



PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

Taking event sustainability to the next level



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

MONTE-CARLO
SOCIÉTÉ DES BAINS DE MER

Introduction

Sustainability was set to be the biggest trend in business events in 2020. According to *C&IT's State of the Industry: Corporate Report 2019*, 23% of corporate planners stated that organising sustainable events and being more conscious of their environmental impact was a key focus, while a third of planners surveyed for the *State of the Industry: Incentives Report* predicted that CSR, ecotourism and wider sustainability would be top incentive trends in 2020.

Then COVID-19 came along and swiftly changed everything. Events across the globe were postponed and cancelled, hotels and conference centres were shut, and planes were grounded as many destinations closed their borders to international travel. The events industry now faces tough challenges ahead to get back on track.

Traditionally, during tough economic times, sustainability has slipped down the list of priorities for businesses. For example, after the global financial crash in 2008, it was put on the back burner by many corporate event planners as they battled with budgets cuts and perceptions issues. But as borders begin to reopen, planes start flying again, and the events industry slowly comes back to life, it's crucial sustainability is not forgotten.

Before the sudden emergence of COVID-19, climate change posed the biggest threat to human civilisation. Once the pandemic has passed, it will still pose the biggest threat. The human tragedy of COVID-19 has brought an unexpected silver lining for the planet. Scientists have reported dramatic falls in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions across the world as a direct result of lockdown and nature has positively thrived.

“AS THE EVENTS INDUSTRY SLOWLY COMES BACK TO LIFE, IT'S CRUCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ISN'T FORGOTTEN”

So it's more crucial than ever that the events industry steps up its commitment to the cause. With live events currently on pause, now is the perfect time to look at how we can take event sustainability to the next level. Amy Hewick, event consultant at Hewick Events says: “As an industry with a historically poor record for sustainability, we need to take responsibility and avoid going back to old habits. The biggest and most positive legacy from COVID-19 should be our approach to event sustainability.”

Selina Donald, sustainability consultant and founder of events agency The Bulb, agrees: “Coronavirus could be the catalyst for the radical innovation needed for sustainable change in the events industry.”



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Understanding true sustainability and its benefits

At present, there are vastly differing views as to what event sustainability actually means. When the topic comes up, people all too often start talking about the three Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle. While reducing plastics and recycling are an important first step towards lessening the impact that events have on the planet, true sustainability goes so much further than that. As global agency CWT Meeting & Events states in its *2020 Future Trends* report: “It is no longer just about recycling, but taking a meticulous approach to all sustainability aspects, from environmental footprint and how to reduce it, to reducing risks in our supply chain, tackling modern day slavery and gender equality, as well as diversity and inclusion.”

Donald adds that sustainability requires companies to use their creative resources to find responsible solutions. “The businesses that embrace sustainability in all its forms – social, environmental and economic – demonstrate competitiveness and a commitment to their organisation’s long-term profitability and growth. This will benefit both their bottom line and the planet.”



“SUSTAINABILITY REQUIRES COMPANIES TO USE THEIR CREATIVE RESOURCES TO FIND RESPONSIBLE SOLUTIONS”

Sustainability should no longer be seen as an after-thought but should be embedded into every aspect of the way you do business. It might sound like a daunting prospect, but there are real business benefits to be had by taking sustainability seriously. Numerous studies have shown that the younger generation care more about the environment and actively want to work for and buy from brands that are environmentally and socially responsible. This means that investing in sustainability could not only help you attract and retain the best talent but also make you more appealing to clients.



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Using the UN Sustainable Development Goals

International initiatives, such as the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provide a good base for taking event sustainability to the next level. They are a call to action to work together to end extreme poverty, reduce inequality, improve health and education, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and preserving our planet.

Start with the SDGs that are most important to your business and find ways to integrate them into the events you organise, gradually building up to incorporating all 17. For example, SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities, can be supported through selecting a destination partner that is committed to sustainability and choosing venues that are walkable or accessible by public transport.

17

is the number of UN Sustainable Development Goals that provide a good base for taking event sustainability to the next level



Adopt SDG 5 – Gender Equality by ensuring all event staff are provided equal pay for equal work and that speaker programmes feature a 50/50 representation of men and women. SDG 3 – Good Health & Wellbeing can be promoted throughout many aspects of an event, from building time into programmes for exercise and relaxation to providing healthy and nutritious catering.

On the subject of catering alone, simple actions like sourcing locally-produced and fair-trade products, serving sustainable seafood, not serving red meat and reducing food waste support a number of SDGs including Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action and Life Below Water.



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Aligning with the right partners

A successful event relies on numerous partners, from destinations, to DMCs, hotels, conference centres, caterers, production companies and more, so it's crucial to align yourself with sustainable partners. When researching suppliers, it is important to put aside any preconceptions and look beyond the surface – you might be surprised by what you find. For example, a venue or destination that talks a good talk when it comes to sustainability, could just be “greenwashing”, while a destination that is not perceived to be strong on sustainability could be the opposite.

