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Article

Sustainability-Driven Luxury Hotel Choice: The Role of Eco-Consciousness, Sustainable Values, and Fintech Adoption among Young Travellers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *This study explores how young travellers understand and interpret sustainability when selecting luxury hotels in Sri Lanka. Specifically, it investigates the meanings and experiences associated with eco-consciousness, perceptions toward eco-sustainability, and eco-sustainable values, while also examining how sustainability initiatives implemented by luxury hotels and fintech-enabled services are perceived within the hotel selection process. By addressing a gap in understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of young travellers, the study contributes to emerging discussions on sustainability-oriented luxury consumption within an emerging tourism destination. Guided by an interpretivist research philosophy and an inductive qualitative approach, the study collected primary data through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected young travellers and luxury hotel managers in Sri Lanka. The research was informed by the Theory of Reasoned Action as a sensitizing theoretical framework. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, perceptions, and meanings associated with sustainable luxury hotel selection. The findings reveal that sustainability is increasingly viewed by young travelers as an integral component of luxury hospitality rather than an optional attribute. Participants associated eco-sustainable practices with authenticity, ethical responsibility, and enhanced travel experiences. Visible sustainability initiatives, environmental transparency, and community-oriented practices emerged as important considerations in hotel evaluations. Fintech-enabled services were perceived as facilitating sustainable travel experiences by improving convenience, transparency, and engagement with sustainability-related initiatives. However, participants also expressed concerns regarding the credibility and visibility of sustainability claims, highlighting the importance of trust and effective communication. This study is limited to the Sri Lankan luxury hotel sector and reflects the perspectives of a purposively selected group of participants. As a qualitative study, the findings provide contextual insights*

rather than statistical generalizations. Future studies may examine these themes across different tourism settings and cultural contexts. The study provides original qualitative insights into how young travelers make sense of sustainability within luxury hospitality settings. By bringing together sustainability, luxury tourism, and fintech-enabled services within a qualitative framework informed by the Theory of Reasoned Action, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the beliefs, perceptions, and experiences underlying sustainable luxury hotel choice among younger generations in an emerging market context.

Keywords: Sustainability, Eco-Consciousness, Sustainable Values, Luxury Hotels, Young Travelers, Fintech Adoption, Sri Lanka

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a central concern in the global tourism and hospitality industry as climate change, environmental degradation, and responsible consumption increasingly shape travel behaviour. In Sri Lanka, luxury hotels play a significant role in post-crisis tourism recovery while facing growing pressure to align premium service offerings with eco-sustainable practices (Wadippuli Arachchi & Sathsarani, 2023; Fernando et al., 2015). This transformation is largely driven by Millennials and Generation Z, who are emerging as dominant market segments and who prioritise environmental responsibility, ethical values, and authenticity in their travel decisions (Vlastelica et al., 2023; Kardos et al., 2019).

Consequently, young travellers are no longer motivated solely by traditional luxury attributes. Instead, they increasingly evaluate hotels through visible sustainability signals such as waste reduction practices, energy efficiency, responsible sourcing, and environmental conservation efforts. Rather than functioning as an optional feature, sustainability is increasingly embedded within how young travellers interpret “quality” and “trust” in luxury hospitality experiences.

Although prior research indicates that eco-conscious consumers demonstrate stronger green consumption intentions, less is known about how young travellers interpret, experience, and assign meaning to sustainability practices when making luxury hotel decisions, particularly in emerging contexts such as Sri Lanka (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). This gap is important because sustainability in practice is not only a measurable construct but also a socially and personally constructed experience shaped by values, emotions, and perceived authenticity.

At the same time, fintech-enabled services are reshaping hospitality experiences by improving convenience, transparency, and digital engagement. Mobile payments, digital booking platforms, paperless systems, and technology-driven loyalty programs increasingly influence how travellers interact with hotels. However, how these digital and fintech-enabled

sustainability features are perceived and experienced by young travellers in shaping eco-conscious hotel choices remains underexplored.

From a theoretical perspective, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides a useful lens for understanding how attitudes and subjective norms influence behavioural intentions. In this study, TRA is not applied as a predictive model but as an interpretive framework to understand how sustainability attitudes and social influences are formed and expressed within digitally enabled hospitality environments. However, existing literature has rarely explored TRA in connection with fintech-enabled sustainability experiences, particularly in luxury tourism contexts.

Previous studies on sustainability in hospitality have largely relied on quantitative approaches focusing on relationships between variables such as environmental attitudes and booking intentions. While useful, these studies provide limited insight into how travellers construct meaning around sustainability and how such meanings influence decision-making processes in real contexts. Furthermore, the integration of sustainability and digital transformation is often studied separately, leaving limited understanding of how both interact in shaping luxury hotel selection.

To address these gaps, this qualitative empirical study explores how eco-consciousness, eco-sustainability perceptions, and eco-sustainable values influence young travellers' luxury hotel selection in Sri Lanka. It also examines how pro-eco hotel practices and fintech-enabled sustainability features are experienced and interpreted during decision-making. To guide this exploration, the study is structured around three research objectives:

RO1: To explore internal sustainability-driven values influencing luxury hotel selection

RO2: To examine how visible sustainability practices shape hotel evaluation

RO3: To explore how fintech-enabled sustainability features influence decision-making experiences

These objectives are operationalised in the Results chapter through thematic analysis, where findings are organised accordingly.

