based reporting reflecting broader social trends on how information is accessed and digested. With the growth of web-based reporting, companies are finding ways to get more creative in the way reporting is used — illuminating the strong stories of positive impact and leadership, but also making the important but static information on management approach easily accessible as well.

GRI is used more as a guidepost than a specific prescription.

As the practice of sustainability reporting matures and evolves, there is a movement away from strict adherence to ‘and toward strategic alignment’ with leading frameworks such as GRI. In fact, KPMG’s 2015 Corporate Responsibility Reporting Survey reflects overall trends in increased sustainability reporting but noted a first-ever decline in use of GRI among the world’s largest companies. While still the most popular voluntary framework (and used by nearly 75% of the Global 250), adoption among Global 250 reporters has declined from its 81% peak.

CONTENT IS BECOMING DISTRIBUTED ACROSS MULTIPLE SOURCES.

Companies are increasingly moving away from the practice of publishing a lengthy, singular PDF each year. Instead, companies are increasing transferring content on management approach for key topics into separate ‘fact sheets’ or ‘issue briefs’ as well as publishing more concise annual updates in the form of ‘summary highlights’ or ‘annual scorecard’ documents.

More information is also making its way to more engaging and robust corporate responsibility webpages as well as annual financial reports, approximately 10% of which are ‘integrated sustainability and financial reports’. Additionally, companies are creating separate robust reports to dive deeper into priority topics. Examples include Google’s online Diversity Report39 and Unilever’s 64-page Human Rights Report40.

As part of the trend, GRI Content Indexes are increasingly becoming published as valued standalone documents rather than just as reference tables in the back of report(s) to help direct readers to relevant information across an increasingly growing number of sources, as well as to place content directly within the index for quick access.

39 https://www.google.com/diversity/
TOPIC-BASED REPORTING IS POLICY AND REGULATORY-DRIVEN (NOTABLY FOR DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS).

Google’s Diversity Report and Unilever’s Human Rights Report illustrate how increased governmental policy and regulatory drivers develop the need for focused reporting on specific topics. In response to US policy efforts to increase the gender diversity in the technology sector, leading technology companies are now publishing separate diversity reports. In response to the UK Modern Slavery Act, companies are opting to publish separate statements or reports on human rights with the best practice of demonstrating alignment with the ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ framework as set forth by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights41 as well as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises42. Within Travel & Tourism, companies including Hilton and Hyatt are producing fact sheets that serve as mini-reports for specific topics, including diversity and human rights.

ESG RESEARCH FIRMS AND RATERS ARE OFTEN INTERESTED IN DISCLOSURES BEYOND THOSE COVERED IN REPORTING FRAMEWORKS.

A review of ESG research firms on a given company’s ESG disclosures will often reveal interest in topics and disclosures that don’t match exactly to frameworks such as GRI and SASB.

Diversity and human rights are key examples with more detailed requests in the new Corporate Human Rights Benchmark’s pilot methodology43 as well as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Corporate Equality Index (addressing LGBT+ workplace performance)44. Supply chain is also notable, as ESG research and raters are interested in more detail beyond the current GRI metrics of percentage of new suppliers screened on social and environmental criteria each year.

With the launch of the GRI Standards as a more dynamic framework and the evolution of initiatives such as SASB, greater convergence between reporting frameworks and market-based demand for specific disclosures may occur.

Nonetheless, companies are increasingly thinking outside the box and looking beyond the traditional sustainability reporting framework when defining content and metrics to disclose.

44 http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index
SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING, TACKLING COMMON CHALLENGES

Sustainability reporting is no longer just about the topics reported, but about how the organisation is tackling common challenges with common aims.

Increasingly, companies’ ESG disclosures will not only cover how each company is addressing and performing on ESG topics but also explain what each company is doing to strengthen global commitments and work toward solutions as opposed to just managing impacts.

The United Nations SDGs are a primary driver behind the trends. Since the SDGs are global and all encompassing, they are augmented by policy and regulatory development for key sustainability topics – notably the Paris Agreement for climate change and the UK Modern Slavery Act covering human rights.