Monaco is an excellent example of a destination that has been misjudged in the past but is actually at the forefront when it comes to sustainability. “It is a fact that Monaco is best known as a luxury destination and for its Formula 1 Grand Prix, but lots of sustainable actions are being taken to make Monaco more responsible,” says Estelle Antognelli, Head of Sustainability department at Monaco tourism office.

The destination's commitment to sustainability comes directly from HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, who has rolled out a pro-active sustainable development policy on both a national and international scale since the beginning of his reign. As well as setting up the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which has funded more than 370 environmental projects at a cost of 37 million euros in the past 10 years, HSH Prince Albert II has pledged that the Principality of Monaco will have halved its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to 1990 figures) and renewed his commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Initiatives relating Monaco's tourism industry are at the heart of this commitment and in 2010, the Monaco Government Tourist Authority created a department dedicated to sustainability. The Tourist Authority and its partners are working hard to create a new, more responsible brand of tourism and putting solutions in place to optimise resource management.

Monte-Carlo Société de Bains de Mer (SBM), which owns and operates a number of hotels, venues and restaurants in Monaco including the Hôtel de Paris Monte-Carlo and the Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort, is among those partners committed to more efficient management of energy and water resources and improving environmentally-friendly practices with regards to meetings and incentives.

370

is the number of environmental projects funded over the past decade by the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation



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Looking out for the right labels

Greenwashing occurs in all industries, and events are no exception. If you're an agency booking hundreds of hotels and venues on behalf of your clients, it can be difficult to ferret out those that are genuinely committed to reducing their impact on the planet, from those that boast about it without developing a proper sustainable strategy. How can you prove that a hotel is sourcing responsibly, managing waste efficiently or using renewable energy?

This is why it's important to look out for international labels, awarded by objective and approved bodies. This lets you measure the degree of investment and commitment by a venue with regard to the environment. The most recognised standards and labels include ISO 20121, ISO 14001, Green Globe, La Clef Verte, Ecolabel, Earth Check, LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and BREEAM, which measures and rewards the environmental performance of a building during its construction or renovation.

Monte-Carlo SBM Group holds many certificates, including four Green Globe certified hotels, while all new projects, such as the recent transformation of Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo and the creation of the One Monte-Carlo Conference and Events Centre, are BREEAM certified.



Meanwhile, Monaco has been a member of the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index since 2018. The GDS-Index is a destination level programme that measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings, events and business tourism destinations. By partnering with Monaco and Monte-Carlo SBM, businesses can be confident that they are choosing partners that are truly committed to a more sustainable approach.

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Preparing for a hybrid future

Following the huge spike in virtual meetings during the global coronavirus lockdown, planners are predicting a rise in hybrid events when live meetings are back on the table.

Hybrid experiences combine the reach of digital with the engagement of live. Instead of gathering 500 people in one location, for example, businesses may choose to bring 100 people together for a smaller live event, with a wider audience joining virtually. Or alternatively they may connect several live events in different locations and share content virtually. The benefit of hybrid events is they are more sustainable as they generally involve fewer people travelling.

“Virtual events are second best. Face-to-face interaction is part of human society and virtual events will not replace physical events in the long term. Sustainability will be the underlying reason why hybrid events will flourish,” predicts Hewick.

Successful hybrid events will require venues and hotels to have the right technology in place to support them. Monte-Carlo SBM has been investing for decades in terms of technical infrastructure and notably wi-fi capacity for live streaming and broadcasting, according to Monte-Carlo SBM Sustainable Development Project Manager Eva Elmshäuser.



“HYBRID EXPERIENCES COMBINE THE REACH OF DIGITAL WITH THE ENGAGEMENT OF LIVE”

“This being said, we appreciate that the industry is pivoting towards more hybrid events and we have set up a hybrid think tank and a specific strategy to put forward SBM’s expertise and adapt our offering in order to make sure we speak the same language as hybrid event planners,” she adds. “SBM is definitely committed to accompanying our partners and clients to navigate into this new normal, all the more as hybrid events notably consist of more eco-friendly practices with a significant reduction in carbon footprint, which we absolutely advocate for.”