Building on the thematic findings, the study develops an empirical framework that emerged inductively from participants' narratives rather than being imposed a priori. This framework integrates three interconnected dimensions: internal values, visible sustainability practices, and technology-enabled sustainability reinforcement. While grounded in empirical data, it is also informed by TRA concepts, particularly attitudes and subjective norms, which helped interpret how sustainability meanings are socially and digitally shaped in luxury hospitality contexts.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends theoretical understanding of sustainable luxury hotel consumption by interpreting TRA within a qualitative framework. Second, it contributes methodologically by moving beyond variable-based explanations to provide experiential insights into how young travellers interpret sustainability. Third, it offers practical insights for luxury hotel managers on how

sustainability and fintech-enabled services can be meaningfully designed to align with the expectations of Millennials and Generation Z in emerging tourism markets such as Sri Lanka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sustainable in Luxury Hospitality

Sustainability has become a fundamental strategic priority within the global hospitality industry due to growing environmental concerns, regulatory pressures, and changing consumer expectations. Issues such as climate change, carbon emissions, waste generation, and resource depletion have encouraged hospitality organisations to rethink conventional business practices and adopt more environmentally responsible approaches (Sloan et al., 2009). Within the luxury hotel sector, this challenge is particularly significant because hotels are expected to maintain exceptional levels of comfort, exclusivity, and personalised service while simultaneously minimising their environmental impact (Han et al., 2019). As a result, luxury hotels increasingly face the challenge of balancing environmental responsibility with premium service delivery (Moise et al., 2021).

Over the past two decades, sustainability has become increasingly integrated into hotel operations and management practices. Hotels have adopted a wide range of environmentally responsible initiatives, including energy-efficient technologies, water conservation systems, waste reduction and recycling programs, sustainable procurement practices, biodiversity conservation efforts, and adherence to green building standards (Moise et al., 2021; Pirani & Arafat, 2014). In addition, many luxury hotels have pursued internationally recognised certifications such as LEED and ISO 14001 to demonstrate their commitment to environmental management and sustainable operations (Al-Aomar & Hussain, 2017; Velaoras et al., 2025). Such certifications not only improve environmental performance but also enhance organisational credibility among environmentally conscious consumers and stakeholders (Bianco et al., 2023).

The growing emphasis on sustainability is closely linked to broader global sustainability agendas and circular economy principles that advocate efficient resource utilisation, waste reduction, and long-term environmental stewardship (Bittner et al., 2024). Within luxury hospitality, circular economy practices include initiatives such as material reuse, recycling, sustainable interior design, food waste management, reduction of single-use plastics, and sourcing products from local suppliers (Jones & Wynn, 2019; Font & Lynes, 2018). These practices support environmental protection while also generating economic and social benefits through stronger engagement with local communities and supply networks.

Beyond environmental compliance, sustainability has increasingly become a source of strategic differentiation within the luxury hospitality sector. Research suggests that sustainability initiatives can enhance brand image, strengthen customer trust, and contribute to competitive advantage (Merli et al., 2019). This trend is particularly evident

among younger travellers who often associate sustainable practices with ethical responsibility, innovation, and service excellence (Barbu et al., 2022; Minazzi & Grechi, 2025). Consequently, hotels that successfully integrate sustainability into their brand identity may be better positioned to build customer loyalty and strengthen their long-term market position.

Further, studies indicate that sustainability initiatives can positively influence customer satisfaction and perceptions of service quality when they are meaningfully incorporated into the guest experience (González-Viralta et al., 2023). Guests often respond positively to environmentally sensitive architecture, energy-efficient technologies, eco-friendly amenities, and locally sourced dining experiences because these features can enhance the overall quality and authenticity of their stay (Dedat & Rodrigues, 2025; Singhal, 2024; Gao & Mattila, 2014). In such cases, sustainability is perceived not as a sacrifice but as an additional dimension of value within the luxury experience.

Despite these advantages, implementing sustainability in luxury hospitality remains challenging. Hotels must carefully balance environmental objectives with guest expectations for comfort, convenience, and personalised service (Tzschentke et al., 2004). Certain sustainability measures, including reduced linen replacement programs, energy-saving controls, or water-efficient facilities, may be interpreted negatively if guests perceive them as reducing service quality (Kang & Nicholls, 2021). Therefore, effective communication and thoughtful service design are essential to ensure that sustainability initiatives are viewed as value-enhancing rather than restrictive (Shen et al., 2020).

Technological innovation has become an important mechanism through which hotels address this challenge. Smart technologies enable hotels to improve resource efficiency while maintaining high service standards and guest comfort (Yolcu et al., 2025). Examples include energy-management systems, artificial intelligence-driven forecasting, automated environmental controls, and digital monitoring tools that support operational efficiency and sustainability objectives (Khatri, 2019; Ullah et al., 2025). At the same time, sustainability within luxury hospitality has expanded beyond environmental considerations to include social and economic responsibilities. Many hotels now emphasise fair labour practices, workforce diversity, community engagement, and responsible tourism initiatives as part of a broader sustainability strategy (Nawanjalee, 2025; Font & Lynes, 2018).

2.2 Young Travellers and Eco-Consciousness

Young travellers, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, have become increasingly important in shaping sustainability trends within the tourism and hospitality industry. Compared with previous generations, they generally demonstrate greater awareness of environmental and social issues, influenced by climate change discussions, sustainability education, and continuous exposure to digital media (Seyfi et al., 2025). As a result, their travel and consumption choices are often influenced by personal values related to

environmental responsibility, ethical consumption, and meaningful experiences (Minazzi & Grechi, 2025). This growing emphasis on sustainability has positioned young travellers as a significant market segment for hospitality organisations seeking to implement environmentally responsible practices (Seyfi et al., 2023).