The UN SDGs have been a ‘game changer’.

As the practice of sustainability reporting matures and evolves, there is a movement away from “strict adherence” and toward “strategic alignment” with leading frameworks, such as GRI. In fact, KPMG’s 2015 Corporate Responsibility Reporting Survey reflects overall trends in increased sustainability reporting, but noted a first-ever decline in use of GRI among the world’s largest companies. While still the most popular voluntary framework (and used by nearly 75% of the Global 250), adoption among Global 250 reporters has declined from its 81% peak.

The dramatic corporate uptake and C-level enthusiasm for the SDGs has brought the initiative front and centre. The following statistics from a 2016 UNGC report illustrate the current momentum and strategic influence of the SDGs:

- 87% of CEOs believe the SDGs provide an opportunity to rethink approaches to sustainable value creation.
- 70% see the SDGs providing a framework to structure sustainability efforts.
- 80% believe that demonstrating a commitment to societal purpose is an industry differentiator.

The SDGs cover a wide range of interrelated issues, which companies are increasingly committing to, including ending poverty and gender equality. Investors are also progressively interested in the areas covered by the SDGs; however, there is a need to better quantify the goals in a way that can produce an impact. The UNGC requested participating organisations to issue annual “communications on progress” relating to the goals.

In its annual State of Green Business Report, GreenBiz predicted that “the SDGs could become a de facto standard against which companies will be judged going forward. No doubt they will become the basis for benchmarks, scorecards, and ratings by activists, investors, and media seeking to identify leaders and laggards.”

---

Spotlight on Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, the UN’s General Assembly agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda contains 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) plus 169 accompanying targets. Subsequently we reviewed our strategy internally against the SDGs. Our analysis of current policies and activities highlighted how our strategy directly relates to and supports several of the 17 SDGs.

- **Protecting Water Resources**
  - Reducing the amount of water used in production
  - Ensuring the responsible discharge of brewery effluent
  - Protecting water resources in water-stressed areas

- **Sustainable Sourcing**
  - Our local sourcing projects, helping smallholder farmers to improve yields and increase incomes
  - Sustainable sourcing of our agricultural raw materials

- **Advocating Responsible Consumption**
  - Making responsible consumption aspirational through Heineken®
  - Building partnerships to address alcohol-related harm
  - Taking action at global industry level
  - Increasing portfolio of no- and low alcohol brands

- **Promoting Health & Safety**
  - Our ‘Safety First’ approach for our employees and contractors
  - Provision of healthcare for employees and family members in developing countries, including malaria and HIV treatment

- **Growing with Communities**
  - Community investments by our operating companies and foundations
  - Supporting economic growth through job creation and pay rises

- **Reducing CO2 Emissions**
  - Energy-saving initiatives in production
  - Increasing renewables (solar, wind, biomass) in energy mix
  - Increasing efficiency in distribution

- **Good health and well-being**
  - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- **Quality education**
  - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all

- **Clean water and sanitation**
  - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- **Affordable and clean energy**
  - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

- **Decent work and economic growth**
  - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- **Responsible consumption and production**
  - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- **Life on land**
  - Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs aim to stimulate action around critical areas concerning humanity and the planet. To better help businesses understand the SDGs and adopt policies to support the goals, the UNGC, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and GRI created the SDG Compass. The compass presents five steps to maximise contribution to the SDGs, from Understanding the SDGs to Reporting and Communicating. The GRI UN SDGs Target 12.6 Live Tracker follows the progress of sustainability reporting around the world. This in turn allows companies to determine which national government initiatives, such as market regulations, policies, and legislation, require companies to disclose or report on non-financial factors.
COMPANIES ALSO CONSIDER TOPICS AND INDICATORS COVERED IN AVAILABLE GRI SECTOR SUPPLEMENTS.