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DESTINATION MONACO

A collaborative approach to sustainability

**Estelle Antognelli, Head of Sustainability department, Monaco tourism office and Monte-Carlo SBM Sustainable Development Project Manager
Eva Elmshausen, give the lowdown on redefining luxury, working together and future sustainability goals...**



Estelle Antognelli

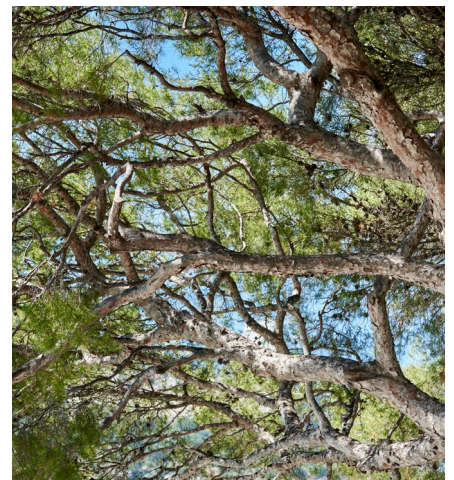


Eva Elmshausen

Monaco is best known as a luxury destination. Can luxury really be sustainable?

Antognelli: “Luxury and sustainability have much in common, especially if you are defining luxury in terms of exceptional quality. Luxury products are today – more than ever - purchased for longevity, making them more sustainable. Luxury – Quality – Sustainability are three words that are very close indeed. As an example, in Monaco, more than 88% of rooms are eco-certified. Most of them are luxurious hotels and they are making huge efforts to reduce energy, water consumption and waste. The challenge is to be able to do it while maintaining high-quality services.”

Elmshausen: “Of course. Luxury as well as sustainability are both about longevity, excellent quality and extraordinary creativity along with personalised products and services. Luxury is slowly getting redefined, in such a way that it should be environmentally appropriate and conscious.”



Do you feel that sustainability has reached a tipping point in events?

Antognelli: “Yes indeed. We have received several requests from large event planners who wanted to organise their event in a sustainable way and Monaco could meet their expectations on this matter. Last year, the tourism board hosted its own annual conference in the most environmentally responsible way possible and will be sharing a case study soon.”

Elmshausen: “We feel that sustainability is becoming a real standard in events. There is a growing awareness with higher expectations and customers >>



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need to be reassured, about sanitary issues, but also about high quality food, absence of pollution, respectful working conditions and responsible purchasing. They also appreciate our natural and cultural heritage and the assurance that we maintain and foster this natural wealth, for example by creating a bird sanctuary on the “Pointe de la Vigie”, at the Monte-Carlo Beach.”

How can you help event planners make their events more sustainable?

Antognelli: “It is possible to organise transfers to and from the airport with electric cars or public transport, and once in Monaco, it’s easy to walk everywhere. Our congress centres are eco-certified and most of our restaurants use local, seasonal and/or organic products. An initiative called “La Petite Boîte” (“The small box”) has been created to fight against food waste. Single use plastic bags, glasses, cutleries and straws are also banned in the Principality.”

Elmshauer: “We offer environmentally-friendly meeting room supplies, such as dry-erase boards, recycled paper, felt-tip pens; recycling bins in all meeting rooms, 95% of Monte-Carlo SBM meeting and banqueting rooms have natural daylight, and water consumption for events and banqueting is provided from

filtering local stations in order to avoid plastic bottles.

“The main facilities of the Group are powered by seawater-heat pump systems and we have invested in an extensive relamping program with LED lighting. Finally, Monte-Carlo SBM has subscribed to ‘green’ contracts for all of the energy consumption of its Monaco sites. The gas contracts include a carbon offset for consumption, and the electricity contracts are ‘renewable energy equivalent’ contracts.”

How are you working together to achieve sustainability goals?

Antognelli: “The tourism sector in Monaco is very united. The Monaco Government Tourist Authority is the referee for the UN SDG 12b: “Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”. We work closely with all tourism and event businesses on common projects and operations. One of our mission is to federate partners, share best practices

within the industry and help to implement them.

Elmshauer: “The Tourism board organises regular events to share good practices, or to visit exemplary implementations. Workshops and meetings are also organised by the Mission of Energy Transition and from other governmental departments.”

What sustainability goals have you set for the next five years?

Antognelli: “Our goal is to become one of the best tourism destinations in terms of sustainability. We are working on a big project – a white paper dedicated to sustainable tourism in order to define a long-term strategy linked with the UN SDGs.”



Elmshauer: “Monte-Carlo SBM calculates its carbon footprint each year in order to continue appropriate reduction actions. Key goals for the future include reducing energy consumption, zero plastic bottles, reduction by half of our paper consumption, in four years, more than 30% of vegetable products coming from local gardens, and 90% coming from local producers.”

95%

**of Monte-Carlo SBM
meeting and banqueting
rooms have natural daylight**



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Recognised expertise in business tourism

Monte-Carlo Société de Bains de Mer is committed to the environment and sustainable development.

The Group's teams strive on a daily basis to reduce use of energy and water and to implement practices that are environmentally friendly in terms of meetings, seminars and professional events. The Group has received numerous certifications and, in particular, five establishments are Green Globe certified, of which two received Gold level in June 2018. This programme, designed for the luxury travel and tourism industry, is recognised worldwide. The group has 4 hotels, 30 restaurants & bars and more than 45 meetings and banqueting rooms in Monaco.

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