Existing studies suggest that many young travellers hold favourable views toward sustainable tourism and environmentally responsible businesses. Generation Z consumers, in particular, have demonstrated positive attitudes toward brands that engage in sustainability initiatives and may be willing to support environmentally friendly products and services, even when these options involve additional costs (European Travel Commission, 2020). Such preferences reflect a broader desire to align consumption choices with personal beliefs and values rather than environmental concern alone (Handriana & Ambara, 2016). Within tourism contexts, sustainability is increasingly viewed as an element that contributes to authenticity, quality, and meaningful travel experiences.

Eco-consciousness refers to an individual's awareness of environmental issues and concern for minimising negative environmental impacts (Ma et al., 2024). In hospitality settings, eco-conscious travellers often pay attention to visible sustainability practices, including environmental certifications, resource conservation initiatives, waste management programs, and broader corporate social responsibility efforts (Ullah et al., 2025). Perceptions of these practices are also influenced by social interactions, peer recommendations, social media content, and electronic word-of-mouth, all of which contribute to how travellers interpret the credibility and significance of sustainability initiatives (Satpathy et al., 2025; Kakirala & Singh, 2020).

However, research indicates that positive environmental attitudes do not always align with actual travel decisions (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Although many young travellers express support for sustainability, factors such as price considerations, convenience, availability of sustainable accommodation options, and concerns regarding greenwashing may influence how sustainability is considered during the decision-making process (Hosany & Serdiuk, 2025; Madar & Neaşu, 2020). This highlights the complexity of eco-conscious consumption and suggests that sustainability-related decisions are shaped by multiple personal, social, and contextual factors.

Several theoretical perspectives provide insight into how individuals engage with sustainability-related decisions. Norm-activation theory and moral-emotion frameworks suggest that personal values, environmental self-identity, and feelings of responsibility can influence how individuals perceive and respond to sustainable consumption opportunities (Torabi et al., 2025; de Araújo et al., 2025). When sustainability aligns with an individual's self-concept and personal values, environmentally responsible choices may be perceived as more meaningful and personally relevant (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

Recent studies have also emphasised the importance of experiential and educational approaches in strengthening environmental awareness among young travellers. Virtual reality experiences, sustainability-focused communication, and experiential learning

initiatives can encourage deeper engagement with environmental issues by making sustainability more visible, relatable, and personally meaningful (Lisana et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2024). Such approaches promote active participation and enhance understanding of sustainability practices within tourism contexts (Tölkes, 2018).

2.3 Sustainable Consumption and Luxury Hotel Booking Intentions

Booking intention is widely discussed in hospitality research as it reflects how travellers consider and evaluate accommodation choices before making reservation decisions (Han et al., 2019). Previous studies have frequently examined booking intention to understand consumer preferences and hotel selection processes, particularly within competitive hospitality markets (Brandão & Cupertino de Miranda, 2022; Chitranapawong & Chirapanda, 2024). In luxury hospitality settings, hotel selection is often shaped by a combination of functional attributes, emotional experiences, symbolic meanings, brand image, and personal values. Contemporary luxury travellers increasingly expect environmental and social responsibility to complement traditional luxury attributes such as comfort, exclusivity, and personalised service (Assaker, 2019).

The growing emphasis on sustainability has contributed to changing perceptions of luxury consumption. Research indicates that environmentally conscious travellers often express favourable views toward hotels that integrate sustainability into their core operations rather than presenting it as a secondary initiative (Ferreira et al., 2023). Sustainable practices such as resource conservation, responsible sourcing, and environmental stewardship are increasingly viewed as elements that enhance the overall hotel experience (Özkan et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2023). As a result, sustainability has become part of a broader understanding of luxury in which environmental responsibility contributes to perceptions of quality, authenticity, and value (Čavić & Zrnić, 2025; Rady, 2018).

The literature also highlights the importance of personal values and emotional experiences in shaping how travellers engage with sustainable hospitality offerings. Environmentally responsible choices are often associated with feelings of moral satisfaction, personal fulfilment, and alignment with individual beliefs and identities (Alghanim & Ndubisi, 2022). When hotel practices reflect values that travellers consider important, sustainability may become a meaningful aspect of the overall travel experience (Srivastava et al., 2024). Such considerations are particularly relevant within luxury hospitality, where emotional engagement and symbolic meaning frequently influence perceptions of service quality and guest satisfaction (Kim & Ha, 2022).

In response to these changing expectations, the concept of responsible luxury has gained increasing attention within hospitality research. Responsible luxury combines sustainability with exclusivity, craftsmanship, authenticity, and experiential richness, suggesting that environmental responsibility can coexist with premium service experiences.

Studies indicate that sustainability initiatives may contribute to perceptions of authenticity, trust, and emotional connection when they are communicated transparently and implemented consistently (Floričić et al., 2024). Similarly, corporate social responsibility activities and credible sustainability communication can strengthen consumer confidence when environmental commitments are supported by observable practices (Bernard et al., 2023; Sahin et al., 2019; Nguyen-Viet et al., 2024).

Digital communication platforms have also become important sources of sustainability-related information for travellers. Online sustainability messages, user-generated content, social media discussions, and customer reviews contribute to how travellers interpret and evaluate hotel sustainability practices (Tanford et al., 2020). Visual evidence of environmental initiatives and positive guest experiences may enhance perceptions of credibility and authenticity (Chuang et al., 2024). At the same time, concerns regarding greenwashing and excessive information can create uncertainty, highlighting the importance of transparent and trustworthy sustainability communication (Font et al., 2025; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015).

