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Managing Sustainability in Hospitality Industry: A Theory of Planned Behaviour

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Abstract- With increasing environmental concerns and growing expectations for responsible business practices, sustainability has become a critical priority within the hospitality industry. The industry faces significant challenges associated with resource consumption, waste generation, carbon emissions, and the need to balance environmental responsibility with economic performance and customer satisfaction. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), introduced by Ajzen in 1991, provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the psychological factors influencing individuals' intentions and behaviours towards sustainable practices. The theory proposes that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intentions, which subsequently contribute to actual behaviour. This study aims to explore the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in managing sustainability within the hospitality industry, with particular attention to sustainable consumption, environmentally responsible customer behaviour, and the adoption of sustainable business practices. A systematic review of relevant empirical studies published during the past ten years is proposed to examine the contribution of TPB to understanding sustainability-related intentions and behaviours in hospitality settings. The study is expected to identify how environmental attitudes, social expectations, and perceived control influence sustainable decision-making among hospitality consumers and other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, it seeks to identify theoretical and empirical gaps concerning the relationship between behavioural intentions and actual sustainable practices, particularly within developing-country contexts. The findings are expected to contribute to the advancement of sustainability management in hospitality by highlighting the importance of integrating behavioural insights into environmental strategies, customer engagement, and responsible operational practices. The study will provide a theoretical foundation for future research and practical recommendations for hospitality organisations seeking to strengthen sustainable practices and support the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords- *Theory of Planned Behaviour, Sustainability Management, Hospitality Industry, Sustainable Consumption, Environmental Attitudes, Behavioural Intentions, Sustainable Consumer Behaviou.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry is increasingly confronted with environmental, economic, and social challenges that have intensified the need for sustainable business practices. Climate change, natural resource depletion, excessive waste generation, water scarcity, and increasing energy consumption have become significant concerns for hospitality organisations worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the vulnerability of the tourism and hospitality sectors to external disruptions, highlighting the importance of organisational resilience, responsible resource management, and sustainable operational strategies. Although the recovery of tourism activities has created new opportunities for industry development, the growing pressure to minimise environmental impacts while maintaining service quality, customer satisfaction, and profitability has made sustainability management a strategic priority. Consequently, hospitality organisations must move beyond traditional operational approaches and incorporate sustainability into their long-term business strategies to remain competitive and contribute to responsible tourism development.

Sustainability has become an essential component of the hospitality industry because hotels, restaurants, resorts, and other tourism-related businesses depend heavily on natural resources and environmentally sensitive destinations. The implementation of sustainable practices, including energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, responsible sourcing, and the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies, can contribute to reducing environmental impacts while improving operational efficiency. However, the successful implementation of sustainability initiatives depends not only on organisational policies and technological capabilities but also on the attitudes, perceptions, intentions, and behaviours of consumers, employees, and other relevant stakeholders. Even when hospitality organisations introduce environmental initiatives, the expected sustainability outcomes may not be achieved if customers are unwilling to participate in sustainable activities or employees do not consistently follow environmentally responsible procedures. Therefore, understanding the behavioural factors that influence the acceptance and adoption of sustainable practices is essential for developing effective sustainability management strategies within the hospitality industry.

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Human behaviour plays a significant role in determining the success of sustainability initiatives, particularly in relation to sustainable consumption, environmentally responsible decision-making, and the adoption of green practices. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), provides a widely recognised theoretical framework for explaining the relationship between individual beliefs, behavioural intentions, and actual behaviour. According to this theory, behavioural intention is primarily influenced by three factors: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behaviour, while subjective norms represent perceived social expectations regarding that behaviour. Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour, considering available resources, opportunities, and potential barriers. These constructs offer a useful foundation for investigating why consumers choose environmentally responsible hospitality services, why employees engage in sustainable workplace practices, and how social expectations and perceived constraints influence sustainability-related decisions. Nevertheless, the relationship between behavioural intentions and actual sustainable behaviour may vary according to individual circumstances, organisational practices, cultural values, and the availability of sustainable alternatives.

