

Case Study: Garden Village Bled Eco-Resort (Slovenia)

Introduction

A case study provides a detailed examination of an example, illustrating how theoretical concepts are applied in practice. In the context of sustainable and ecotourism-oriented business planning, case studies help learners move from abstract ideas to tangible scenarios.

By analysing how an ecotourism enterprise navigates sustainability challenges, learners can better understand risk assessment, financial management, and compliance with regulatory frameworks, and apply these insights to their future ventures.

Context

Garden Village Bled is an eco-resort located near Lake Bled, Slovenia, one of Europe's premier sustainable tourism destinations. The resort operates in the hospitality and ecotourism sector, focusing on immersive nature-based experiences that combine comfort with environmental stewardship.

Slovenia is known for its forward-thinking environmental policies, strong local community engagement, and the national "Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism." The country's tourism strategy emphasizes green entrepreneurship, resource efficiency, cultural heritage, and community well-being. Garden Village Bled benefits from this supportive policy environment and the growing market of eco-conscious travelers.

In recent years, Slovenia has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable tourism. Initiatives such as eco-certifications, promotional campaigns for responsible travel, and public-private partnerships have created fertile ground for entrepreneurs. Garden Village Bled emerged as part of this wave, aiming to meet increasing consumer demand for environmentally responsible tourism experiences.

<h3>Challenge</h3>	<p>The main challenge faced by Garden Village Bled was to design and operate a tourism venture in a sensitive natural environment (Lake Bled and its surroundings) without compromising ecological integrity. They had to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimize environmental impact while maintaining a profitable, market-attractive business model.• Comply with local and national regulations aimed at preserving Lake Bled's natural resources.• Address the expectations of travelers seeking authentic, eco-friendly accommodations and experiences that contribute positively to local communities.• Ensure financial viability amid potential seasonal demand fluctuations and changing market conditions.
<h3>Actions taken</h3>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sustainable Infrastructure Investments: The resort integrated eco-design principles: treehouses built with responsibly sourced wood, green roofs, solar panels for energy, and natural filtration systems for wastewater.2. Local Sourcing and Community Engagement: Garden Village partnered with local farmers and artisans to provide fresh, seasonal produce and crafts, reinforcing the local economy and reducing transportation-related emissions.3. Nature-Based Experiences: The resort offered activities like workshops on composting, guided nature tours, and cultural immersion events to educate guests about the environment and local heritage.4. Certifications and Compliance: They pursued "Green Scheme" certifications endorsed by the Slovenian Tourist Board and adhered to regulations on land use, energy efficiency, and waste management. <p>These actions aimed to align business operations with sustainability goals—reducing environmental footprint, fostering community ties, and enhancing the guest experience—while ensuring regulatory compliance and market differentiation.</p>

	<p>Stakeholders involved include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal teams: Resort management, sustainability officers, hospitality staff, and marketing personnel. • External partners: Local suppliers, environmental NGOs, community leaders, and local government agencies responsible for tourism standards.
<p>Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental benefits: A noticeable reduction in water and energy consumption due to efficient infrastructure. Increased biodiversity in the resort's landscaped areas by incorporating native plant species. • Economic outcomes: Stable year-round bookings and a willingness among travelers to pay a premium for genuinely eco-friendly accommodation. Higher occupancy rates due to positive reputation and strong online reviews. • Social and cultural gains: Strengthened relationships with local suppliers and artisans, contributing to local livelihoods. Guests reported high satisfaction with the authenticity and educational value of their stay. <p>Successes and shortcomings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success: The resort successfully positioned itself as a model for sustainable tourism, receiving accolades and high ratings on platforms focusing on eco-travel. • Shortcomings: Initial infrastructure investments were significant, requiring careful financial planning. Some visitors expected even more immersive sustainability programs, indicating room for growth in guest engagement offerings. <p>The outcomes aligned closely with the resort's initial objective: to create a financially viable ecotourism business that balances profitability with environmental conservation and community well-being.</p>
<p>Lesson learned</p>	<p>What worked well: Integrating sustainability from the start, forming strategic local partnerships, and achieving recognized eco-certifications were crucial for credibility and long-term success.</p>

What didn't: Underestimating the initial costs and the need for continuous innovation in guest engagement underscored the importance of financial foresight and ongoing program development.

Practical lessons

- Embed sustainability principles into the core business model, not as an afterthought.
- Use risk assessment tools (like SWOT or PESTEL) to anticipate market fluctuations and regulatory changes.
- Leverage certifications and transparent communication to build trust and market differentiation.
- Invest in staff training and guest education to keep the sustainability narrative authentic and dynamic.

Slovenian Tourist Board Green Scheme:
<https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism>

Garden Village Bled Official Website:
<https://gardenvillagebled.com/>

European Travel Commission Reports on Sustainable Tourism: <https://etc-corporate.org/>

References/ Visuals



Image 13 <https://gardenvillagebled.sl-hotels.com/en/photos.html>



Image 14 <https://gardenvillagebled.sl-hotels.com/en/photos.html>