Although previous studies have generated valuable insights into sustainability and hotel selection, much of the existing research relies on quantitative approaches that focus on measuring associations between sustainability-related variables and booking intentions. Comparatively less attention has been given to understanding how young travellers interpret sustainability within luxury hotel contexts and how these perceptions influence their decision-making processes. Furthermore, limited research has explored how sustainability-related values are experienced alongside emerging digital and technological features during hotel evaluation and selection. Exploring these perspectives may contribute to a richer understanding of sustainable luxury consumption and provide deeper insights into the experiences of young travellers (Pagaldiviti & Rai, 2025).

2.4 Fintech-Enabled Sustainability Features in Hospitality

Alongside the broader sustainability transformation in the hospitality industry, financial technologies (fintech) have increasingly become part of how travellers engage with hotel services. Fintech refers to the integration of digital technologies such as mobile and contactless payments, blockchain systems, artificial intelligence, and data analytics into financial services, aimed at improving efficiency, transparency, and user convenience (Zheng & Siddik, 2022). In recent years, fintech has also been associated with discussions on green finance, ethical consumption, and digitally enabled sustainable practices, positioning it as an emerging element within sustainability-oriented service ecosystems (Mirza et al., 2023).

Existing literature highlights that fintech-related tools can support sustainability-related practices through digital and paperless transactions, improved transparency in payments, and data-based tracking of environmental indicators such as carbon-related information (Shala & Berisha, 2024). Research from finance and related sectors further

shows that digital financial systems can enhance accountability and improve resource efficiency by enabling more transparent and traceable processes (Zheng & Siddik, 2022). Similarly, digital reporting and analytics tools are often discussed as mechanisms that support organisations in documenting and communicating sustainability-related activities in a more structured way (Arner et al., 2020). These developments reflect the growing integration of digital financial systems into sustainability-oriented practices across industries (Atayah et al., 2023).

Within tourism and hospitality, fintech applications are increasingly embedded in everyday customer experiences. Mobile payment systems, digital booking platforms, blockchain-based loyalty programs, and cashless transactions have become common features of modern hotel services. Studies suggest that these technologies are often associated with smoother transactions, increased convenience, and greater transparency in service delivery (Karim et al., 2022). Blockchain applications in particular are discussed in relation to improving transparency and trust in tourism transactions, which may shape how travellers interpret service reliability and credibility (Khanna et al., 2020; Nurzyńska et al., 2024).

From a consumer experience perspective, fintech-enabled systems may reduce the effort involved in making hotel bookings and accessing services. Simplified payment processes, easy access to information, and seamless digital interfaces can make hotel selection more convenient for digitally engaged travellers (Nguyen et al., 2016). This is especially relevant for younger travellers, who are generally more comfortable with technology-mediated interactions and often expect convenience as part of their travel experience (Paliwal et al., 2025).

Although existing studies suggest that fintech-enabled systems may shape how travellers engage with hotel services, there is still limited understanding of how these technologies are experienced and interpreted within sustainability-oriented hospitality contexts. Instead of treating fintech as a statistical moderating factor, there is a need to explore how young travellers perceive digital payment systems, booking platforms, and technology-enabled sustainability features in their actual decision-making contexts. Understanding these lived experiences may provide deeper insight into how digital systems are connected to sustainability perceptions and hotel selection processes.

Despite the growing presence of fintech in hospitality, most existing research focuses on its use in banking, financial services, or investment sectors, with comparatively less attention to tourism and hotel contexts (Taouil et al., 2025). While some studies highlight that fintech may contribute to improved engagement, trust, and user experience, there remains limited qualitative understanding of how these digital features are experienced by travellers when making sustainability-related hotel decisions (Shrivastava et al., 2025). Addressing this gap is important for developing a more context-sensitive understanding of how digital financial systems interact with sustainability perceptions in luxury hospitality settings.

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives and the Role of TRA

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is widely recognised as a useful framework for understanding how individuals form intentions and make decisions based on their attitudes and perceptions of social expectations (Andrewson et al., 2025). Within hospitality and tourism research, TRA has frequently been applied to explore environmentally responsible behaviour, hotel selection, and support for sustainability-related initiatives (Sharma, 2019; Gill et al., 2021). The theory emphasises the importance of personal evaluations and social influences in shaping how individuals approach particular decisions, making it relevant to the study of sustainable consumption in hospitality contexts.

Although TRA has been applied across various areas of consumer behaviour research, sustainability-related hospitality studies more commonly draw upon frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory. These approaches often emphasise factors such as perceived behavioural control, personal values, and moral obligation (Han et al., 2010). In comparison, TRA provides a useful perspective for examining how individuals interpret sustainability-related issues through their personal attitudes and the influence of important social groups. This focus is particularly relevant when considering younger travellers whose decisions are often shaped by social interaction, peer influence, and digitally mediated communication (Ridwan et al., 2025).

The increasing presence of digital and fintech-enabled services within hospitality environments introduces new contexts through which travellers encounter and engage with sustainability-related information. Features such as digital payment systems, transparent transaction records, and technology-enabled sustainability initiatives may contribute to how travellers perceive environmental responsibility and discuss these practices within their social networks (Karim et al., 2025). Similarly, visible sustainability-related information shared through digital platforms may become part of the broader social environment in which attitudes and perceptions are formed and communicated (Paliwal et al., 2025). However, these experiences remain relatively underexplored within luxury hospitality settings, where sustainability, technology, and expectations of exclusivity increasingly intersect (Rady, 2018).