In alignment with the SDGs and to support the Paris climate agreement, companies are increasingly making public commitment to “combat climate changes.” These commitments include:

- **Science-Based** Carbon Reduction Targets: 200+ companies have targets that have been approved by the Science-Based Targets Initiative. Large consumer brands (including P&G, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, L’Oreal, Puma, Sony, and Walmart) have been early adopters. Travel & Tourism early adopters include Caesars Entertainment and Host Hotels & Resorts.

- **Renewable Energy:** Companies (including London’s Heathrow and Gatwick Airports, BMW, Goldman Sachs, H&M, Nike, Facebook, and Google) have committed to 100% use through RE100.

- **We Mean Business coalition:** Over 500 companies (including Metsä Group International, NH Hotels, and TUI Group) have joined the campaign to “create a low carbon revolution” in tandem with CDP Commit to Action programme.

- **Paris Pledge for Action:** 1,300 companies, cities, investors, and organisations (including Air Transport Action Group, Heathrow Airport, and Hotels of Iceland) have joined a pledge in support of the Paris climate agreement.

Overlap exists among these public climate change commitments. The CDP Commit to Action is most comprehensive with a set of ten commitments (as of 2017), which include adopting a science-based target, growing the market for sustainable renewables, removing short-lived pollutants, removing deforestation from supply chains, pricing carbon, reporting climate change information in mainstream reports “as a fiduciary duty”, developing low-carbon technology partnerships, aligning business growth and development objectives, responsible corporate engagement in climate policy, committing to 100% renewable energy use, and improving water security.

Additional environmental commitments, including the CEO Water Mandate and New York Declaration on Forests, exist. Social commitments are becoming more prevalent as well, such as the ILO Global Business and Disability Network Charter, for which signatories include AccorHotels, IBM, and L’Oreal. At the heart of the UK Modern Slavery Act’s request for disclosures is a desire for companies to state “What are you doing about this issue of human rights specifically?” Increasingly, demonstrating actions is reflected by making public commitments, notably to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ILO Standards.

Ultimately, the growing practice of companies making public commitments specific to individual ESG topics lends itself to more focused discussions on how each company is executing against these commitments. There is also a spirit of increased global collaboration and coordination as other companies (including industry peers) often work toward the same stated commitments.
PARTNERSHIPS AND INDUSTRY COLLABORATIONS ARE INCREASINGLY PART OF HOW COMPANIES REPORT ON ESG MANAGEMENT APPROACHES.

Within the UN SDG framework, an underlying premise is that partnerships and collaborations are a critical means toward achieving the goals. There are numerous working groups associated with each of 17 goals and 169 targets. In fact, UN SDGs' final goal – SDG 17 – is centred around “Partnerships for the Goals.” This is because there is a view that partnership can enable companies and communities to accelerate progress.

In the context of Travel & Tourism, a spirit of partnership underlies industry efforts to promote sustainable tourism. For example, partnerships are central to the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development platform60. Aligned with the UN SDGs, the initiative is focused on five key areas:

1. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
2. Social inclusiveness, employment, and poverty reduction
3. Resource efficiency, environmental protection, and climate change
4. Cultural values, diversity, and heritage
5. Mutual understanding, peace, and security

These key five areas are captured, in part, by the Global Sustainable Tourism Dashboard, which also aligns with the SDGs61. The use of this type of dashboard enables Travel & Tourism organisations to identify the role that they are playing within the context of industry. Topics with metrics covered by the Global Sustainable Tourism Dashboard include economic development, carbon emissions, gender equity, security and culture, and heritage protection.

60 http://www.tourism4development2017.org
61 http://tourismdashboard.org

Figure 5: 2016 Global Sustainable Tourism Dashboard62

In sustainability reporting, companies are increasingly identifying partnerships that can support prioritised SDGs as well as performance to support industry metrics. Additionally, companies are increasingly integrating the role of partnerships in their narrative and descriptions of management approaches. It is worth noting that partnerships are particularly prevalent in addressing supply chain issues.

The gap is widening between leaders and laggards in reporting.

