

Why do hotels go for sustainable practices? Eliciting the behavioral intentions of mid-market hotel guests

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Abstract

This research endeavors to analyze the impact of sustainability practices (SP) on the revisit intentions (RVI) and recommendation intentions (RCI) of young professionals staying in budget hotels through the mediating effect of guest comfort (GC). The study also examines the moderating role of technology readiness (TR) of the guest on the proposed relationships. Data were collected from 505 young Indian professionals working in service sectors located in Chandigarh Tri-city and Delhi NCR (India) and who travel for work and stay at mid-priced hotels. The structural equation modeling (SEM) technique was used to analyze the proposed hypotheses. The results show that SP has a positive impact on GC, RVI, and RCI. Further, GC has positive impact on RVI and RCI. The results also show that TR moderates the relationship between SP and GC. Finally, the relationship between GC and RCI is also moderated by TR. Customers' RVI and RCI are not only created when hotels incorporate SP but also when the degree of GC is not compromised but enhanced. In this way, it is recommended that managers carefully use the SP as an important tool to raise the level of GC. The study reveals that young professionals tend to have strong RVI and RCI toward such hotels, which have implemented technology and SP in the hotel operations while maintaining the GC level. In this sense, the SP implemented by the hotels acts as a strategic tool in the creation of GC, RVI, and RCI.

Keywords

Sustainability practices, technology readiness, guest comfort, revisit intention, recommendation intentions, structural equation modeling

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development, introduced by the United Nations in 1987, has evolved into an important global trend affecting both practical and academic research (Alnawas et al., 2024). It integrates environmental principles with socio-economic objectives, with the aim of meeting human needs in a balanced and fair manner (Barakagira and Paapa, 2024). Over the past six decades, academic debates have increasingly advocated for the reimagining of industrial growth patterns under capitalism to address environmental crises such as global

warming and pollution, highlighting the need for a green economic transition (Fuchs et al., 2024). This transition is seen as an active commitment to sustainable development, by increasing public awareness and highlighting the need for corporate adherence to sustainability principles (Li et al., 2023). The global sustainable market is expected to grow by US\$335.93

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billion during 2023-2027, with annual growth of 9.54% (Research and Markets, 2022), indicating a growing emphasis on sustainability in the industry. Despite the widespread acceptance of sustainability in other sectors, the hotel industry has been relatively slow in adopting these standards (Chung et al., 2022). The main objectives of early hotel sustainability projects were to minimize waste and decrease energy costs (Barakagira and Paapa, 2024). However, there has been a notable change in this particular sector, where sustainability is now regarded as a strategic aspect rather than simply a means to save expenses. As a result, hotels allocate substantial resources toward upgrading their IT systems. In 2016, mid-market hotels had the highest proportion of total expenses dedicated to this purpose, at 7.3%. They were followed by higher-end hotels at 6.1% and luxury hotels at 5.6% (Adelson, 2016). Hotels are now embedding the Elkington's (1997) triple bottom triple line approach- encompassing economic, social, and environmental sustainability- into their core strategies (Eid et al., 2021).

Recent strides by major hotel chains illustrate this shift. For example, the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) reports significant environmental achievements including initial reduction in carbon emissions and increased use of renewable energy by the utilization of 387 Mn MJ renewable energy, a reduction of 79,995 tCO₂e emission, and the harvesting of 1,93,134 KL rainwater. The Taj Mahal palace in Mumbai part of IHCL notably operates as 100% green hotel showcasing potential for comprehensive integration of sustainability to hotel operations (IHCL Annual Report 2022-23). Similarly, a recent report from the giant hotel chain IHG (IndianContinental Hotels Group, 2023) suggests a significant reduction in carbon emission by almost 2% in comparison to 2019. IoT (Internet of Things) devices, like thermostats and motion sensors, significantly reduce energy consumption by 20% to 45%, exemplifying the sector's move toward smarter resource management (Lakshmi and Lakshminarayana, 2024). The integration of advanced technologies such as IoT in hotel operations not only contributes operational efficiency and resource management but also aligns with the increasing customer preferences for environmentally responsible and technologically advanced accommodation (Michalis, 2024). Additionally, by using IoT and new technologies, hotels can implement cost-cutting initiatives and contribute

to "green" on-property system operations. Leading hotel groups such as Marriott International and Radisson are utilizing AI and software solutions to optimize energy use, while Hilton and Wyndham Hotels have implemented sophisticated water management systems to minimize waste (Gunduz Songur et al., 2023). These efforts reflect a broader trend within the industry for their contribution to sustainability in their operations. This push toward sustainable practices is further reinforced by changing guest expectations, where environmental stewardship can enhance hotels marketability and support premium pricing strategies (Barakagira and Paapa, 2024).

The dynamic nature of this changing landscape provides a valuable opportunity for educational research, specifically in understanding the influence of sustainable practices on tourist behavior and the financial/non-financial outcomes of the hotel business. Although extensive research has been conducted on the impact of sustainability on customer satisfaction and corporate performance, there are still notable knowledge gaps regarding the specific dynamics of how sustainability and technology adoption intersect in hotels, specifically in the mid-market segment. Therefore, this study intends to bridge the gap by examining the connections between hotels' implementation of sustainable technology, guest comforts, guest level of readiness with the technology, and their behavioral intentions in terms of RVI and RCI.

The importance of this study is that it gives focus to the mid-market hotels segment, which usually bears different challenges and opportunities in implementing sustainability due to their scale and consumer demographics. Building on this background, the paper further investigates how these hotels strategically apply technology in enhancing sustainability and guest comfort, thus providing new insights into the strategic application of technology for sustainable development within the hotel industry. Furthermore, the study introduces a new concept of guest comfort within the framework of technology development and explores its mediating role between the use of technology as sustainable practices and the behavioral intentions of the guest. Finally, the study fills not only a research gap but also has practical consequences for hotel management: to give an impulse to enhance the guest satisfaction and loyalty through technologically integrated sustainable practices. This study, therefore, tries to provide

an in-depth analysis of how mid-market hotels can integrate sustainability into their business models in a profitable way. This is by exploring how change in selected hotel practices can yield a more sustainable hospitality experience for guests. The manuscript will not only discuss specific practices—such as transitioning to energy-efficient lighting systems or serving sustainable food—but also explore the larger meaning and possible outcomes of these practices for the industry as a whole.

In essence, the study aims to elucidate the complex dynamics of the contemporary hotel industry by providing a comprehensive understanding of how advancements in technology enhance guest satisfaction in terms of revisit and recommendation intentions and ensure long-term economic success. By doing so, this study aims to create a roadmap for other industries that combine technology and sustainability. It highlights the potential of innovative approaches that can lead to improved business outcomes and increased guest loyalty in an increasingly competitive and environmentally conscious market.

The remainder of the paper's structure consists of a literature review, which forms the theoretical basis of the hypotheses, and a method section that describes the study's design and execution in detail. After that, the paper presents the results and begins a discussion of them. In the next section, study discusses the theoretical and practical implications. The study is concluded with the limitations and future scope of the study.

Literature review

Conceptual framework

The conceptual model of the current study relies on the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The S-O-R model is one of the significant models used by earlier researchers to explain the consequences of the environmental features of the hospitality industry regarding the internal assessment of the consumers and then their behavior (Choi and Kandampully, 2019). In line with the S-O-R model, an individual response to the environment occurs in three stages: when an individual is exposed to an external stimulus (S), he/she develops internal states/evaluations (O) which will eventually evoke responses (R). Internal states/evaluations (O) may mediate the relationship between stimuli (S) and responses (R) in humans (Hameed

et al., 2022). The present study relates to the physical and psychological comfort of the guest (O) offered by the sustainability practices of a hotel (S) which in turn affect the response of the guest in the form of their revisit and recommendation intention (R). Another layer of complexity is added to this model by examining the moderating role of technology readiness on the proposed SOR relationships.