The integration of TRA with fintech-enabled sustainability features represents an emerging area within hospitality research. While TRA offers a useful lens for understanding attitudes and social influences, contemporary hospitality experiences are increasingly shaped by digital technologies that affect how travellers access information, evaluate hotel offerings, and engage with sustainability initiatives. For younger travellers, who are highly connected through digital platforms, these technologies may form an important part of how sustainability is experienced and interpreted during hotel selection processes. Rather than applying TRA as a predictive model, the present study uses the theory as a guiding framework for exploring how young travellers understand and make sense of sustainability

and fintech-enabled features within luxury hospitality contexts. This approach enables a richer examination of participants' experiences while maintaining the relevance of established behavioural theory within an increasingly digitalised environment.

2.6 Research Gaps and Conceptual Positioning

The reviewed literature highlights growing academic interest in sustainability within the hospitality industry, particularly in relation to eco-conscious consumers, sustainable luxury hospitality, and environmentally responsible hotel practices. Existing studies have contributed valuable insights into how sustainability influences consumer preferences and hospitality management practices. Similarly, emerging research has identified the increasing role of digital technologies and fintech-enabled services in supporting sustainable consumption through enhanced convenience, transparency, and customer engagement. Despite these contributions, several important gaps remain.

First, much of the existing literature relies on quantitative approaches that focus on measuring relationships among sustainability-related constructs. While these studies provide useful evidence regarding consumer tendencies and preferences, they offer limited understanding of how travellers personally interpret sustainability initiatives and how such interpretations influence their hotel selection processes. As a result, the meanings, experiences, and values that shape sustainability-oriented decisions among young travellers remain insufficiently explored.

Second, although fintech-enabled sustainability features have received growing attention in discussions of digital transformation and sustainable consumption, existing studies primarily emphasise technological adoption, operational performance, or financial outcomes. Comparatively less attention has been given to understanding how travelers experience and evaluate fintech-enabled sustainability features within hospitality settings. The ways in which digital payment systems, paperless transactions, blockchain-based loyalty programs, and other technology-enabled services contribute to travellers' perceptions of sustainability require further exploration.

Third, sustainability and technology have often been examined as separate areas within hospitality research. Limited attention has been directed toward understanding how young travellers simultaneously experience sustainability-related values and technology-enabled services when evaluating luxury hotel options. Given the increasing importance of both sustainability and digital engagement in contemporary travel experiences, exploring these perspectives together may provide a more holistic understanding of sustainable luxury hospitality.

From a theoretical perspective, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) offers a useful lens for examining how personal attitudes and social influences contribute to decision-making processes. However, previous applications of TRA in hospitality research have largely focused on quantitative testing of theoretical constructs. Consequently, there remains limited

understanding of how sustainability-related attitudes and social influences are interpreted and experienced by travellers within digitally connected hospitality environments. A qualitative exploration can provide richer insight into how these processes are understood from the perspective of travellers themselves.

Furthermore, empirical evidence from emerging tourism destinations such as Sri Lanka remains limited. The country's unique cultural, economic, and technological context may shape how young travellers perceive sustainability and evaluate luxury hotel experiences. Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts an interpretivist qualitative approach to explore how young travellers understand, evaluate, and experience sustainability within luxury hotel settings in Sri Lanka, while also examining the role of fintech-enabled sustainability features in shaping these experiences. By focusing on participants' perspectives and lived experiences, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of sustainable luxury hospitality within an increasingly digitalised environment.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to explore how young travellers perceive eco-sustainability and fintech-enabled practices in luxury hotels and how these factors shape their hotel selection decisions within the Sri Lankan context. Given the exploratory nature of the research and its focus on understanding participants' perceptions, values, experiences, and interpretations, a qualitative research design was adopted.

The study is grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that individuals develop meanings based on their experiences and interactions. Since the study seeks to understand how young travellers interpret sustainability initiatives and fintech-enabled services within luxury hospitality settings, an interpretivist perspective was considered appropriate. This philosophical position allows the researcher to explore subjective meanings rather than measure objective relationships between variables.

Consistent with the interpretivist paradigm, the study adopted an inductive research approach. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the research sought to generate insights from participants' experiences and identify emerging themes related to sustainable luxury hotel consumption. An exploratory qualitative strategy was employed because limited research has examined how sustainability-related perceptions and fintech-enabled experiences jointly shape young travellers' luxury hotel selection behaviour, particularly within emerging tourism destinations such as Sri Lanka.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) served as a sensitizing theoretical framework guiding the study. Specifically, interview questions were designed to explore participants' attitudes toward eco-friendly luxury hotels, the influence of social groups and digital

communities on hotel selection decisions, and behavioural intentions related to sustainable accommodation choices. While TRA informed the interview design and initial interpretation of findings, the analysis remained open to the emergence of additional themes beyond the theory.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The study focused on two participant groups: young travellers and luxury hotel managers operating within Sri Lanka's luxury hospitality sector.

The target population of young travellers consisted of individuals aged between 15 and 45 years, representing both Generation Z and Millennial cohorts. To ensure relevance to the research objectives, participants were required to have previous experience staying in four-star or five-star hotels and possess awareness of sustainability-related practices within hospitality settings.

The second participant group consisted of luxury hotel managers who were directly involved in sustainability initiatives and fintech-enabled service implementation within their organisations. These participants were selected because of their operational knowledge regarding environmental practices, digital service innovations, and customer engagement strategies.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select information-rich participants capable of providing meaningful insights into the research phenomenon. Participants were recruited through professional hotel contacts and direct approaches based on their relevant experience and willingness to participate in the study. Recruitment continued until data saturation was achieved, whereby additional interviews no longer generated substantially new insights or themes.

The final sample comprised 30 participants, including 23 young travellers and 7 luxury hotel managers.

