ECO CONSCIOUS STAYS FOR BETTER ENVIRONMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality sector plays a significant role in creating environmental as well as social effects which highlights the global sustainability aspects. Hotels, resorts and other service providers generates a lot of waste, uses a lot of energy and water which has a direct impact on eco-systems and communities. Additionally, the evolution of business practices has been influenced by corporate social responsibility (CSR) concerns heightened consumer awareness and regulatory frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also impacted the evolution of the company operations. Studies done between 2018 to 2025 were taken into consideration for this research work. The PRISMA framework has been used to identify, screening as well as thematically tag research papers in five major aspects such as environmental sustainability, Corporate Social responsibility and the applications of the circular economy.

Adopting eco conscious choices, such as waste reduction, conserving water and using renewable resources has been shown to improve operational efficacy while minimizing the impact on environment. Through community engagement tactics, initiatives to promote diversity and employee well-being are becoming equally important. Technological advancements like AI, IoT and smart hotel systems are great examples for improving efficiency and consumer engagement. Moreover, regulatory frameworks especially pertaining to green supply chain management and CSR disclosure. Despite the circular economy, it is still in its infancy.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Social Responsibility, Eco-conscious, Artificial Intelligence, IoT, Diversity

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the industries which has the highest resource requirement is the hospitality sector which impacts society and environment as well as the economics (Lenzen et al., 2018). Hotels and resorts along with associated service providers do play a significant role in contributing in producing trash as well as in greenhouse emissions. These places also use a lot of raw materials, energy and waster

(Bohdanowicz & Martinac, 2007). Simultaneously, the sector is labour intensive, the industry is also essential to social development, community involvements and cultural preservations. The hospitality sector both innovates in real world and conducts academic research since it both contributes to and mitigates sustainability challenges.

Environmental managers have traditionally taken steps to reduce waste, certify ecological practices and improve energy efficiency in order to frame sustainability in the hospitality sector (Bohdanowicz, 2006). However, current research expands this scope adding governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which highlight transparency and accountability (Rhou &Singhal,2020), additionally social sustainability highlights the community support, equity as well as labour rights. (Font et al.,2021). Furthermore, they are debating over technological innovation more and more as they implement circular economies and change sustainable operations (Wynn & Jones,2022).

The growing body of perspectives and approaches in the expanding corpus of literature in this sector from surveys and case studies, conceptual frameworks and cross-national evaluations, reflects a variety of viewpoints and methodologies. However, this very diversity also caused the objects it created to become fractured. Numerous Studies focus on specific components such as CSR reporting, green marketing or supply chain practices. The results have to be integrated into comprehensive frameworks. (Zhang et al., 2022; Han et al., 2019). Furthermore, identified gaps due to the regional biases in the literature especially with regard to affluent countries were considered in understanding the sustainable practices in the Global South (Kwan et al.,2023).

By conducting Systematic literature review (SLR) to overcome the gaps between 2018-2025. We have combined the data from sustainable dimensions and the assessment seeks to provide.
1. In-depth analysis of sustainability initiatives in the hospitality sector
2.determining the elements which promote and hinder the adoption of sustainability practices.
3.An analysis of technological advancements, government regulatory frameworks social concerns and the circular economy.
4. Recommendations for future research specially on government directions and policies, in view to pandemic COVID-19 directions and their resilience of the industry (PL et al.,2021).

2. METHODOLOGY

According to Tranfield et al., (2003) asserts that a rigorous and transparent approach is needed to ensure the replicability and overcome biasness. This study adhered to standard as well as systematic procedures drawn from management and hospitality research as well as the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews. The methodology consisted of four key stages:
1. Search Strategy

2. Eligibility criteria
3. Screening and selection process
4. Data extraction and consolidation

2.1 Search strategy

Specifically, all the papers indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (Wos) published between 2018-25 were considered. The search strategy was designed to capture peer-reviewed publications across leading academic databases. Because of their comprehensive coverage of the literature in the fields of hospitality, business management, environmental science and social science searches were selected. Boolean operators and keywords were used in the search string to strike a balance between precision and breadth. To find relevant articles using keywords search string ("sustainability" OR "green marketing" OR "hospitality" OR "hospitality sector" OR "eco-conscious").