Sustainability practices

Terms such as “green,” “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” have become buzzwords in the hotel industry. Nowadays, hotel guests are increasingly aware of environmental concerns and recognize that their stay in a hotel may have a direct or indirect impact on the environment (Gunduz Songur et al., 2023). A substantial body of research indicates that guests consistently prefer sustainable hotels (Han et al., 2018). This preference is supported by the International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI) study, which revealed that 90% of hotel guests prefer to stay in hotels that demonstrate environmental care. Strict environmental regulatory policies have also encouraged hotels to incorporate sustainability practices. Consequently, many hotels have integrated sustainability principles into their everyday operations to protect the environment and attract environmentally conscious customers. The adoption of sustainability practices, along with affiliation with recognized certification bodies such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which is a green building certification program), Green Globe (sustainable tourism certification), ISO (International Organization for Standardization, a certification signed by a third-party indicating a company runs to an ISO standard), and others, can enhance guest satisfaction, and promote eco-friendly behavior (Fuchs et al., 2024). Improved levels of guest satisfaction are critical for maintaining competitiveness and ensuring economic sustainability. Aside from the moral imperative, engaging in sustainability activities offers several advantages such as cost savings, increased efficiency, and higher profitability, building goodwill, and achieving a competitive market advantage (Han et al., 2018). This creates a win-win situation for hotels (Akel and Noyan, 2024). However, it is important to note that the financial returns from investing in sustainable practices or technology might be slow and uncertain (Han et al., 2018). In

summary, the integration of sustainable practices in the hotel industry is driven by guest preferences, regulatory pressures, and the potential for enhanced guest satisfaction and economic benefits. While the intermediate financial payoff maybe uncertain, the long-term advantages of sustainability for competitiveness and guest loyalty make it strategic imperative for hotels.

The influence of sustainable practices on guest comfort

Numerous studies (Akel and Noyan, 2024; Moise et al., 2020; Olya et al., 2021) have consistently demonstrated that hotels' sustainability efforts positively impact guest satisfaction. Furthermore, high employee satisfaction is also documented in organizations where management prioritizes sustainability practices such as their employees' social welfare (Alzghoul et al., 2024). This high employee satisfaction translates into high customer satisfaction, as contented employees are more likely to perform well in their roles (Choudhary and Kunte, 2023). Guest comfort is an important component of overall satisfaction and is influenced by the services and facilities provided by a hotel to meet the physical, functional, and psychological needs of the guest. Therefore, it is critical for a hotel to implement sustainability measures that have no direct impact on guests negatively. For example, the installation of solar panels or sustainable transportation initiative can be implemented without affecting guest comfort (Gerdt et al., 2019). However, eco-friendly activities are often perceived as austere and uncomfortable, contradicting the hedonistic nature of tourism. Lee et al. (2018) argue that sustainable practices may sometimes require sacrificing some level of guest comfort, which can negative impact on service quality and customer satisfaction. Gerdt et al. (2019) emphasizes that certain aspects of sustainable measures, if not handled carefully—such as towel or linen reuse, which may make guest feel compelled—can negatively impact guest comfort. Conversely, if these measures are managed meticulously, they can positively affect guest comfort and lead to pleasurable experiences. The challenge lies in determining whether innovative sustainable practices can improve guest comfort, leading to numerous positive consequences. It is essential to stimulate this improvement to leverage the benefits fully. Based on prior research, this study hypothesized

a positive and significant relationship between sustainable behavior of the hotels and guest comfort. This hypothesis is grounded in the literature that suggests well-implemented sustainable practices can enhance guest comfort and satisfaction, thus benefitting the hotel industry.

H1: Hotel sustainable practices have a positive and significant impact on guest comfort with the hotel.

The influence of sustainable practices on RVI and RCI

Previous consumer research on hotel eco-practices has yielded ambiguous results. According to Ferreira et al. (2023), environmental initiatives are key factors influencing guest hotel choice. However, Olya et al. (2021) emphasize that visitors' behavior may not always align with their ecological concerns. Despite these mixed opinions, many hotels are adopting green strategies in response to growing public demand for environmental responsibility (Eid et al., 2021). Several recent studies have found that implementing sustainable procedures in hotels can boost customer satisfaction, revenue, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Hameed et al., 2022; Tseng et al., 2021). Moise et al. (2020) suggest that guests are more likely to return to hotels with sustainable practices, indicating that hotels should develop effective methods of communicating their environmental activities. Guests tend to give positive reviews to hotels using environmentally friendly techniques (Merli et al., 2019). Research shows that companies' environmental responsibility significantly enhances guests' inclinations to stay in a green hotel and promote them through word-of-mouth (Hameed et al., 2022). Additionally, hotel green practices have been shown to impact customer satisfaction, repeat reservations, and favorable word-of-mouth intentions (Moise et al., 2020). Olya et al. (2021) assert that guests are more likely to return to a hotel that engaged in social and environmental sustainability measures. As many organizations embrace environmental initiatives to increase client trust, (Hameed et al., 2022), it is crucial to determine whether sustainable practices lead to increased visitors' intention to revisit (RVI) (Merli et al., 2019) and recommend (RCI) to hotel brand to others. Improved guest comfort, a key antecedent for building trust (Wang et al., 2021), is central to this relationship.

Building on these insights, this study examines whether a hotel's stronger dedication to eco-friendly measures results in increased guest loyalty toward such green establishments. Based on this, we have proposed the following hypotheses:

H2: Hotel sustainable practices have a positive and significant impact on guest RVI

H3: Hotel sustainable practices have a positive and significant impact on guest RCI

The influence of guest comfort on RVI and RCI

Developing long-term relationships with customers is increasingly vital for hotels, as customer satisfaction and the potential for repeat business are closely intertwined (D'Souza et al., 2021). Tourist satisfaction is a critical component in shaping future behavior within the tourism industry. Loyalty, which indicates a person's inclination to promote a location and return to a venue, plays a significant role in this content. Research has identified positive and vivid influences on travelers' desire to return and their willingness to share their experiences at a destination (Meng and Han, 2018).

Previous studies have assessed comfort in terms of both physical and psychological comfort (Wensley et al., 2017). Abdulaali et al. (2020) integrated these two dimensions of comfort within the hospitality industry, arguing that comfort is the most crucial component of guest satisfaction. Numerous tourism-related studies have investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, revealing that satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and spread positive WoM (Moise et al., 2020; Hameed et al., 2022).

Maintaining customer satisfaction is essential for businesses to succeed in a competitive landscape, and understanding consumer behavior is equally vital (Koch et al., 2020). In the service industry, factors contributing to customer comfort, especially psychological comfort (PC), reduce stress and strengthen relationships (Ainsworth and Foster, 2017). Trust, a potential result of comfort in the service sector- including psychology, healthcare, and retail- is crucial for developing long-term relationships with clients (Ai et al., 2022).

Furthermore, previous research has shown that comfort positively influences service quality, which leads to satisfaction (Dabholkar et al., 2000). Comfort with a service provider influences satisfaction, which subsequently leads to revisit intentions and positive WoM (Merli et al., 2019). Eid et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of satisfaction in establishing long-term relationships between service providers and clients. Supporting previous research, Sparks and Browning (2011); Tseng et al. (2021) investigated hotel online reviews and discovered that positive reviews create a favorable impression of the hotel in terms of trust and belief. This positive impression impacts psychological comfort, ultimately encouraging positive WoM and revisit intentions.