As some companies have now been reporting for nearly 10 years, and in some cases 20 years, their sustainability platforms (including strategies, goals, engagement methods, partnerships, and disclosures approaches) have evolved. Among new sustainability reporters, some will struggle to ‘catch up’ whereas others will ‘leapfrog’ to mature reporters with a fresh approach born in the post-SDG environment for ESG disclosures.

Regardless of the maturity of a company’s programmes, the quality of content to do with how an organisation presents its sustainability strategy and performance is increasingly beginning to diverge dramatically.

On one end of the spectrum are the companies with general boilerplate language on topics, outdated terminology, and vague goals and objectives.

On the other end are the new leaders in the sustainability reporting – these companies demonstrate a clear understanding of key ESG issues, contextualise the ESG issues within business growth strategy and/or organisational purpose, articulate the role that they intend to play, and can provide specific metrics and examples of the actions taken and progress made.

Reporting approaches reflect changing characteristics for ESG leadership.

In the GlobeScan/SustainAbility (GSS) 2016 Sustainability Leaders Survey, the authors concluded that drivers of corporate leadership include the following:

1. Applying the SDGs as a lens for setting sustainability goals.
2. Articulating the vision for the company’s sustainability contribution.
3. Applying ambitious goals and measures of performance.
4. Pursuing a business breakthrough model that drives “net positive benefit”.
5. Demonstrating expression of sustainability strategy through products and services.
6. Collaborating with other organisations for system-level changes.
7. Using brand to shift consumer behaviour.

Leaders named in the GSS 2016 Sustainability Leaders Survey included Unilever, Interface, Tesla, Nike, and Patagonia. These new characteristics of leadership are reflected in how these and other leading companies are reporting.

---


---
THE CHALLENGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY REPORTERS IS HOW TO BALANCE STYLE, SUBSTANCE, AND SIMPLICITY IN SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING.

Following the Paris climate agreement and corporate enthusiasm for the SDGs, a ‘race to the top’ in bold goal setting is occurring. As such, bold targets are becoming more commonplace and critical for organisations that aim to generate value and credibility from their sustainability endeavours.

Readers of sustainability reporting are increasingly able to distinguish companies with more limited aspirations and/or actions on key environmental and social topics. While goal-based reporting is emerging, companies in theory should be focused on their goals. However, the reality is that stakeholders are interested in a wider range of information on management approach regarding numerous topics.

INDUSTRY BENCHMARKING IS BECOMING MORE PRECISE AND DEFINITIVE.

Similar to financial metrics, such as operating margins, earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA) and return on equity, ESG research firms and sophisticated audiences, including media and advocacy groups, are now able to make industry comparisons for key ESG metrics. This is possible because industry-wide data sets over several years are now available. Additionally, stakeholders have numerous tools and resources available to support benchmarking.

Examples of ESG metrics that lend themselves to easier industry benchmarking include carbon emissions, water consumption, community investments, and women in executive management and on board. Stakeholders can now make annual assessments, such as:

- How aggressive are a company’s environmental targets compared to peers?
- How environmentally intensive are a company’s operations compared to peers?
- How does the rate and velocity of a company’s progress to reduce environmental impacts compare to peers?
- Is the company a laggard or a leader in terms of community investments and gender diversity and inclusion?

The widespread availability of information means that companies can be compared, scored, or flagged for how they’re doing on specific issues or goals. This can have positive implications as leaders will be rewarded, and negative implications as laggards will be more easily recognised. With the momentum toward science-based targets, this phenomenon will be especially true. Whereas five to seven years ago any company with a reduction target was a leader, now companies’ targets and performance against targets are and will be increasingly scrutinised in comparison to peers.
SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING LEADERS BENEFIT FROM TAKING THE TIME TO CLEARLY ORGANISE AND FRAME THEIR PROGRAMMES.

Abraham Lincoln is quoted to have said “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” This principle can be applied to sustainability reporting.

Organisations will benefit from identifying a clear, concise set of focus areas where bold action can be taken. When assessing focus areas, companies should not shy away from supply chain and community issues, where the company can make a measurable difference – even if these issues are controversial or challenging.