3.3 Data Collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted between the researcher and participants. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide flexibility to explore participants' experiences in depth while maintaining consistency across interviews through the use of a structured interview guide. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face, while a small number were conducted through online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams to accommodate participant availability and geographical constraints. Interviews were conducted in either English or Sinhala depending on participants' language preference.

Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 70 minutes. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Informed consent was obtained

from all participants before data collection commenced. Separate interview guides were developed for young travellers and hotel managers.

The young traveller interview guide consisted of five sections covering: (A) Background and Travel Context, (B) Hotel Selection Considerations, (C) Eco-Consciousness, Internal Values and Perceptions, (D) Eco-Sustainable Values and Buying Behaviour, and (E) Experiences of Eco-Sustainable Practices. A total of 25 open-ended questions were included to encourage participants to discuss their attitudes, experiences, and decision-making processes.

The hotel manager interview guide consisted of seven sections covering: (A) Background and Role, (B) Motivation for Eco-Sustainable Practices, (C) Eco-Sustainability Initiatives, (D) Understanding Young Travellers' Buying Behaviour, (E) Fintech Practices, (F) Fintech Supporting Eco-Sustainable Behaviour, and (G) Performance Outcomes. The guide contained 20 open-ended questions focusing on organisational sustainability initiatives, fintech implementation, and managerial perspectives regarding changing consumer expectations. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data.

3.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis following the six-step procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a systematic and flexible approach for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The analysis process began with familiarisation through repeated reading of interview transcripts. Initial codes were then generated manually from meaningful segments of text. Subsequently, related codes were grouped into broader categories and potential themes. These themes were reviewed, refined, and compared across participant groups to ensure internal consistency and conceptual clarity.

Following theme refinement, themes were defined and named according to their relevance to the research objectives and emerging patterns within the data. Finally, the themes were interpreted and integrated into a coherent narrative explaining how eco-consciousness, eco-sustainable values, sustainability perceptions, hotel sustainability initiatives, and fintech-enabled practices influence luxury hotel selection behaviour among young travellers. Manual coding was employed throughout the analysis process to enable close engagement with participant narratives and facilitate deeper interpretation of meanings embedded within the data.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were considered throughout the research process. Credibility was supported using semi-structured interviews, verbatim transcription, and

prolonged engagement with the data. Transferability was strengthened by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and methodological procedures.

Dependability was ensured through clear documentation of sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures. Confirmability was enhanced by maintaining transparency during coding and theme development and by grounding interpretations in participants' own accounts.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by removing personally identifiable information from transcripts and research outputs. Data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic research purposes.

4. RESULTS

The results of this study highlight the internal values, visible practices, and technological facilitators that shape the selection of luxury hotels by Millennials and Generation Z in Sri Lanka. Based on the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 23 young travellers and 7 luxury hotel managers, the following themes emerged.

The empirical framework presented in Figure 1 was developed inductively from the thematic analysis of interview data rather than being directly derived from the literature review. During the coding and theme development process, three overarching dimensions consistently emerged across participant accounts: (1) internal sustainability motivations, (2) visible sustainability actions and engagement, and (3) technology-enabled sustainability reinforcement. These dimensions collectively explain how young travellers evaluate luxury hotels and form the basis of the empirical framework presented in this study. While the framework is informed by concepts discussed in the literature, including eco-consciousness, sustainability perceptions, and the role of social influences highlighted within the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), it remains primarily an empirical interpretation grounded in participants lived experiences.

Building on this framework, the results are structured according to the three research objectives to ensure analytical clarity and logical alignment between data interpretation and research design. Accordingly, Themes 1 to 3 correspond to RQ01 (Internal sustainability motivations), focusing on moral expectations, value-driven integrity, and wellness-oriented sustainability perceptions. Themes 4 to 6 correspond to RQ02 (Visible sustainability actions and engagement), highlighting tangible environmental practices, participatory sustainability experiences, and community-based social sustainability. Themes 7 to 9 correspond to RQ03 (Technology-enabled sustainability reinforcement), illustrating how fintech-enabled features such as frictionless digital services, transparency dashboards, and eco-gamification strengthen trust, engagement, and sustainable decision-making among young travellers.

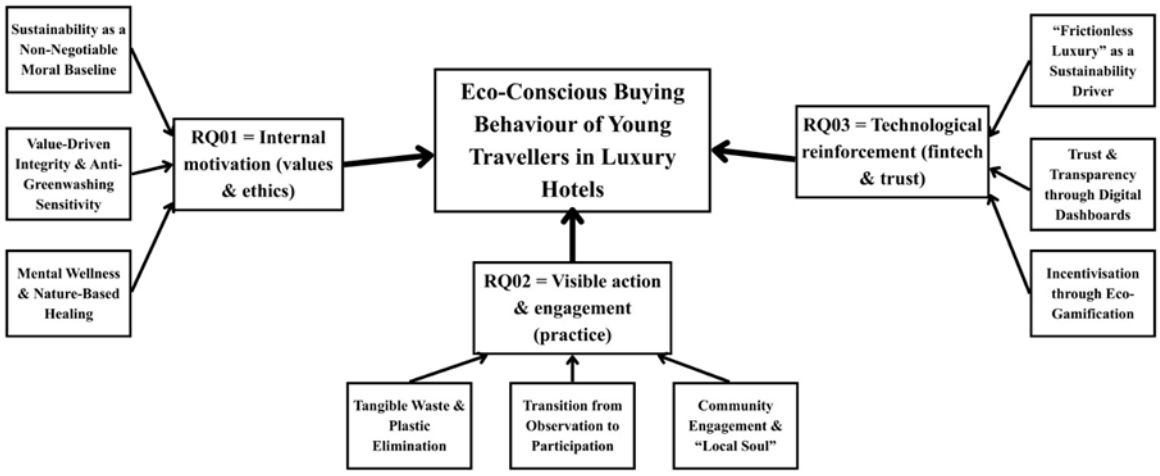


Figure 1: Empirical Framework of Eco-Conscious Buying Behaviour of Young Travellers in Sri Lankan Luxury Hotels
Source: Author's Creation