In Summary, the literature underscores the necessity of satisfied consumers for fostering healthy long-term relationships, highlighting the significant beneficial influence of comfort on satisfaction. These findings are further examined through the subsequent hypotheses:

H4: Guest comfort has a positive and significant impact on guest RVI

H5: Guest comfort has a positive and significant impact on guest RCI

The mediation effect of guest comfort

The term "comfort" originated from the Latin word "confortare," meaning "to support firmly and lessen pain" (Kolcaba and Kolcaba, 1991). This concept is widely discussed in the literature on nursing, work psychology, and environmental psychology. Ariffin et al. (2011) emphasize that "comfort" is one of the most significant elements of hotel hospitality (Gaur et al., 2019) and is a crucial factor in delivering quality service that leads to guest satisfaction. In simple terms, anything in a guest room that contributes to a pleasant stay is considered part of the concept of comfort. For hotels, comfort extends beyond the physical surroundings to encompass the guest's emotional or psychological well-being or sense of comfort while they are there (Ariffin et al., 2011). Psychological comfort refers to the customer's perception of the service provider's products and services as safe, convenient, and pleasurable. Hepple et al. (1990) contend that hospitality is a blend of tangible and intangible features, further highlighting the multifaceted nature of comfort. According to Vischer (2007),

physical comfort is the fundamental human requirement, functional comfort is the value-boosting feature, and psychological comfort comprises the traits of services or surroundings that cater to a guest's emotions and sentiments. Guest comfort, therefore, can be defined as a feeling of ease that includes both physical and emotional aspects. This can be characterized by having comfortable furniture, a pleasant atmosphere, easy communicate with the staff, privacy, convenience services, cleanliness and the feeling of being "at home away from home" (Ainsworth and Foster, 2017; Ariffin et al., 2011).

Previous research (Dabholkar et al., 2000) has shown that comfort is vital in providing great service and sustaining a healthy bond between a guest and a hotel. As a megatrend, sustainability practices are being implemented in the hotel sector (Gerdt et al., 2019; Koch et al., 2020). However, sustainable practices might lead to guest discomfort or require them to make compromises regarding their comfort levels (Lee et al., 2018). It is critical for hotel management to adopt sustainable policies in a way that does not directly impact guests (Gerdt et al., 2019). Given the significance of comfort to the client, if high levels of comfort are not met, customers may switch service providers. Comfort is highlighted as a key element in the establishment and managing relationships with service providers (Gaur et al., 2019). To ensure guest satisfaction, particular attention should be paid to guest comfort. Since comfort positively influences satisfaction, it consequently impacts guest revisit intention and recommendation intention. Revisit intention refers to tourists' willingness to return to a destination in the future (Merli et al., 2019), while recommendation intention signifies the level of endorsement an individual expresses toward a product, service, or company at a given time (Oppermann, 2000).

Considering the significant mediating effect of guest comfort, we propose the following hypotheses:

H6: Guest comfort mediates the relationship between hotel sustainable practices and RVI

H7: Guest comfort mediates the relationship between hotel sustainable practices and RCI

The moderating effect of technology readiness of hotel guest

Although new innovation technologies are shaping the future of the hospitality industry,

various scholars have highlighted the importance of understanding user readiness to adopt technology-based systems in light of these advancements and their impact on customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2020). Technology readiness (TR) represents a personality characteristic that gauges an individual's inclination toward technology. Earlier studies have often considered TR as having a direct impact on satisfaction, particularly in settings where technology plays a pivotal role in the product or service (Kim et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017).

As technology becomes more prominent in the hotel industry for gaining a competitive advantage, improving service quality, increasing staff productivity, lowering operating expenses, and enhancing sustainability (Eid et al., 2021), it unquestionably plays an important role in enhancing guest experiences within the tourist industry (Barakagira and Paapa, 2024). Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the readiness of guests to accept technology-based products and services. Kim et al. (2020) argue that customers with high levels of technological readiness have a favorable attitude toward new technology and are more likely to appreciate the benefits of adopting the technologies used in hotels to meet sustainability goals.

According to Parasuraman (2000: 308), TR is defined as an "individual's propensity to embrace and use new technologies." Similarly, Blut and Wang (2020) described TR as a person's desire to utilize and appreciate new technology. TR is also considered a personality trait rooted in perceptions, beliefs, and feelings that evaluate a person's proclivity for technology. Prior studies by Tuomi et al. (2021) indicated that beliefs about new technology can be both favorable and unfavorable at any given time, influencing the tendency to accept or reject (Parasuraman, 2000). Parasuraman (2000) identified four dimensions: optimism, innovation, discomfort, and insecurity. Optimism and innovativeness are contributors to TR and are referred to as Positive Technology Readiness (PTR), whereas discomfort and insecurity are inhibitors and are referred to as Negative Technology Readiness (NTR). Customers' perceptions of the simplicity and utility of tech-driven services positively correlate with their optimism, leading to increased satisfaction (Tuomi et al. (2021). Innovativeness reflects a customer's tendency to be at the forefront of embracing novel technologies, acting as a catalyst (Li et al., 2021). Innovative customers have a keen interest in emerging technologies,

view themselves as adept at utilizing these tools, and handle the unpredictability they introduce effectively (Zhi et al., 2023). On the other hand, ‘discomfort’ describes scenarios where individuals struggle to use technology and feel overwhelmed by their lack of proficiency (Zulkifly et al., 2016). This ‘discomfort’ is described as the perception of not having control over technology, coupled with a feeling of being overwhelmed by it. This can lead to “technostress,” which negatively affects guest satisfaction (Lee et al., 2023). ‘Insecurity’ pertains to individuals’ lack of trust in technology and doubts about its reliability (Blut and Wang, 2020). Karahanna et al. (1999) referred to anxiety experienced by individuals hesitant to use technology due to their skepticism. This anxiety centers on specific aspects of transactions involving technology instead of addressing technology in its entirety (Son and Han, 2011).

Previous research by Kleijnen et al. (2004) demonstrated that TR is a significant factor or moderator of consumer attitudes toward and adoption of technology. Furthermore, individuals with high technology readiness are most inclined to accept, appreciate, and pay a premium for technology-added services (Hao et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2021).

According to earlier research, the TR of the guest plays a substantial moderating role in the adoption of new technologies. As a result, it is critical for hotels to carefully select and integrate new technology without compromising guest comfort while also evaluating how it will contribute through the enrichment of the guest experience. So, the following hypotheses are put to the test with the help of the evidence from the aforementioned literature:

H8: Technology readiness of guest moderates the relationship between hotel sustainable practices and guest comfort

H9: Technology readiness of guest moderates the relationship between hotel sustainable practices and revisit intentions

H10: Technology readiness of guest moderates the relationship between hotel sustainable practices and recommendation intentions

H11: Technology readiness of guest moderates the relationship between guest comfort and revisit intentions

H12: Technology readiness of guest moderates the relationship between guest comfort and recommendation intentions

Methods

Participants and procedure

In this cross-sectional study, the data were gathered using a multistage random sampling approach from young professionals located in Chandigarh Tri-city and Delhi NCR (India) who often visit hotels, especially mid-market segment hotels, for business or leisure purposes. Many factors led this study to choose Chandigarh Tri-city and Delhi NCR for data collecting. First, both regions are economic hubs with numerous young IT, banking, retail, telecommunications, and healthcare workers. Due to its strong infrastructure and job prospects, Delhi NCR draws young professionals, while Chandigarh Tri-city’s well-planned urban layout and high level of life make it excellent for researching professional habits and preferences. Second, including both locations ensures a diverse sample, with Delhi NCR offering insights from a fast-paced metropolis and Chandigarh Tri-city from a structured yet active professional scene. Thirdly, both areas have well-established hospitality businesses with many mid-market hotels for business and leisure guests and accurate data. High response rates and reliable data are achieved by these locations’ excellent connectivity and transportation infrastructure. High professional stress in these regions necessitates studying young professionals’ holiday habits to help the hospitality industry relieve tension. Finally, data from these major economic hubs helps hoteliers design successful marketing and service plans, making the Indian hotel business more competitive. Thus, Chandigarh Tri-city and Delhi NCR represent young professionals’ Indian travel preferences.