In the hospitality industry, the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour can provide valuable insights into the behavioural mechanisms underlying sustainability management. Consumers who hold favourable attitudes towards environmental protection may demonstrate stronger intentions to select eco-friendly hotels, reduce resource consumption, and support businesses that adopt sustainable practices. Similarly, employees who perceive sustainability as socially desirable and believe they possess the necessary resources and capabilities may be more willing to participate in environmental initiatives. However, factors such as additional costs, limited environmental awareness, inadequate facilities, greenwashing concerns, and perceived inconvenience may prevent individuals from translating their intentions into actual sustainable behaviour. These challenges indicate that sustainability management requires an integrated approach that considers both organisational capabilities and the behavioural determinants of stakeholder participation. By examining attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, hospitality organisations can develop targeted communication strategies, environmental awareness programmes, incentive mechanisms, and customer engagement initiatives that encourage responsible consumption and strengthen the implementation of sustainable practices.

Despite the growing importance of sustainability in hospitality research, further investigation is needed to understand how behavioural theories can be effectively applied to sustainability management across different geographical and institutional contexts. In particular, developing economies may experience additional challenges associated with financial constraints, limited environmental infrastructure, inconsistent sustainability awareness, and differences in stakeholder expectations. These issues are particularly relevant to the Sri Lankan hospitality industry, where environmental sustainability must be considered alongside economic development, tourism competitiveness, local community participation, and the conservation of natural resources. Although the Theory of Planned Behaviour offers a valuable explanation of sustainability-related intentions and actions, its application requires careful consideration of contextual factors that may influence the relationship between attitudes, social norms, perceived behavioural control, and actual sustainable practices. A theory-driven understanding of these relationships can help identify the factors that facilitate or constrain sustainability adoption and provide a stronger basis for evidence-informed managerial decisions.

Accordingly, this study, entitled *“Managing Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry: A Theory of Planned Behaviour Perspective,”* aims to examine the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining and supporting sustainability management within the hospitality industry. The study seeks to explore how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence sustainability-related behavioural intentions and practices, while identifying the theoretical and practical challenges associated with translating intentions into actual sustainable behaviour. By synthesising relevant empirical literature, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of behavioural determinants of sustainability and provide insights for hospitality managers, policymakers, and other stakeholders seeking to promote environmentally responsible operations and sustainable consumption. Ultimately, the study intends to establish a theoretical foundation for integrating behavioural insights into hospitality sustainability strategies and supporting the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate action (SDG 13).

Attitudes towards Sustainable Hospitality Practices

Attitudes towards sustainable hospitality practices refer to the positive or negative evaluations of individuals regarding the implementation and adoption of environmentally responsible practices within the hospitality industry. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitude is a fundamental determinant of behavioural intention, reflecting the extent to which an individual perceives a particular behaviour as favourable or unfavourable [Ajzen, 1991]. In the hospitality context, these attitudes may be shaped by consumers’ environmental awareness, personal values, previous experiences, and perceptions of the benefits associated with sustainability initiatives, such as energy conservation, water management, waste reduction, and the use of environmentally friendly products and services. Consumers who believe that sustainable hospitality practices contribute to environmental protection, resource conservation, and the long-term well-being of society are more likely to develop favourable

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attitudes towards hotels and other hospitality establishments that demonstrate environmental responsibility. Similarly, employees' and managers' attitudes towards sustainability can influence their willingness to support and implement environmentally responsible practices within organisational operations. The development of positive attitudes is therefore essential for encouraging sustainable behavioural intentions and strengthening sustainability management in the hospitality industry. However, favourable attitudes alone may not always translate into actual sustainable behaviour, as individual decisions can also be influenced by factors such as cost, convenience, accessibility, and the availability of sustainable alternatives. Consequently, understanding attitudes towards sustainable hospitality practices is important for explaining consumer decision-making and promoting more responsible consumption and operational practices within the hospitality sector.

Social Influence and Sustainability in Hospitality

Social influence plays a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes, intentions, and behaviours towards sustainable practices within the hospitality industry. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of the social pressure exerted by important referent groups, such as family members, friends, colleagues, and other influential individuals, to perform or avoid a particular behaviour [Ajzen, 1991]. In the hospitality context, consumers' decisions to select environmentally responsible hotels, participate in sustainable tourism activities, reduce resource consumption, and support eco-friendly hospitality services may be influenced by the expectations and behaviours of people around them. Social influence can also emerge through online reviews, social media platforms, environmental campaigns, and recommendations from previous guests, which may strengthen awareness and encourage the acceptance of sustainable hospitality practices. Furthermore, organisational stakeholders, including employees, managers, suppliers, and local communities, can influence the adoption of sustainability initiatives by promoting shared environmental values, responsible resource management, and environmentally conscious workplace practices. When sustainable behaviour is socially encouraged and recognised, individuals may develop stronger intentions to support environmentally responsible hospitality establishments. However, the influence of subjective norms may vary according to cultural values, social expectations, personal beliefs, and the perceived credibility of information received from others. Therefore, understanding social influence is essential for explaining sustainable consumer decision-making and developing effective strategies to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour within the hospitality industry.