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria were developed to ensure high quality and directly relevant research were included. Articles were considered eligible when it has to be published in peer reviewed journals between 2018 to 2025 and specifically addressed sustainability within the hospitality sector. Both empirical studies whether qualitative, quantitative or using mixed approach were included. Publications including Book Chapters, dissertations, editorials, Opinion pieces, conference proceedings and research that focused on tourism in general without a specific focus on hospitality were not taken into consideration. Additionally, exclusion criteria was also applied to work published outside the specified time frame, papers written in languages other than English and studies for which full-text versions were not accessible.

2.3 Screening and Selection Process

Three steps were included in the screening process.

Deduplication: Of the original 547 data, 412 unique articles remained after duplicates were eliminated using reference management software.
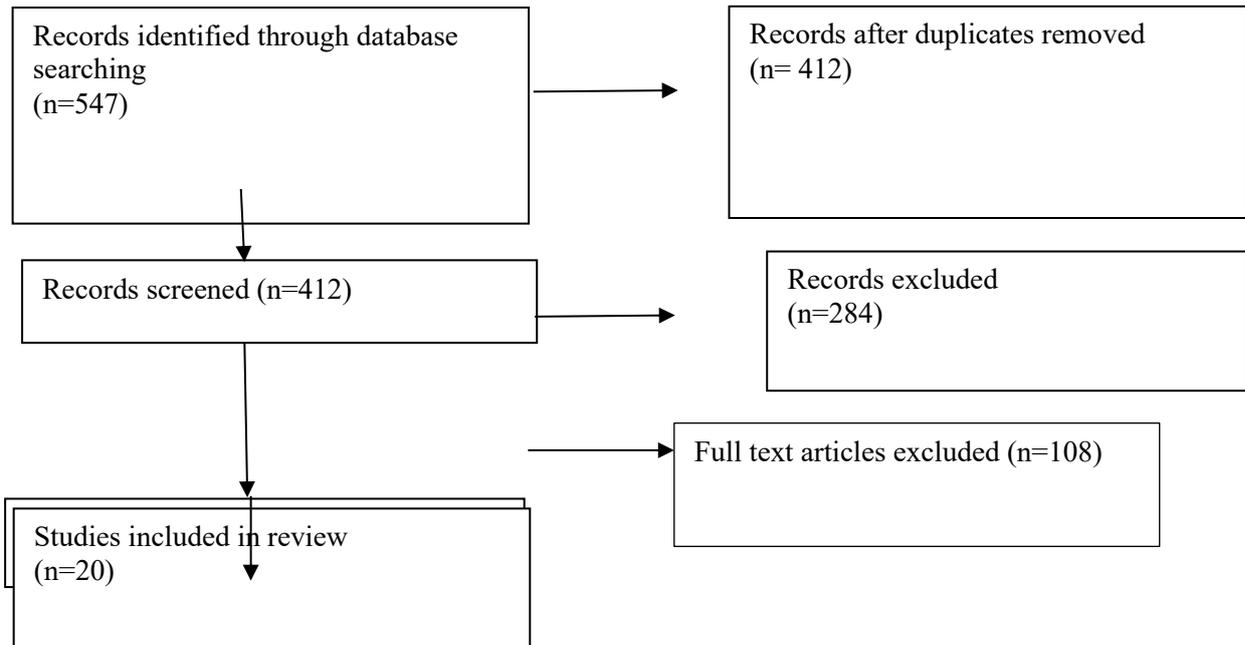
Screening of Titles and Abstracts: Two independent reviewers screened for pertinent titles and abstracts. There were 128 articles left after 284 records that did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Full Text screening: 128 articles full texts were evaluated in retention to the eligibility requirements. At this stage, 108 articles were excluded due to insufficient relevance (e.g: being solely descriptive without any sustainability analysis, tourism focused or without any sustainability analysis, tourism focused or without a hospitality focus.

This process resulted in **20 articles** being included in the final synthesis.

2.4 PRISMA Flow Diagram
Identification of studies via databases.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Records identified through  │   →    │ Records after duplicates    │
│ database searching          │        │ removed (n= 412)            │
│ (n=547)                     │        │                             │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
           │
           ↓
┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Records screened (n=412)    │   →    │ Records excluded            │
│                             │        │ (n=284)                     │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
           │
           ↓                            ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                  →     │ Full text articles excluded │
                                        │ (n=108)                     │
┌─────────────────────────────┐        └─────────────────────────────┘
│ Studies included in review  │
│ (n=20)                      │
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Table 1. Thematic synthesis of Sustainability (n=20)

Theme	Subject Area	Findings	Challenges
Environmental Sustainability	Water conservation, waste reduction, eco-certification, Energy efficiency	Green technology consisting of LEDS, IoT sensors and renewable energy systems are being adopted by hotels more and more (Han et al.,2019; Arenhart et al., 2024). Recycling programs are growing in popularity and eco-certifications (Such as LEED and Green key) enhance	High initial retrofitting costs, inconsistent certification requirements, small businesses limited capacity, and guests reluctance to adopt new habits like reusing towels (Mensah, 2019; Rhou & Singal, 2020).