With a population of over 1.42 billion, India is known as the most populous country in the world (United Nations, 2023), which has its own pros and cons. However, with an average age of 28.2, it boasts one of the world’s youngest populations (Population of India – Demographics, 2023). Every year, a considerable number of young citizens enter the workforce, resulting in a working-age population that exceeds the number of dependents. India has one-fifth of the world’s young people, which could help the country reach its ambitious goal of becoming a US \$5 trillion economy. However, young professionals from almost all the service sectors—IT, Banking, Retail, Nursing, Telecom, etc.—are paying a high price in terms of critical health

conditions as a result of the constant physical and mental stress of their jobs (Padma et al., 2015), and suggest that one of the greatest ways to reduce stress is to simply take a good vacation. For the Indian tourism and hospitality industries, this appears to be an exciting prospect that they would want to capitalize on by attracting a large number of clients who are technophiles.

According to the Indian Tourism and Hospitality Industry Analysis by IBEF (2024), the hotel industry in India, which encompasses domestic, inbound, and outbound segments, was valued at US \$32 billion in FY20. It is projected to grow to US \$52 billion by FY27, thanks to increasing demand from travelers and the continuous endeavors of travel agents to enhance the sector. According to the CARE (Credit Analysis and Research Limited) ratings agency, India will add over 50,000 branded hotel rooms added between 2018/19 and 2023/24, with around 34,000 of those rooms being mid-market. The mid-market segment would have the greatest influx of hotel rooms, at 49.5% followed by upscale at 21.9%, budget at 18.1%, and luxury at 10.5% (Kaushik, 2019). Because the hotel or accommodation sector is an energy- and water-intensive industry, it is critical to investigate guest attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable practices implemented in hotels, particularly in mid-market hotels, which have the largest market share.

The respondents were rigorously scrutinized since the study's target audience comprised genuine customers, and those who were recognized as visiting and staying in mid-market hotels were invited to complete a questionnaire. Google Docs was used to make an online survey questionnaire, and the link was e-mailed to the target audience. Pirsch et al. (2007) research demonstrates that e-mail surveys are an effective method for gathering information from a large percentage of the population, in this case the young IT professionals.

The participants were notified that their participation was purely voluntary and that benefits of any sort would not be offered. Before starting to gather final data, we piloted the questionnaire with 46 locals in Chandigarh, and the results showed an adequate Cronbach's alpha coefficient value ($>.70$). As per the requirement, some modifications were made to the wording and order of the questions used to measure the components of this study to reduce the possibility of "order bias" (Aggarwal et al., 2022a). In addition, to prevent method bias, respondents were informed of the

confidentiality of their data. The final questionnaire was sent to 578 respondents, and 519 of them filled it out and sent it back. Furthermore, 14 responses did not make it to the final analysis due to missing data or unengaged respondents. As a result, 505 relevant surveys remained. As suggested by Hair et al. (2006), the sample size could be tenfold the number of instrument variables. The present investigation's instrument has 33 items, so selecting 330 participants would be a decent size of the sample. Since, according to Fowler (2013), the greater the response rate, the lesser the sample bias, the 87.37% (505/578) response rate indicates that there is little to no risk of sample bias. Out of 505 participants, 292 (57.82%) were males, and 213 (45.74%) were females. Two hundred and nine (41.38%) were unmarried, and 296 respondents (58.62%) were married. One hundred forty-six respondents (28.91%) were less than 25 years of age; 157 (1.09%) were between the age groups of 25–30 years.

There were 202 responses (40%) received from the participants aged between 30 and 35. This indicates that the median age of the respondents was under 30, and 60% were under the age of 30. In terms of annual income, 339 (67.13%) of the participants fell into the "high income class" (USD 13,654; 1 USD = 77.60 INR) according to the World Bank Atlas method-derived classifications. Moreover, this figure significantly exceeds the average individual income in India. The remaining participants fall into the upper-middle-class bracket, earning less than INR 1,000,000 annually.

Measures

Based on a review of the relevant literature, several scales were chosen to evaluate the constructs of the proposed model. First, the *sustainable practices* of the mid-market hotel were evaluated using the scale developed by Berezan et al. (2013). It consists of 10 statements measuring the sustainability practices of a mid-market hotel. The sample items consist of "The hotel has a recycling policy in place; The hotel makes an effort to purchase green products and supplies."

Next, to measure the *guest comfort*, a pool of items was created from existing literature. Initially, 16 items were generated. Ten experts were selected and invited to participate in an expert survey to evaluate the application of the indicators as well as to validate the selected

indicators. These experts include individuals from various service sectors, such as tour operators, hotel managers, and academicians. The 16 items were sent to these experts to rate the significance of each statement, considering the research objective in mind. The experts were asked to rate the items on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 stands for “most important” and 1 stands for “least important.” Indicators with scores below 35 ($3.5 * 10$) were eliminated from further consideration when the results of the survey were tallied (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019). The experts were also asked to identify new or alternative indicators for each construct. Five indicators had an average score of less than 3.5, hence a decision was taken to drop those indicators, and finally 11 indicators were sent for pilot study. Sample items consist of “The hotel has comfortable upholstery, furniture, and beds; the hotel has an attractive ambiance; the hotel takes care of cleanliness and hygiene effectively; the hotel provides a variety of recreational facilities”.

Next, to measure the *revisit intentions* of the young professionals toward a sustainable mid-market hotel with the questionnaire provided by Mittal et al. (2021). The scale consists of 3 items. The sample items consist of “I intend to stay in a hotel with sustainable practices; I would love to stay in a hotel with sustainable practices again.”

Next, the recommendation intentions were measured using the 3-item scale developed by Mittal et al. (2021). The three-item scale measures the Recommendation Intentions of a young professional toward a mid-market hotel that has sustainable practices. The sample statements include: “I would recommend a hotel with sustainable practices to my friends, I would say positive things about a hotel with sustainable practices”.

Technological readiness was measured using a scale developed by Parasuraman and Colby (2015). This scale has 16 items and split into four key dimensions: Optimism (4 items), Innovativeness (4 items), Insecurity (4 items), and Discomfort (4 items). The sample items of the first dimension “Optimism” consist of “New technologies contribute to a better quality of life,” and “Technology gives me more freedom of mobility.” The sample items of the second dimension “Innovativeness” consist of “Other people come to me for advice on new technologies,” and “I can usually figure out new high-tech products and services without help from others.” The sample items of the third dimension,

“Insecurity” consist of “People are too dependent on technology to do things for them,” and “Too much technology distracts people to a point that is harmful.” Finally, the sample items of the fourth dimension “Discomfort” consist of “Sometimes, I think that technology systems are not designed for use by ordinary people,” “When I get technical support from a provider of a high-tech product or service,” and “I sometimes feel as if I am being taken advantage of by someone who knows more than I do.”

All the statements of the questionnaire were measured in a 5-point Likert scale, in which 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. This study collected its data through a self-administered questionnaire.

Scale purification

A pilot study was undertaken to ensure that the research questions were clearly defined, and that no ambiguity was created between the respondents. The pilot study also allowed us to verify the correctness of the questions and the reliability of the data collected. In the pilot study, all 43 items were put to use. An overall sample size of 252 individuals took part in the survey. IT workers in India who choose to stay in mid-market hotels were included in the study’s sample. Four items were rejected at this stage, owing to low communality or low factor loading (0.6 or less), or because they had cross-loading. Two items (GC3 and GC4) belong to the factor of “Guest Comfort” and two items (SP9 and SP10) belong to the factor of sustainable practices. The ratio of items to respondents in the pilot study was 1:5 or greater, as recommended by the literature (Bentler and Chou, 1987). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the maximum likelihood estimator. The Varimax orthogonal rotation approach was utilized to identify the unique factors. The “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity” were used to test the applicability of exploratory factor analysis. Results of the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were found to be statistically significant at a 0.001 level of confidence for the value of KMO (.921). Factor loadings of greater than 0.5 are seen in all variables. The total variance explained by extracted factors is 76.28% which is satisfactory as suggested by Osborne et al. (2008). There are eight distinct factors based on the EFA’s findings. The identified dimensions were as follows: sustainable practices having 8 items with Cronbach’s alpha

as 879, guest comfort has 9 items with Cronbach's alpha as .880, revisit intentions have three items with Cronbach's alpha as .826, recommendation intentions have three items with Cronbach's alpha as .893. Technology readiness has a further four sub-dimensions, namely: Optimism, Innovativeness, Discomfort and Insecurity. The optimism sub-dimension has four statements with Cronbach's alpha as .915, the innovativeness sub-dimension has four statements with Cronbach's alpha as .772, discomfort sub-dimension has four statements with Cronbach's alpha as .908 and finally the insecurity sub-dimension has four statements with Cronbach's alpha as .907. Finally, 39 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale were retained (refer Annexure I), and the validity of the scale was established through confirmatory factor analysis (Hajra and Aggarwal, 2023).