Perceived Behavioral Control Over Sustainable Practices

Perceived behavioural control is an important component of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), referring to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a particular behaviour based on available resources, opportunities, abilities, and potential constraints [Ajzen, 1991]. In the hospitality industry, perceived behavioural control influences consumers' ability and willingness to participate in environmentally sustainable practices, such as selecting eco-friendly accommodation, reducing water and energy consumption, minimising food waste, and supporting establishments that implement responsible environmental management. Consumers may demonstrate stronger intentions to engage in sustainable hospitality practices when they perceive that environmentally friendly options are accessible, affordable, convenient, and readily available. Conversely, financial limitations, insufficient environmental information, limited access to certified green hotels, and a lack of convenient sustainable alternatives may discourage individuals from adopting environmentally responsible behaviours, even when they possess favourable attitudes towards sustainability. Perceived behavioural control is also relevant to hospitality employees and managers, as the availability of financial resources, appropriate technologies, employee training, organisational support, and effective management systems can influence their ability to implement sustainable operational practices. According to the TPB framework, perceived behavioural control may influence behavioural intentions and, when it accurately reflects an individual's actual control over the behaviour, may also contribute to predicting actual behavioural performance [Ajzen, 1991]. Therefore, strengthening perceived behavioural control through improved accessibility, affordability, awareness, infrastructure, and organisational support is essential for encouraging sustainable decision-making and promoting the effective implementation of sustainability practices within the hospitality industry.

Sustainable Behavioral Intention and Decision-Making

Sustainable behavioral intention and decision-making are important elements in understanding how individuals develop a willingness to adopt environmentally responsible practices within the hospitality industry. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), behavioural intention represents an individual's motivation and readiness to perform a particular behaviour and is influenced by three key determinants: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [Ajzen, 1991]. In the hospitality context, sustainable behavioral intentions may be reflected in consumers' willingness to select environmentally friendly hotels, support sustainable tourism services, minimise food waste, conserve water and energy, and choose hospitality establishments that demonstrate environmental responsibility. Consumers who possess favorable attitudes towards sustainability, perceive positive social expectations, and believe that sustainable choices are achievable are more likely to develop stronger intentions to engage in environmentally responsible consumption. The decision-making process may also be influenced by environmental awareness, personal values, perceived service quality, affordability, convenience, and the availability of credible sustainability information. Furthermore, hospitality organisations can encourage sustainable decision-making by communicating their environmental initiatives transparently, providing accessible eco-friendly alternatives, and demonstrating the tangible benefits of sustainable practices. However, behavioural intention does not always translate into actual behaviour, as

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financial constraints, situational barriers, and differences between personal preferences and purchasing circumstances may influence final decisions. Therefore, understanding the relationship between sustainable behavioural intentions and consumer decision-making is essential for hospitality organisations seeking to encourage responsible consumption, strengthen sustainability initiatives, and promote long-term environmental sustainability within the industry.

