CAUSES AND CHALLENGES FOR FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GALLE DISTRICT, SRI LANKA

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Food waste is the major type of waste problem that has been facing the world. In Sri Lanka, half of the total solid waste represents food and green waste. The hotel sector can be considered a major food waste generator compared to other food service industries. Food waste also negatively impacts the environment, economy, and society of the country. This study aims to identify the causes of food waste in five-star hotels, identify the challenges faced by five-star hotels when managing food waste, and examine the sustainable food waste reduction strategies that can be adopted by five-star hotels in the Galle district, Sri Lanka. The qualitative research approach and phenomenology have been selected as the research design. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and both face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted. Based on the analysis using qualitative thematic analysis, the findings were six causes of food waste were identified as Menu Planning error, ingredient spoilage, Inventory controlling error, Taste of the food, Guest's attitudes, Buffet, and causes for food waste were classified into two categories such as Pre consume and Post consume there are five food waste management challenges identified as internal challenges as The staff of the hotels, Type of food service, Menu planning and external challenges as Ingredients spoilage and guest's attitudes. Five-star hotels in the Galle district currently use food waste disposal practices and food waste reduction strategies, and they are concerned about their food waste control, so they use some awareness programs, especially for their staff community. In this study, the researcher mainly identified from interviews that the main factor for food waste is the guests' attitude. The recommendations for better food waste prevention and reduction include different means such as using new food waste composting machines, using artificial intelligence, using food waste management software, conducting awareness programs for reducing food waste, and achieving business sustainability.

Keywords: *Food waste, food waste reduction, five-star hotels, sustainability*