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		reputation and consumer trust (Font et al.,2021)	
Social Sustainability	Employee well-being, Community engagement, cultural perspectives, DEI	Work life balance and improved labour policies increase employee retention (Deery & Jago, 2015). Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is associated with innovation and service excellence (Manoharan et al., 2024; Font & Lynes, 2018).	Financial limitations, especially foe SMEs, significant turnover, persistently low wages and a lack of standardized social sustainability criteria (Baum, 2018; Baum et al.,2020).
Governance and CSR	Reporting, Stakeholder engagement, leadership and transparency	CSR reports increasingly align with frameworks such as GRI and SDGs (Font et al., 2021). Stronger sustainability results are correlated with a diverse board and a leadership attitude (Mahran et al., 2025). In local communities, Stakeholder engagement fosters legitimacy and confidence (Kim et al., 2017)	Greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011), regional adoption disparities (Sorensen & Grindsted, 2021), SME's lack of accountability procedures and resource limitations in SMEs (Mensah, 2019).
Technology and Innovation	Smart systems, IoT, Blockchain, AI, Digital apps	Consumption is greatly reduced by consumption (Kim et	The environmental impact of digital infrastructure

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		al.,2019). Predictive analytics cut food waste (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019), blockchain enhances supply chain transparency (Hall, 2019), and guest facing apps encourage sustainable behaviour from users (Han et al., 2018)	(Mariani &Baggio, 2022), high capital costs, unequal adoption between SMEs and major chains (Mensah, 2019), and privacy or ethical issues concerns (Mahran et al., 2025).
Circular Economy	Food waste reduction, procurement, reuse programs, closed loop systems	Redistribution, composting and biodigesters help in food waste reduction (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019). Greywater recycling and waste heat recovery are examples of circular innovation and hotels are implementing material recycling systems to phase out plastics (Jones et al., 2014; Awan et al., 2022).	Infrastructure deficiencies, cultural opposition from visitors and employees, expensive investment costs, and the dangers of "circular washing" or symbolic adoption with systemic change, are obstacles to implementation (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

2.5 Data Extraction

The following data was methodically taken from each included study and entered into an Excel coding sheet:

- Bibliographic Information (year, journal and author)
- Study Country or region
- Research design (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and conceptual)

- Focus Area (technological, social, governance/CSR, environmental and circular economy)
- Key Findings
- Determined obstacles and facilitators

Thematic analysis and uniform comparison across studies and structured extractions.

2.6 Data Synthesis

Patterns, divergences and emerging trends in the hospitality sustainability discourse were found by thematically synthesizing data from the included research. According to Thomas & Harden's (2008) thematic synthesis guidelines, research was categorized into five interconnected groups that reflect the dominant dimensions sustainability aspects covered in the literature. Environmental sustainability which included efforts like waste reduction, water conservation and energy efficiency, social sustainability which encompassed initiatives such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and water conservation, social sustainability, which examined issues if labour rights, community involvement and employee wellbeing; governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which emphasized accountability, transparency, and the risks of green washing and technological innovation which included the use of smart systems, digital platforms, and eco-certifications procedures and circular economy approaches, which placed a strong emphasis on sustainable procurements, closed loop supply chains and resource reuse. To identify areas of agreement and discrepancies across regional methodological or conceptual contexts, findings were compared and contrasts within each category. This synthesis process not only allowed for the integration of fragmented insights but also ensured that the analysis remained systematic and replicable, in line with best practices for systematic reviews in management and sustainability research (Tranfield et al.,2003; Snyder,2019).

2.7 Quality Assessment

All included studies underwent a rigorous quality assessment utilizing standards modified from Kitchenham & charters (2007). Each study was evaluated in terms of the clarity of its research objectives, the suitability of the technique selected, the transparency of data collecting and analysis processes and the clarity of the research objectives were all taken into consideration while evaluating each study. Studies that satisfied all four criteria were classified as high quality, while those showed just slight methodological flaws but provided insightful information were graded as moderate quality. Crucially, following screening, no studies judged to be of low quality were retained, enhancing the validity and dependability of the combined results.