Sustainable Behaviour and the Intention Behaviour Gap

Sustainable behaviour refers to the actual actions undertaken by individuals to minimise environmental impacts and support responsible consumption and resource management within the hospitality industry. Although the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposes that behavioural intention is an important predictor of actual behaviour, a gap may exist between individuals' intentions to engage in sustainable practices and their subsequent actions [Ajzen, 1991]. In the hospitality context, consumers may express positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability and demonstrate a willingness to support eco-friendly hotels, sustainable tourism activities, and responsible consumption practices; however, these intentions may not always translate into actual behaviour. Factors such as financial constraints, convenience, limited availability of sustainable alternatives, insufficient environmental information, and a lack of trust in sustainability claims may influence consumers' final decisions. For example, a consumer may intend to select an environmentally certified hotel but ultimately choose another establishment because of differences in price, location, or accessibility. Similarly, hospitality employees and managers may recognise the importance of sustainability but face operational challenges, resource limitations, and organisational barriers that restrict the implementation of environmentally responsible practices. Understanding this intention–behaviour gap is therefore essential for identifying the factors that prevent sustainable intentions from becoming consistent actions. Hospitality organisations can help reduce this gap by improving access to sustainable services, providing credible environmental information, strengthening organisational support, and integrating sustainability into everyday operational and consumer decision-making processes. Consequently, examining the relationship between behavioural intentions and actual sustainable behaviour provides valuable insights into developing effective sustainability management strategies and promoting long-term environmental responsibility within the hospitality industry.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a literature review approach to examine the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in managing sustainability within the hospitality industry. Relevant academic literature is identified through searches of Google Scholar using keywords such as Theory of Planned Behaviour, Sustainability Management, Sustainable Hospitality Practices, Environmental Sustainability, Attitudes Towards Sustainability, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, Sustainable Behavioural Intention, and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour. Searches are conducted using individual keywords and combinations of these terms to identify studies directly and indirectly related to the application of TPB in hospitality sustainability. The review focuses on relevant academic publications examining the relationship between the core TPB constructs—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control—and sustainable behavioral intentions and actual behaviour. Studies discussing environmentally responsible consumer decision-making, sustainable tourism, green hotel practices, and sustainability-related organisational behaviour are also considered where relevant to the research objectives. Publications are screened according to their relevance to the research topic, academic contribution, and availability of sufficient information for analysis. Studies published in languages other than English are excluded. The selected literature is subsequently reviewed thematically to identify key findings, theoretical applications, emerging research trends, and gaps in the existing knowledge concerning sustainability management in the hospitality industry.

Empirical Studies

The empirical studies reviewed in this research examine the application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour to sustainability-related attitudes, social influences, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intentions, and actual sustainable behaviour within the hospitality industry. Particular attention is given to studies investigating consumers' preferences for environmentally responsible hotels, intentions to adopt sustainable tourism practices, willingness to support green hospitality services, and participation in environmentally friendly consumption. The reviewed studies also consider the influence of individual, social, and organisational factors on sustainable decision-making and behaviour. Through a thematic analysis of the selected publications, the research seeks to identify how the three core TPB constructs contribute to explaining sustainable behavioral intentions and the extent to which these intentions translate into actual sustainable practices. Furthermore, the review examines contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken the relationship between intentions and behaviour, including environmental awareness, affordability, convenience, access to sustainable alternatives, and organisational support. The findings from the selected studies are synthesized to identify dominant research themes, methodological approaches, geographical patterns, and gaps in the existing literature. This analysis provides a foundation for understanding the relevance of TPB to sustainability management and for identifying future research opportunities within the hospitality industry, particularly in developing-country contexts.

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III. CONCLUSION

Sustainability has become an increasingly important priority for the hospitality industry as businesses face growing environmental challenges, changing consumer expectations, and the need to adopt responsible operational practices. This study examines the relevance of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in understanding and managing sustainability within the hospitality industry. The reviewed literature highlights the importance of three fundamental constructs: attitudes towards sustainable hospitality practices, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These factors contribute to shaping individuals' intentions to engage in environmentally responsible behaviours, including selecting eco-friendly accommodation, conserving natural resources, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable hospitality services. Furthermore, sustainable behavioural intention and decision-making play an important role in explaining how environmental awareness, social expectations, and perceived capabilities influence consumer choices and sustainability-related actions. However, the relationship between behavioural intention and actual sustainable behaviour remains a significant consideration, as financial limitations, convenience, accessibility, and organisational constraints may prevent individuals from translating positive intentions into consistent practices. The application of TPB therefore provides a valuable theoretical foundation for understanding sustainable consumer behaviour and supporting the development of effective sustainability management strategies in hospitality organisations.

Moreover, the successful implementation of sustainability initiatives requires a coordinated approach involving hospitality managers, employees, consumers, suppliers, policymakers, and local communities. Hospitality organisations can encourage sustainable practices by improving access to environmentally friendly services, providing transparent information about sustainability initiatives, strengthening environmental awareness, and creating supportive organisational environments. Nevertheless, the extent to which the TPB constructs explain sustainable behaviour may vary across geographical, cultural, and organisational contexts. Further empirical research is therefore necessary to examine the applicability of the TPB framework across different hospitality sectors, particularly in developing countries such as Sri Lanka, where contextual factors may influence sustainable consumption and organisational practices. Future studies could also investigate additional factors, including environmental awareness, personal values, trust in green claims, and perceived economic benefits, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable decision-making. In conclusion, the Theory of Planned Behaviour offers a useful framework for examining the relationship between attitudes, social influences, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intentions, and actual sustainable behaviour. Its application can contribute to strengthening sustainability management, encouraging responsible consumer choices, and supporting the long-term environmental and economic sustainability of the hospitality industry.

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