Theme 1: Sustainability as a Non-Negotiable Moral Baseline

The findings indicate that Millennials and Generation Z perceive eco-sustainability as a fundamental requirement when selecting luxury hotels, rather than an optional or value-added feature. For many participants, sustainability acts as an initial filtering criterion during the hotel selection process, particularly when browsing digital platforms. Hotel managers similarly observed that young travellers conduct detailed online checks of environmental credentials before considering other hotel attributes such as pricing or room categories.

The absence of visible sustainability information was frequently interpreted as a negative signal, often leading participants to exclude such hotels from consideration. One hotel manager described this group as "quietly bullish," emphasising their proactive and selective approach to sustainability information.

"For young travellers, sustainability is not a trend or lifestyle preference; it is a fundamental expectation." (HM04)

A young traveller further explained:

"I avoided a few luxury hotels because there was no mention of eco-friendly practices… that absence itself felt like a red flag." (YT04)

These accounts suggest that sustainability functions as a basic expectation in luxury hospitality decision-making among younger travellers. Rather than being evaluated as a promotional feature, sustainability is used as a screening mechanism to assess hotel credibility.

Theme 2: Value-Driven Integrity and Anti-Greenwashing Sensitivity

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of honesty and transparency in sustainability communication. Young travellers reported a strong ability to recognise exaggerated or misleading environmental claims, often described in the data as "greenwashing." Such perceptions significantly reduce trust and negatively influence booking decisions.

Hotel managers also confirmed that this demographic is particularly sensitive to inconsistencies between marketing messages and actual operational practices. While minor operational limitations were generally accepted, dishonesty regarding sustainability commitments was not tolerated.

"Young travellers are very sensitive to greenwashing. If they feel sustainability is only marketing, they react very negatively." (HM02)

Findings indicate that trust plays a central role in shaping hotel selection, and once damaged, it is difficult to restore. Participants frequently relied on digital reviews, peer feedback, and social media content to validate hotel sustainability claims before making booking decisions. Integrity and transparency emerged as key determinants in how young travellers evaluate sustainability claims within luxury hospitality contexts.

Theme 3: Mental Wellness and Nature-Based Healing

The data reveals that travel for Millennials and Generation Z is strongly associated with psychological well-being, stress relief, and emotional restoration. Participants frequently described luxury eco-friendly hotels as restorative environments that support mental relaxation and connection with nature.

Eco-sustainable hotels were often perceived as "sanctuaries" that enable guests to disconnect from urban stress while maintaining comfort and luxury standards. Many participants also highlighted the importance of experiencing "guilt-free indulgence," where luxury consumption does not conflict with environmental responsibility.

"Leisure travel for me is not only for fun; it is like healing my mind. So I usually choose places that support relaxation and nature." (YT14)

These accounts suggest that wellness and sustainability are closely interconnected in shaping travel choices. Nature-based environments, calm surroundings, and eco-friendly design elements were repeatedly associated with emotional comfort and psychological balance. Participants indicated that sustainable luxury enhances the perceived meaning of travel experiences by aligning personal well-being with environmental responsibility.

Theme 4: Tangible Waste and Plastic Elimination

The findings show that visible environmental practices, particularly the elimination of single-use plastics, play an important role in shaping young travellers' perceptions of sustainability in luxury hotels. Hotels such as Heritance Kandalama, Taj Samudra, and Cinnamon Wild have introduced initiatives like in-house glass bottling systems and refillable dispensers, which are widely recognised by both managers and guests as clear indicators of environmental responsibility. Participants consistently highlighted that such visible actions increase confidence in a hotel's sustainability commitment. Rather than focusing on technical environmental performance, young travellers placed importance on what they could directly observe during their stay.

"When guests see glass water bottles instead of plastic ones, it gives them instant reassurance." (HM05)

These visible sustainability cues were associated with trust and validation of responsible consumption choices. The absence of such practices was often interpreted as a lack of environmental commitment.

Theme 5: Transition from Observation to Participation

The data indicates a clear shift from passive awareness of sustainability to active involvement among young travellers. Participants expressed a preference for engaging directly in environmental activities such as tree planting, coral reef restoration, and waste management demonstrations, rather than only observing hotel-led initiatives.

Hotel managers noted that these participatory experiences are particularly valued by Millennials and Generation Z and often enhance the memorability of the stay. Such activities also encourage guests to feel personally connected to sustainability efforts within the hotel environment.

"The modern young traveler wants to be actively involved. They want to plant the tree themselves… sustainability has become experiential rather than informational." (HM04)

Findings suggest that participation-based experiences influence how sustainability is perceived, with travellers preferring hotels that allow them to contribute meaningfully during their stay. These experiences were also frequently linked to emotional engagement and sharing of travel experiences on digital platforms.

Theme 6: Community Engagement and the "Local Soul"

Social sustainability emerged as an important dimension of luxury hotel selection, particularly through engagement with local communities. Participants valued initiatives that highlighted local culture, employment, and community integration, such as locally sourced food, cultural interaction, and employment of staff from nearby communities.

Hotels were perceived more positively when they demonstrated strong local connections, which enhanced the authenticity of the overall experience.