2.8 Limitations

This methodology provides rigor and transparency; it still has limitations. Limiting the review to peer-reviewed, English-language journal papers would have left out important findings from grey literature or non-English environments. Furthermore, even though the three databases used are comprehensive,

they might not include all pertinent publications. Finally, the small sample size (20 articles) reflects the specify of inclusion criteria but may limit generalizability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Environmental sustainability

Given the hospitality industry's historically large ecological footprints and susceptibility to the effects of climate change, environmental sustainability has been the most prevalent issue in the studied literature. Hotels, resorts and restaurants are widely acknowledged the most resource intensive sectors which generate substantial amounts of solid waste and greenhouse gas emissions in addition to using a lot of energy, water and non-renewable resources (Bohdanowicz, 2006, Karvounidi et al., 2022). Hospitality companies have been ecologically conscious practices in recent years due to combination of legal frameworks, customer expectations and competitive pressures. According to Han et al. (2018), the research repeatedly demonstrates that environmental sustainability is a strategic imperative that can yield operational efficiency, cost savings and long-term resilience.

One of the most researched facets of environmental sustainability in the hotel sector is energy efficiency. Hotels are among the most energy-intensive commercial buildings because of their 24-hour operations, high need for HVAC (heating ventilation and air conditioning), lighting and laundry services. According to studies, energy expenditures in hotels can account for up to 10% of total operating expenses, making energy management a financial and sustainability concern (Mensah, 2019). Many properties have adopted energy efficient appliances, motion sensor-based lightning systems, smart thermostats and LED lighting to name a few. Among other renewable energy sources, some have also invested in solar and geothermal energy systems

Although there is evidence of a so-called "green gap," wherein stated customer intentions do not always translate into behavioural support for eco-friendly hotels if the higher costs are involved, studies indicate that guests are becoming more supportive of such initiatives, especially when they are communicated transparently (Zhang et al., 2019).

In areas where water is scarce, water conservation has also taken centre stage in the hotel sector's environmental strategy. Hotels consumer vast amounts of water for laundry, kitchens, pools, and landscaping. Researchers observe that during the last ten years, there has been a notable increase in the usage of low-flow fixtures, water recycling technology, rain water harvesting and linen/towel reuse programs (Jones et al., 2014). Empirical evidence suggests that such initiatives are most effective when combined with guest education and staff training as behavioural factors strongly influence water consumption (Verma & Chandra, 2018). There are still issues with striking a balance between conservation efforts and visitor comfort, though, as overly stringent regulations could make visitors

unhappy.

In the reviewed literature, waste management and the concepts of circular economy have also become more prominent. Solid waste generated from food services, single use plastics and packaging poses a continuous environmental concern. Numerous studies demonstrate the increasing use of food waste tracking systems, composting and recycling initiatives (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019). Reducing food waste in particular has been a top goal, as hotels work with nearby charity to redistribute excess food and increasingly use inventory management tools. The incorporation of circular economy practices such as reusing grey water for landscaping or procuring from suppliers with closed loop systems but also represents an important frontier for sustainability initiatives in the future (Awan et al., 2022).

According to Sorensen & Grindsted (2021), green construction as well as eco certifications plays an integral role in embracing the eco conscious behaviour. Especially certifications like EarthCheck, Green key and LEED offer an organizational structure that eventually help in minimizing the waste reduction, water as well as energy loss. In contrast, academics emphasize that certificates serve as a signalling benchmarking tool for attracting eco-conscious customers.

However, some critiques point to the uneven accessibility of certification, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), due to cost and administrative burdens. This creates a divide in adoption, with larger international chains more likely to pursue certifications than independent hotels. The integration of smart technologies, including building management systems, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and AI-powered predictive analytics, has allowed hotels to monitor and optimize resource consumption in real time (Arenhart et al., 2024). For Eg: IoT sensors can automatically adjust HVAC usage based on occupancy patterns, significantly reducing unnecessary energy waste. While the literature identifies clear efficiency gains, scholars caution that technological solutions alone are insufficient without supportive organizational culture and staff engagement. Additionally, successful implementation requires employee training and the alignment of sustainability goals with broader business strategies (Kim et al., 2019).