Data analysis

The proposed model (Figure 1) hypothesized the causal link between one exogenous variable (Sustainable Practices), one mediator (Guest Comfort), two endogenous variables (Revisit Intentions and Recommendation Intentions) and one moderator (Technology Readiness). The demographic variables were taken as the control variables in the model. The two-step technique provided by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was employed to investigate the hypothesized relationships with AMOS 18. The reliability and validity of the measurement model were examined in the first step. The path analysis was then put to the test hypotheses as a second step in the process. The estimated path linkages were determined using a maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). As MLE allows us to pick the distribution parameters that best characterize the available data, it was chosen above OLS (Ordinary Least Square). Consequently, more accurate parameter estimates can be calculated using the MLE approach. The study performed bootstrapping based on a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval to test the mediating role of GC on the relationship between SP and BI in terms of guest RVI and RCI. Further, the grouping variable low technology readiness and high technology readiness is used to evaluate the moderating impact of technology readiness concern with the relationship between sustainability practices, guest comfort, and BI. To perform a moderation analysis each grouping factor requires a minimum sample size of 100

respondents (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The study used the critical ratio and standard error and unstandardized estimates, that obtained from the correlation of estimations to make the comparison between the two groups (Iglesias and Vázquez, 2001). The Z-test was also used to evaluate the impact of the two kinds of categories on predicted relationships (Hair et al., 2006).

Common method biasness

The current study collected data through self-reports, which could potentially lead to the common method bias inherent in the results. To determine whether common method bias was present, the researchers used Harman's single-factor analysis. Factor analysis was done for all items, after which the researchers determined whether a single factor accounted for over 50% of the variance. Using EFA through SPSS 20.0, all variables tested gave one factor solution without rotation. The extracted single component had a variance of 31.49, which is less than 50% of the total scale variance. This means that common method bias was absent in this study (Aggarwal et al., 2022b).

Results

In this section, the reliability and validity of the proposed model were examined in measurement model and the hypothesized relationships were tested in structural model with the help of the AMOS software.

Measurement model

There were two invariance tests performed on the proposed model: metric invariance and configural invariance. Configural invariance was used to determine if the suggested measurement model's residual variance, intercepts, and factor loadings were consistent or not. Measurement items with identical factor loading patterns across groups are referred to as "configural invariance" (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). To conduct the configural invariance test, we implemented the proposed measurement model with two independent sub-groups that were estimated independently of one another. The outcomes of the configural invariance tests indicated a satisfactory model fit with $CMIN = 2893.706$, $p < 0.001$, $DoF = 1272$, $CMIN/DoF = 2.275 \leq 3$, $CFI = 0.904 \geq 0.90$, $PGFI = 0.664 \geq 0.50$, $GFI = 0.824 \geq 0.80$, $RMSEA = 0.050 \leq$

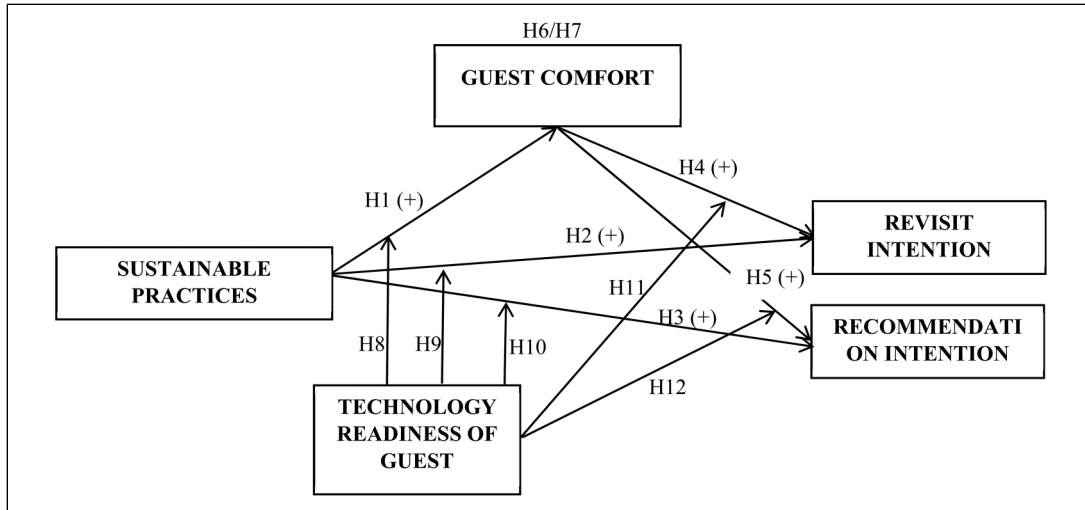


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

0.08, $RMR = 0.050 \leq 0.08$. Consequently, the suggested model has configural invariance as the model fit value reveals acceptable bounds. Statistical significance was found in the factor loadings across subgroups, indicating that the model exhibits configural invariance.

Metric invariance provides a thorough evaluation of invariance by generating scale intervals or equal metrics across the group (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). Metric invariance means that distinct observed variables are assessed using the same metrics and scale intervals across different groups (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). The CMIN and DoF for two models were compared in order to assess metric invariance. There were no constraints on factor loadings in the first model, and there were constraints on factor loadings across two sub-groups in the second model. The fit measure was insignificant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 52.7$, $\Delta D.F. = 38$, $p = 0.057 > 0.05$), indicating that metric invariance exists. Furthermore, all model fit values were greater than the specified criteria $CMIN = 2946.40$, $p < 0.001$, $DoF = 1310$, $CMIN/DoF = 2.249 \leq 3$, $CFI = 0.892 \geq 0.90$, $PGFI = 0.667 \geq 0.50$, $GFI = 0.813 \geq 0.80$, $RMSEA = 0.053 \leq 0.08$, $RMR = 0.073 \leq 0.08$.

We can proceed with these two subgroups and test the multi-group moderation analysis because the results of metric and configural invariance were robust.

Based on the Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability scores presented in Table 1, the factors demonstrate strong internal consistency, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein

(1978). To assess construct validity, the study examined both discriminant and convergent validity as outlined by Hair et al. (2006). Convergent validity for a measurement model can be ascertained if the standardized factor loadings for each statement are notably tied to their designated factor, as indicated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The standardized values were observed to surpass the set benchmark of 0.50, as highlighted by Hair et al. (2010) and Hair et al. (1998). Additionally, these estimates were deemed statistically significant, given that the p -value was below the 0.05 significance level, as mentioned by Hair et al. (2010). Hair et al. (2010) introduced an alternate method to evaluate convergent validity, suggesting that Composite Reliability (CR) should exceed the average variance extracted (AVE). Furthermore, the AVE should be at least 0.50 as posited by Fornell and Larcker (1981). As depicted in Table 1, the measurement model adheres to the convergent validity criteria. This research confirms discriminant validity by contrasting the correlation coefficients of constructs with the square root values of AVE, as outlined by Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Results of Table 2 show that the square root of the AVE is greater than all the correlation values indicating the presence of discriminant validity in the current measurement model. Aside from this, data showed that the measuring method provides a good fit for the measurement model with $CMIN = 1165.998$, $p < 0.001$, $DoF = 636$, $CMIN/DoF = 1.833 \leq 3$, $CFI = 0.927 \geq 0.90$, $PGFI = 0.693 \geq 0.50$, $AGFI = 0.776 \geq 0.80$, $GFI = 0.808 \geq 0.80$, $RMSEA = 0.058 \leq 0.08$, $RMR = 0.037 \leq 0.08$.