With 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs can also be used as a tool to align corporate focus areas and commitments in addition to creating stakeholder engagement opportunities. Once a clear, concise set of focus areas has been established, a set of bold ‘headline’ goals with quantifiable metrics should be established for each focus area. To assess the level of boldness, companies can benchmark their commitments against shared industry commitment and priority partnership as a means to achieve their ESG goals.

Additionally, these bold goals and focus areas can come to life by crafting an overarching statement of purpose or mission to contextualise these commitments. The most powerful statements of purpose are those that are truly unique and authentic to an organisation’s strengths, capability, and risk/opportunity profile. Additionally, goals and focus areas can be developed from a process-based lens (in addition to a topic- or materiality-based lens). In short, companies can benefit from asking not only “What are we going to do?” but also “How are we going to do it?” when developing bold goals.

All management actions and communications can cascade down from the streamlined set of bold goals, and supporting KPIs (or ‘impact metrics’) can be used to track progress on specific programmes and actions. Perhaps most compelling, the bold sustainability targets can be used to guide, challenge, and empower employees across locations of operations to support the ESG platform and disclosures. At the local level, employees can address important issues – such as water scarcity, education, deforestation, biodiversity, and climate adaptation – through local engagement in a more targeted way that directly supports global sustainability targets.

SECTOR OUTLOOK, IMPLICATIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Sustainability reporting will continue to grow as a key component of a company’s sustainability platform. For Travel & Tourism, it is important that those reading the reports and pulling ESG data understand the context and nuances of the sector. Arguably, ‘every sector is different’; however, the particulars of Travel & Tourism should be expounded for proper ESG analysis. The ESG research community did not necessarily (and arguably still does not) understand the business models or metrics of Travel & Tourism industries. For example, hotels and tour operators were placed in the same competing sub-sector as restaurants in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indices until recently. Also, ESG analysis firms did not understand the fragmented business model often found in the hotel industry, and would perpetually evaluate lodging Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) for a lack of programmes and disclosure despite them not operating the hotels themselves (and in some countries being legally restricted from operational action). WTTC Members supporting this research also offered anecdotal stories of data analysis firms inaccurately estimating their energy, water, and carbon data by a factor of 10.

Broader yet important is the development of common understanding of ESG disclosure in service sectors. It can be argued that the GRI and some of the CDP responses have their frameworks skewed toward companies that produce goods. The term ‘locations of operations’ can reach over 100 countries for travel companies, and data capture systems are more cumbersome. Similarly, training is an intrinsic concept in service industries, with training a key operating procedure and focus of the majority of Travel & Tourism businesses; it’s inherent that most of it is not formally tracked. Should companies be required to start tracking each instance of training, including daily 10-minute operational briefings? Further topic discussion, collaboration, and research can help provide awareness around the nuances of these types of issues within Travel & Tourism. On the other hand, Travel & Tourism will have to increase attention to key labour topics that may be highly relevant and impactful to the business and stakeholder, but not reported because of either unwillingness to publicly state information, or a lack of data capture methods.

At present, in both national and multinational levels, the topic of sustainability reporting has not been particularly addressed within travel industry associations and working groups in general. In addition to supporting performance measurement for carbon, these groups could provide benefit to members by increasing resources, collaboration efforts, policy recommendations, and support to help companies approach the wide spectrum of reporting.

Finally, the role of Travel & Tourism itself in generating economic growth, jobs, and its effects on destinations, both positive and negative, can adapt the concepts of ESG and sustainability reporting and apply them to sustainable tourism. The WTTC took the first step in this direction with the recently released report Understanding the Critical Issues for the Future of Travel & Tourism, wherein the material issues for the sector overall have been mapped, with the three critical issues identified: climate change, destination degradation, and disruption. As one of the world’s largest sectors and with a robust and dynamic value chain, Travel & Tourism can leverage the trends and lessons learned in sustainability reporting across its value chain to approach its key issues.