3.2 Social Sustainability

In the last ten years, social sustainability has become an equally important pillar in hospitality studies, even if environmental sustainability has emerged as an equally critical attention. The hospitality sector is labour intensive and service oriented, communities and employees have a significant impact on how guests feel the business and in turn, how successful it is in the long run. Social sustainability in hospitality therefore encompasses issues such as fair labour practices, employee well-being, diversity and inclusion, community engagement, cultural preservation and equitable value distribution along supply chains (Henderson,2007, Baum, 2018). Regardless of its environmental accomplishments, a

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company cannot be deemed truly sustainable if it ignores the social dimension, according to numerous academics (Font et al.,2021).

One of the most prominent themes within social sustainability research is employee well-being and working conditions. Long hours, seasonal contracts, poor pay and frequent turnover are common characteristics of hospitality occupations that compromise workforce stability. Studies consistently highlight that improving working conditions is not only morally required but also advantageous from a business standpoint because motivated staff members provide better customer service and increase client loyalty (Deery & Jago, 2015). Initiatives such as providing and career development opportunities and adopting flexible schedules have been linked to improved employee satisfaction and retention **(**Kim et al.,2017). Additionally, some hotels have begun acknowledging the psychological effects of high stress work environments and incorporating wellness initiatives that promote both mental and physical health (Baum,2018).

The increased focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is closely tied to employee well being. The hospitality sector employs a highly diverse workforce across gender, ethnicity and nationality. Nonetheless, studies show that prejudice, impediments to promotion, and gender inequities still exist, especially in leadership roles (Ng & Pine, 2003). Stronger organizational policies to support gender equality, cultural sensitivity and diversity in hiring and promotion procedures have been demanded by recent studies (Manoharan et al., 2024). Due to diverse teams which likely have more creative solutions to complex problems, social sustainability frameworks increasingly view DEI as a force for creativity and as a competitiveness rather than primarily a compliance issue (Mahran et al., 2025).
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3.3 Governance and CSR

Another important aspect in sustainability in the hospitality sector is governance and Corporate social responsibility (CSR). It not only emphasizes on the major procedures, rules but also on ethical standards that can help make organizational decisions. CSR in the hospitality sector normally operates through reporting frameworks and meet to international standards. Governance together with corporate social responsibility are included into company strategy rather than being token of being accidental. (Font et al., 2021; Dahlsrud, 2008).

This is frequently reiterated transparent that CSR reports are mandatory. Hotels and other hospitality firms are increasingly expected to reveal their sustainability strategies through specialist online platforms, integrated annual reports or sustainability reports. These reports frequently adhere to a set of international standards which do include ISO 14001 environmental management principles, the Global Reporting initiative (GRI), and the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) of the UN.

Transparent reporting, according to Coltman et al. (2008), transparent reporting encourages confidence among all stakeholders, including visitors, investors, staff and regulators, by improving accountability as well as serving as a signalling mechanism. The validity of CSR reporting remains questioned since some businesses may selectively disclose information or prioritize symbolic projects while ignoring more substantive changes, a practice commonly referred as "greenwashing" (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

The literature also focused on how important stakeholders' involvement is to governance and corporate social responsibility. Business practices in the hospitality sector engage in constant, direct communication with multiple stakeholders, such as clients, staff, suppliers, local communities and governments, in contrast to manufacturing or extractive industries. Effective governance therefore requires a stakeholder-oriented approach that integrates diverse perspectives into decision making processes. Eg; hotels that engage in local communities in their operations and planning have a higher chance of obtaining a social license to operate and having a beneficial impact on the local economies (Font & Lynes, 2018). According to Kim et al. (2017), workers who believe their opinions are heard during sustainability planning also exhibit greater levels of dedication and job satisfaction.

3.4 Technology and Innovation.

The emerging growth in technology had had a significant impact on the adoption of sustainable practices in this sector. In order to reduce their environmental impact while preserving visitor satisfaction, hotels, resorts, and other service providers' are turning to technology as a critical tool for efficiency, accountability and transparency. Technology plays a crucial role in optimizing resources, improving operational effectiveness and changing the way that consumers interact with business (Arenhart et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2019). Digitalization and data analytics have been used by the hospitality sector as sustainable practices. Organizations can assess performance, track resource consumption across properties and identify areas for improvement (Mariani & Baggio, 2022).