Table 1. Convergent validity.

Construct	Code/Sub-constructs	SRW	CR	AVE	Source
Sustainable practices (SP)	SP1	0.824	0.940	0.661	Berezan et al. (2013)
	SP2	0.826			
	SP3	0.785			
	SP4	0.758			
	SP5	0.873			
	SP6	0.821			
	SP7	0.834			
	SP8	0.778			
Guest comfort (GC)	GC1	0.724	0.916	0.578	Hepple et al. (1990)
	GC2	0.729			
	GC5	0.709			
	GC7	0.809			
	GC8	0.716			
	GC9	0.853			
	GC10	0.772			
	GC11	0.758			
Revisit intentions (RVI)	RV11	0.765	0.842	0.640	Mittal et al. (2021)
	RV12	0.774			
	RV13	0.858			
Recommendation intentions (RCI)	RC11	0.866	0.887	0.726	Mittal et al. (2021)
	RC12	0.953			
	RC13	0.722			
Technology readiness (TR)	Optimism (OPT)		0.900	0.692	Parasuraman and Colby (2015)
	TR1	0.846			
	TR2	0.841			
	TR3	0.855			
	TR4	0.784			
	Innovativeness (INN)				
	TR5	0.865			
	TR6	0.831			
	TR7	0.848			
	TR8	0.794			
	Insecurity (INS)				
	TR9	0.819			
	TR10	0.879			
	TR11	0.840			
	TR12	0.821			
	Discomfort (DIS)				
	TR13	0.840			
	TR14	0.845			
	TR15	0.892			
	TR16	0.854			

SRW: standardized regression weight; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance.

Structural model

Structural model results also showed satisfactory values with respect to model fit $CMIN = 4.651$, $p < 0.001$, $DoF = 1$, $CMIN/DoF = 2.651 \leq 3$, $CFI = 0.990 \geq 0.90$, $AGFI = 0.954 \geq 0.80$, $GFI = 0.995 \geq 0.80$, $RMSEA = 0.075 \leq 0.08$, $RMR = 0.018 \leq 0.08$.

The path analysis results reveal that sustainable practices have a significant and positive impact on guest comfort ($\beta = 0.406$; critical

ratio = 9.978; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis H1 is supported. Further, results of the Table 3 shows that there is significant and positive impact of sustainable practices on revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.480$; critical ratio = 12.363; $p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H2 is supported. The results of the path analysis show that there is significant and positive impact of sustainable practices on recommendation intentions ($\beta = 0.105$; critical ratio = 2.276; $p < 0.05$). Hence, hypothesis H3 is supported. A similar type of results

Table 2. Discriminant validity.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
DIS	3.625	0.791	0.858							
SP	3.941	0.639	0.475	0.813						
GC	3.61	0.816	0.423	0.439	0.760					
RVI	3.886	0.909	0.6	0.633	0.47	0.800				
RCI	3.96	0.701	0.218	0.045	0.105	0.087	0.852			
OPT	3.706	0.856	0.399	0.249	0.668	0.415	0.029	0.832		
INN	3.941	0.639	0.503	0.547	0.64	0.617	0.134	0.666	0.835	
INS	3.75	0.767	0.623	0.357	0.514	0.487	0.252	0.446	0.518	0.840

M: mean; SD: standard deviation; bold-off diagonal: square-root of AVE.

Table 3. Structural model.

Hypothesis	Relationship			Estimate	C.R.	Decision
H1	Sustainable practices	→	Guest comfort	0.406	9.978***	Supported
H2	Sustainable practices	→	Revisit intentions	0.480	12.363***	Supported
H3	Sustainable practices	→	Recommendation intentions	0.105	2.276**	Supported
H4	Guest comfort	→	Revisit intentions	0.220	5.675***	Supported
H5	Guest comfort	→	Recommendation intentions	0.269	5.831***	Supported

Estimate: standardized regression weight; C.R.: critical ratio.

*** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$.

was observed for the relationship between guest comfort and revisit intentions such that guest comfort has significant and positive impact on revisit intentions ($\beta = 0.220$; critical ratio = 5.675; $p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis H4 is supported. Further, guest comfort also has significant and positive impact on recommendation intentions ($\beta = 0.269$; critical ratio = 5.831; $p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis H5 is supported.

Results of the mediation analysis show that guest comfort partially mediates the relationship between sustainable practices and a customer's revisit intentions to a mid-market hotel. Finally, the results of mediation analysis (Table 4) depict that guest comfort fully mediates the relationship between sustainable practices and customer's recommendation intentions for a mid-market hotel.

Results of the moderation analysis (Table 5) show that there is a moderating role of technology readiness on the relationship between sustainable practices and guest comfort (z -score = -2.258 ; $p < 0.01$) such that the strength of the relationship is stronger for customers who are low on technology readiness as compared to customers who are high on technology readiness. A similar type of result was observed for the relationship between guest comfort and recommendation intentions, where technology readiness moderates the relationship. The strength of the

relationship between guest comfort and recommendation intentions was stronger for customers who were low on technology readiness. However, for the rest of the relationships, there was no moderating effect of technology readiness.

Discussion

The results of this study cement the concept that sustainability practices in mid-market hotels have a significant impact on a guest's comfort and reflect on guest revisit intention and recommendation intentions. These results coincide with past findings stating that environmental initiatives in hotels raise customer loyalty and satisfaction, thereby promoting a positive brand image and repeating business (Berezan et al., 2013; Moise et al., 2020). This means that hotels, through the implementation of SP, will not only enhance their environmental performance but also increase the guest experience, thus more loyalty and positive words. This means that environmentally sustainable hotels give an environmental image that positively affects behavioral intentions (Eid et al., 2021; Han et al., 2018). However, the influence of SP was found to be more prominent on the intentions of a revisit than that of the comfort and the recommendation intentions of the guests. This indicates that although sustainability efforts significantly

Table 4. Mediation analysis.

Hypothesis	Mediating relationship	ISE	p-value	DSE	p-value	Type of mediation
H6	Sustainable practices → Guest comfort → Revisit intentions	0.090	0.001	0.480	0.001	Partial
H7	Sustainable practices → Guest comfort → Recommendation intentions	0.109	0.001	0.105	0.056	Full

Table 5. Moderation analysis.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Low		High		z-score
		Estimate	p	Estimate	p	
H8	Sustainable practices → Guest comfort	0.289	0.000	0.133	0.002	-2.258**
H9	Sustainable practices → Revisit intentions	0.415	0.000	0.496	0.000	0.981*
H10	Sustainable practices → Recommendation intentions	0.096	0.247	0.119	0.115	0.210*
H11	Guest comfort → Revisit intentions	0.263	0.000	0.151	0.063	-1.052*
H12	Guest comfort → Recommendation intentions	0.512	0.000	0.179	0.088	-2.345**

** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

affected guests' decision to return, their comfort and tendency to recommend the hotel may be influenced by other factors. This subtle understanding is important for hotel administrators with the aim of balancing sustainability initiatives with other aspects of guest experience.

Furthermore, the results also show that GC has a positive relationship with RVI and RCI, although GC has a stronger positive effect on RCI than RV. The concept of GC, which includes the physical active and psychological aspects, aligns with the Vischer's Comfort Triangle (2007) and supports previous research emphasizing its importance in service quality and customer satisfaction (Ainsworth and Foster, 2017; Ariffin et al., 2011). The positive relationship between GC and behavioral intentions indicates the need to ensure a high level of comfort for hotels to develop loyalty and positive word of mouth. Most research in the past examined the relationship between satisfaction and BI (Piramanayagam et al., 2021; Leri and Theodoridis, 2019; Jeong and Shin, 2020). However, in the context of tourism and the hotel industry, where the term "comfort" is widely used to advertise various services and products, and where the concept of GC is prominent to satisfy guests, in spite of this, the concept of comfort has not yet been adequately researched (Nagy and Carr, 2018). In this regard, this research fills an important gap by considering guest comfort

as an important factor for guest BI in term of RVI and RCI.