Hotels make more effective adjustments to staffing, energy and supply chain operations using predictive analytics to foresee demos and patterns. AI-Powered solutions, for examples, can predict guest occupancy levels and align procurement processes to minimize food, waste, a persistent sustainability issue in hotel dining facilities (Filimonau & Delysia, 2019). The growing use of blockchain for supply chain further enhances governance and transparency, allowing stakeholders to trace the origin of food and commodities and verify compliance with sustainability criteria. (Hall, 2019)

3.5 Circular Economy

The concept of circular economy has gained popularity in sustainability studies and, in recent years

its use in the hospitality sector gained wider recognition. The circular economy places emphasis on resource efficiency, waste reduction, reuse, recycling and closed loop technologies that prolong product lifecycles than the conventional linear "take-make-dispose" model (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019). The CE framework in the hospitality sector presents opportunities to reduce environmental impacts while also creating economic and social value. Although the application of circular practices is still uneven and frequently concentrated in larger or more progressive enterprises, the reviewed literature depicts that hotels, restaurants, and resorts are becoming increasingly conscious of these practices (Awan et al.,2022).

Nevertheless, successful case studies show that circular practices can have both financial and environmental benefits. Hotels that have implemented comprehensive CE strategies report lower waste disposal costs, better reputation and stronger guest loyalty. Another criticism arising from the literature is the risk of superficial adoption, where hotels implement visible but limited circular practices (e.g., eliminating plastics straws) while ignoring more systemic challenges like food waste or supply chain circularity. This selective approach can lead to accusations of "circular washing," mirroring concerns about greenwashing in environmental sustainability and questioning in authenticity and questioning the authenticity of corporate commitments (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

4. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The systematic literature consists of 20 peer-reviewed papers published between 2018 and 2025 that evaluates sustainability in the hospitality sector. The final ruling indicates a developing commitment to sustainability in the areas of the environment, society, governance, technology and circular economy; Nevertheless, it also reveals enduring issues and gaps that must be addresses if the sector is to become resilient over the long term. The review highlights that often-overlooked component of social sustainability. Diversity, inclusion (DEI), equality, employee wellbeing and labour in sustainable hospitality are among the challenges that are increasingly being acknowledged (Baum, 2018; Manoharan et al., 2024). The necessity for strong social protection measures by increasing the vulnerability of the hospitality sector.

Nevertheless, despite more attention social sustainability is still less evident in reporting than environmental performance and lacks clear measures. (Coltman et al.,2008). This asymmetry limits accountability and risks relegating social issues to the periphery of sustainability strategies. Accountability is restricted by this imbalance, which therefore runs the risk of pushing social concerns to the sidelines of sustainability plans.

Although this work offers a thorough summary, it has a number of drawbacks. First, the review was restricted to peer- reviewed journal papers written in English, which would have left out pertinent

information from non-English contexts and grey literature such as industry reports. Secondly, only two databases (Scopus and web of science) were searched, which, while comprehensive may not capture all relevant publications. Third, although the inclusion of only twenty articles reflects strict eligibility requirements generalizability may be limited. Fourth, albeit methodical, the topic synthesis methodology included subjective interpretation judgements (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Finally, because sustainability research continues to develop, new developments especially in the areas of technology and circular practices may emerge beyond review period.

5. CONCLUSION

The hospitality sector practicing sustainability is a complex idea that encompasses aspects pertaining to the environment, society, government, technology and the circular economy, per this thorough literacy analysis. While environmental sustainability continues to dominate practice and academia. Collectively, these findings result to a shift in the hospitality sector to move away from small-scale improvements and toward more extensive and systemic sustainability efforts.

The study conceptually improves sustainability research by integrating several literacy strands into a coherent framework that illustrates the relationships between environmental, social, governance and technical aspects, the study theoretically advances sustainability research. It highlights the actual need to research more in the understudied areas like social responsibility metrics, the long term benefits of CSR governance and the scalability of circular economy techniques in the hospitality sector.

The evaluation highlights sustainability from a managerial perspective where it not only becomes a strategic need but a moral obligation for a business entity. Businesses operating in hospitality sector may understand improvements in operational efficiency, stakeholder confidence and reputational capital in which they integrate sustainability into the core strategy (Han et al.,2018; Rhou & Singhal., 2020). Managers should prioritize staff training, leadership commitment and stakeholder involvement in order to make sustainability a cultural norm. Additionally capacity building should guarantee that innovations are employed efficiency and distributed fairly, technology investments should be combined with capacity building.

The findings show that policymakers that consistent reporting procedures, incentives for SME and stronger regulatory frameworks are essential. In conclusion, the hospitality sector is undergoing a radical transformation, Sustainability is now a must for resilience and long-term competitiveness; it is no longer an option. Adopting the circular economy's tenets and incorporating sustainability into the environmental, social, governance and technological domains would enable the sector to ensure its own long-term survival and significantly contributing to global sustainability goals.

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