The study also highlights the important role of GC as a mediator between SP and both RVI and RCI. The effect of partial mediation on RVI and full mediation on RCI shows that while SP directly affects the guests' revisit decisions, their comfort during stay plays a more important role in their likelihood to recommend the hotel to others. This finding introduces GC as an important element in the hospitality industry, which has been less explored in the context of sustainability and technology readiness. These findings are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings on which the SOR framework has been developed. In this regard, SP as a stimulus enhances the internal state (GC) that subsequently enhances the RVI and RCI in the form of a behavioral response of the guest. The causal chain, therefore, is well established with the findings of the study relating GC as an effective mediator between SP and BI. Interestingly, technology readiness was found to moderate the relationship between SP and GC and between GC and RCI. Guests with lower TR demonstrated a significantly higher correlation between satisfaction with the SP and overall GC, as well as between GC and likelihood to recommend the hotel (RCI). This indicates that guests with less technical knowledge may get greater comfort from the SP, which in turn

influences their recommendations. These results support the theory that while high TR guests might be more tech-savvy, their expectations for conformity might differ, meaning that SP has less of an impact on their comfort and behavior in the future. The results align with the components of the Technology Readiness Index (TRI) (Parasuraman, 2000), which suggests that optimism and innovation contribute to favorable attitudes toward technology, whereas discomfort and insecurity can impede acceptance. The results mean that hotel administrators should consider TR when implementing new technologies, ensuring that they are user-friendly and enhancing guest comfort without causing technostress (Lee et al., 2023).

The results also point to the nuanced and more complex nature of comfort within the context of hospitality (Han et al., 2018) where the satisfaction of basic comfort needs leads guests to seek a higher level of comfort, resonating with the classification of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1981). This layered understanding of guest comfort suggests that while guests familiar with technology, such as young professionals, may initially appreciate innovative solutions, their perception of such technologies as necessities over time may lessen the perceived luxury or add value, aligning with Shove's (2003) observations on evolving comfort expectations. Therefore, this study highlights the important need for hotels to consider different levels of TR when implementing new technologies. Ensuring that technical solutions not only meet sustainability goals but also meet the diverse technical efficiency and comfort levels of guests, can enhance guest experiences and satisfaction. Adopting user-friendly technologies seamlessly integrated into the guest experience, hotels can enhance the positive impact of their sustainability initiatives on the comfort of guests and then on their behavioral intentions such as revisiting and recommendation hotel.

Implications of the study

The implications section has been segregated into two parts the first part is related to theoretical implications and the second part is related to the practical implications.

Theoretical implications

The results of the study make significant theoretical contributions, which are enumerated below.

Firstly, the current study significantly expanded the understanding of SOR model by applying it to the context of mid-market hotels and their sustainability practices. This study uniquely identifies SP not only as environmental or operational adjustments, but as strategic tools designed to enhance guest experiences. GC is conceptualized as internal state influenced by the stimuli. The study innovatively expands this component to include both physical and psychological comfort, providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of how guest process their environment. The responses in this study are twofold, that is, RVI and RCI. This dual response framework adds depth to the SOR model by showing that internal states can simultaneously influence multiple behavioral outcomes.

Secondly, the novel construct of GC has been introduced in the research work and has been validated in this study to comprehend the BI of staying guests who practice sustainable behavior during their stay in mid-market hotels, which is a significant contribution to the literature on hospitality. Most prior studies (Akel and Noyan, 2024; Moise et al., 2020; Olya et al., 2021) have centered on the notion that engaging in sustainable practices should lead directly to guest or hotel satisfaction, which in turn should beget positive business image. However, the current study manifested the mediating role of GC, illustrating how SP can result in a positive influence on GC, which, in turn, impacts guest behavior and the intentions they form as a result of their experience. In this way, the study brings a new perspective to the field of service encounters by highlighting GC as the critical link, the nexus, through which SP affects guest behavior and intentions.

Thirdly, the findings extend the knowledge of behavioral mechanisms in which SP influences business outcomes by showing that comfort is a key mechanism in the process by which environmental responsibility is translated into guest revisit and recommendation intentions. The establishment of GC as a mediator fact adds another layer of complexity to the SOR framework. It shows that the organism (GC) not only directly affects the response (BI) but also mediates the impact of the stimulus (SP) on the response (BI). This nuanced understanding suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing GC can enhance the positive effects of SP on guest behaviors.

Fourthly, the inclusion of TR as a moderator in the SOR model indeed makes the theory

more robust and extends it to include individual differences in stimulus response. The present study shows that the organism (GC) and its following response (RVI and RCI) can be influenced by the guest's technology readiness. Adding the technology readiness of guests as a factor to this interrelated series of events to create RVI and RCI adds a layer of complexity that emphasizes the importance of including personality traits and individual readiness in SOR models.

Finally, the introduction of a new scale for measuring GC in the study, and the investigation of its mediating role between SP and BI, contribute significantly to the literature. This innovative approach enhances the nomological network of SP and GC, which results in the opportunity to enrich the understanding of the intricate relationships among sustainability, technology, and guest behavior. These results fill the gaps in present knowledge while opening up avenues for future studies to delve deeper into the multifaceted relationship across these constructs.

Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings of the study have many implications for hotel managers as well as front-line workers who are dealing with guests at each step of the service.

Firstly, hotel managers should implement sustainable practices in a way that guests can see and understand and that directly enhances the guests' experiences. For example, using biodegradable products in housekeeping and serving areas and energy-efficient lighting and water-saving fixtures throughout the hotel can not only cut utility costs, but it can also be a way of visibly communicating a commitment to sustainability. For example, a hotel committed to solar energy might provide detailed information about the solar installation that engages guests. They can even be given an opportunity to see for themselves how it works and that has a direct impact on the guests' engagements with the hotel.

Secondly, to implement SP successfully, hotel manager should create comprehensive training programs for employees. Additionally, hotel managers should consistently inform both staff and guests about the hotel's sustainability practices. This not only aids in resource and energy conservation but also attracts more environmentally conscious traveler segments. Knowledge about sustainability promotes an ecologically responsible employee culture that can reduce a

hotel's negative impact on the environment. Employees who are well-versed in SP can effectively communicate these sustainable practices to the guests, thereby improving guests' comfort and satisfaction with the hotel. Moreover, involving employees in sustainability initiatives can boost their morale and job satisfaction, leading to enhanced service performance.

Thirdly, technology plays an important role in increasing operational efficiency and enhancing the overall experience of guests. However, it is important to include user-friendly technology that does not hinder the guest's comfort. Hotels should prioritize improving user-friendliness and enhancing visitor comfort while integrating technology solutions like smart room systems. Regular customer feedback about guests' technical experiences can help hotels make necessary modifications and improvements. Apart from this, it is essential that given the different TR levels that guests might have, hotels should be able to deliver tailored solutions. While high TR guests may find a lot of allure in the personalization of mobile applications, light, and temperature controls, the same might easily expose low TR guests to technostress, thus calling for the use of technologies that are simpler and more intuitive. In addition, employees should be trained so that they can assist these guests appropriately, making their experience as comfortable as possible.

Fourthly, effective communication of SP is important in engaging the guest. The hotels can communicate their sustainability efforts through in-room information cards, digital displays, and staff communication. If they are reasonably explained on how the practices help conserve the environment it will not only improve the comfort of the guest but they will also take a positive view of the hotel's initiatives and eventually become supportive. For example, they can inform their guests regarding their recycling programs and benefits from reduced towel and linen usage.

Fifthly, hotels can encourage guest participation in sustainability initiatives by offering some incentives to them. For example, loyalty points, discount offers, or small rewards may be distributed to the guests who will choose some eco-friendly options, like reduced housekeeping service or participation in recycling programs. Initiatives like this do not only promote sustainability but give the guests more of an involved and satisfied feeling.

Sixthly, hotel managers should consider a proper SP to guest comfort balance. In this

regard, SP should not in any way compromise guest comfort and convenience in its implementation by managers. The SP should aim at improving the overall guest experience. For instance, a sustainable practice such as the use of organic and locally sourced food will not only create a reduction in environmental impact but also will boost guest satisfaction.

Lastly, hotel managers need to establish criteria for sustainability policies and assess the outcomes. Continuous review ensures that SP remains efficient and achieves its environmental and visitor comfort objectives. Conducting guest surveys on sustainability and comfort can provide valuable insights. Providing feedback on the implementation of in-room recycling or energy-saving equipment can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. Hotels should actively collaborate with local and national organizations to enhance sustainability practices. Collaborating with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local governments, and sustainability certification agencies can enhance credibility, access to resources, and promotional opportunities. Organizing sustainability workshops or community clean-ups in collaboration with a local environmental organization can enhance the hotel's reputation for environmental responsibility and engagement with the community.

Limitations and further research

This study yielded multiple significant findings regarding hotel sustainability practices and their impact on customer experience literature. The inclusion of guest comfort opens up new study avenues. However, there are a few drawbacks to the study that must be addressed in future research. These outcomes of this study contain contextual and regional restrictions that limit their generalizability. The findings of the study are based on cross-sectional data collected from Chandigarh Tricity, Punjab, and 165 were from Delhi NCR (India), which may inhibit the generalization of findings to the hotel industries in other countries. Thus, the model must be tested in different regions of the country as well as developed or underdeveloped countries, considering differences in lifestyles, economic conditions, and cultures, among many other factors. In addition, for greater generalizability, the study should be expanded to include more service sectors. This study only focused on hotel guests' perceptions of the technology used by mid-market hotels for sustainable practices,

guest comfort, and intentions to revisit and recommend. Therefore, future research may undertake experimental research to incorporate the perspectives of other stakeholders across the hotel's sustainable practices in the context of guest comfort by incorporating additional elements and by carrying out the research in other hotel segments. The researcher had a limited amount of time to collect data. A longitudinal study could have revealed a better relationship between the attitude of customers toward the sustainable practices and their RVI and RCI. The survey was conducted in English, which could have posed a language challenge for certain local tourists. However, the researcher did offer language assistance to some participants. This study employed a quantitative approach to data analysis. Future investigations might benefit from combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gain a deeper understanding. Employing qualitative research could provide hotel managers with clearer insights into the connection between sustainability initiatives and guest comfort.

Conclusion

This paper underlines sustainability practices as a matter of great importance toward guest comfort, satisfaction, and loyalty within the hotel sector. Modern hotel guests attach great importance to a hotel's environmental responsibility and tend to choose a hotel that shows even a little sign of environmental friendliness in its activities, as new environmental issues, based on green consumerism, impact guest intentions toward ecologically friendly businesses. Guest comfort, as such, enhances the revisiting and recommendation of hotel guests. The study extends the SOR framework by considering guest comfort as a mediating variable and the moderating role of the guest's technology readiness. Visible sustainable practices with considerable employee training, effective communication strategies, and user-friendly technology solutions are indispensable. Sustainable practice provides a win-win solution to the hotel entities, converting valuable insight into hotel managers for their continuing success in a green market.

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Appendix I. Measure description and descriptive analysis.

Construct	Operationalization	M	SD	S	K	Source
Sustainable practices (SP)	SP1 The hotel has a recycling policy in place	3.502	1.049	-0.556	-0.296	Berezan et al. (2013)
	SP2 The hotel makes an effort to purchase green products and supplies	3.617	1.000	-0.829	0.170	
	SP3 The hotel has water saving devices in public spaces	3.609	0.985	-0.784	0.233	
	SP4 The hotel purchase products from local suppliers	3.727	0.896	-0.904	0.753	
	SP5 The hotel has water saving devices in guest rooms	3.652	0.954	-0.746	0.301	
	SP6 The hotel uses energy saving bulbs throughout the premises	3.688	0.887	-0.753	0.588	
	SP7 Occupancy sensors are used to control lighting throughout the hotel	3.692	0.904	-0.845	0.698	
	SP8 The hotel uses a key card plug-in system to cut power in case of absence.	3.712	0.904	-0.762	0.664	
Guest comfort (GC)	GC1 The hotel has comfortable upholstery, furniture & bed	3.917	0.829	-0.938	1.739	Hepple et al. (1990)
	GC2 The hotel has an attractive ambience	3.929	0.828	-1.178	2.476	
	GC5 The hotel has a friendly staff	4.032	0.845	-1.176	2.406	
	GC7 The hotel respects the guest room privacy	4.059	0.761	-1.024	2.364	
	GC8 The hotel provides services as per the convenience of the guest	4.024	0.786	-0.979	2.178	
	GC9 The hotel takes care of cleanliness & hygiene effectively	4.075	0.733	-0.848	1.872	
	GC10 The hotel has an effective information desk	4.012	0.828	-1.204	2.666	
	GC11 The hotel makes the guest feel home away from home	4.040	0.786	-0.861	1.601	
Revisit intentions (RVI)	RV11 I intend to stay in a hotel with sustainable practices.	3.617	0.951	-0.897	0.560	Mittal et al. (2021)
	RV12 I would love to stay in a hotel with sustainable practices	3.640	0.935	-0.722	0.525	
	RV13 I think I will come back to a hotel with sustainable practices soon again	3.688	0.948	-0.748	0.295	
Recommendation intentions (RCI)	RC11 I would recommend a hotel with sustainable practices to my friends	4.008	1.073	-1.357	1.614	Mittal et al. (2021)
	RC12 I would say positive things about a hotel with sustainable practices	3.992	1.008	-1.437	2.274	
	RC13 I would encourage friends and relatives to stay in a hotel with sustainable practices	3.881	0.931	-1.129	1.893	
Technology readiness	Optimism (OPT)					Parasuraman and Colby (2015)
	TRI New technologies	4.047	0.820	-0.959	1.718	

(continued)

Appendix I. (continued)

Construct	Operationalization	M	SD	S	K	Source
	contribute to a better quality of life					
	TR2 Technology gives me more freedom of mobility	4.028	0.768	−0.999	2.195	
	TR3 Technology gives people more control over their daily lives	4.028	0.784	−0.946	1.863	
	TR4 Technology makes me more productive in my personal life	4.028	0.774	−1.085	2.640	
	Innovativeness (INN)					
	TR5 Other people come to me for advice on new technologies	3.925	0.796	−0.865	1.736	
	TR6 In general, I am among the first in my circle of friends to acquire new technology when it appears	3.953	0.800	−1.178	2.898	
	TR7 I can usually figure out new high-tech products and services without help from others	3.984	0.766	−1.040	2.581	
	TR8 I keep up with the latest technological developments in my areas of interest	3.945	0.749	−0.825	1.936	
	Insecurity (INS)					
	TR9 People are too dependent on technology to do things for them	3.798	0.879	−1.397	2.694	
	TR10 Too much technology distracts people to a point that is harmful	3.771	0.906	−1.210	2.013	
	TR11 Technology lowers the quality of relationships by reducing personal interaction	3.787	0.832	−1.124	2.149	
	TR12 I do not feel confident doing business with a place that can only be reached online	3.763	0.830	−1.125	1.885	
	Discomfort (DIS)					
	TR13 When I get technical support from a provider of a high-tech product or service, I sometimes feel as if I am being taken advantage of by someone who knows more than I do	3.585	0.937	−0.832	0.672	
	TR14 Technical support lines are not helpful because they don't explain things in terms I understand	3.755	0.814	−0.993	1.657	
	TR15 Sometimes, I think that technology systems are not designed for use by ordinary people	3.664	0.874	−0.800	0.839	
	TR16 There is no such thing as a manual for a high-tech product or service that's written in plain language	3.672	0.886	−0.860	0.806	

M: mean; SD: standard deviation; S: skewness; K: kurtosis.