"They love knowing that their butler comes from the neighboring village… it makes the experience feel real and meaningful." (HM05)

These findings indicate that young travellers associate sustainability not only with environmental practices but also with social and cultural responsibility. Community engagement contributed to a stronger sense of authenticity and emotional value in luxury hospitality experiences.

Theme 7: Frictionless Luxury as a Sustainability Driver

Digital technologies and fintech-enabled systems are reshaping luxury hospitality by creating a "frictionless luxury" experience, where operational convenience and sustainability coexist. Millennials and Gen Z participants consistently emphasised expectations for fully digital service processes, including mobile check-in, digital room access, and paperless transactions, which they associate with both efficiency and environmental responsibility.

Hotel managers highlighted that digitalisation is no longer perceived only as a service enhancement but also as a sustainability strategy due to reduced paper usage and operational waste.

"Moving toward a fully paperless hotel experience is not just about convenience; it is also a strong sustainability initiative." (HM 03)

This finding indicates that digital service delivery is interpreted by young travellers as a visible sustainability practice rather than a purely technological upgrade. Participants described frictionless digital processes as reducing unnecessary environmental impact while enhancing autonomy and travel convenience. Mobile-based hotel interactions were associated with modern luxury and eco-responsible consumption.

Theme 8: Trust and Transparency through Digital Sustainability Dashboards

Findings indicate that trust is a critical determinant in sustainability-oriented hotel selection, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z who demonstrate strong skepticism toward unverified environmental claims. Fintech-enabled transparency tools, such as sustainability dashboards, carbon tracking systems, and real-time digital reporting, were identified as key mechanisms for building credibility.

Hotel managers noted that digital integration enhances authenticity perceptions by linking sustainability claims to operational data.

"When sustainability is integrated into real operational systems, especially digital platforms, it demonstrates genuine commitment." (HM05)

Participants expressed preference for hotels that provide visible and verifiable sustainability information through digital platforms rather than static marketing messages. Young travellers indicated that access to real-time environmental performance data

increases confidence in hotel selection decisions and reduces concerns regarding greenwashing. This theme confirms that fintech-enabled transparency functions as a trust-building mechanism by bridging the gap between sustainability claims and operational reality.

Theme 9: Incentivization through Eco-Gamification and Digital Rewards

The study found that fintech-based gamification systems significantly influence sustainable consumption behaviour by making eco-friendly actions more engaging and rewarding. Hotels increasingly use digital loyalty platforms and in-room technologies to encourage sustainable guest behaviour through point-based incentives. A hotel manager explained this system as follows,

"On the in-room tablets, we have what we call the 'Green Guest' challenge. Each of these actions earns Eco-Points." (HM07)

Participants described eco-gamification as a motivating factor that transforms sustainability from a passive expectation into an interactive experience. Actions such as linen reuse, energy saving, and sustainable dining choices were more likely to be adopted when linked to rewards such as points, benefits, or future discounts.

Young travellers also highlighted that digital reward systems enhance engagement and create a sense of participation in sustainability efforts, particularly when linked with broader social or environmental contributions such as donations or community projects.

Table 1: Summary of Themes

Research Objective	Theme	Core Finding
RO1	Sustainability as a Non-Negotiable Moral Baseline	Sustainability is viewed as a minimum requirement rather than a luxury feature
RO1	Value-Driven Integrity and Anti-Greenwashing Sensitivity	Transparency and authenticity strongly influence trust
RO1	Mental Wellness and Nature-Based Healing	Sustainability is associated with emotional well-being and guilt-free luxury
RO2	Tangible Waste and Plastic Elimination	Visible environmental practices enhance credibility
RO2	Transition from Observation to Participation	Young travellers prefer active involvement in sustainability initiatives
RO2	Community Engagement and the Local Soul	Social sustainability and local connections enrich travel experiences

RO3	Frictionless Luxury as a Sustainability Driver	Digital services support convenience and paperless operations
RO3	Trust and Transparency through Digital Dashboards	Real-time sustainability information enhances trust
RO3	Incentivisation through Eco-Gamification	Reward systems encourage engagement with sustainability practices

Source: Author's Creation

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion critically compares empirical findings with prior studies while contextualising results within the Sri Lankan luxury hotel sector. Rather than treating sustainability as an auxiliary feature, the findings indicate that eco-sustainable values function as a core decision-making criterion for Millennials and Generation Z travellers. The chapter also cautiously integrates the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) to explain value–attitude–behaviour linkages without overextending its application.

The findings reveal that eco-consciousness operates as a non-negotiable moral baseline influencing luxury hotel selection among young travellers. This aligns with prior research indicating that Millennials and Generation Z demonstrate heightened environmental awareness and ethical sensitivity when making travel decisions (Gössling et al., 2020; Deloitte, 2020). Unlike traditional luxury consumers who prioritised exclusivity, comfort, and prestige, young travellers increasingly associate luxury with responsibility, authenticity, and positive environmental impact.

This finding supports Ranasinghe et al. (2020), who argue that sustainability has become a strategic necessity for Sri Lanka's tourism recovery, particularly in attracting younger, value-driven markets. Similarly, Fernando et al. (2015) observed that environmentally responsible practices positively influence tourists' perceptions of Sri Lankan hotels. However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that eco-consciousness is not merely a preference but an ethical expectation. Participants consistently expressed that luxury hotels lacking credible sustainability commitments were excluded from consideration regardless of price or service quality.

From a theoretical perspective, this supports TRA's assumption that behavioural intentions are shaped by underlying beliefs and values. In this context, eco-conscious beliefs directly inform favourable or unfavourable attitudes toward luxury hotels, subsequently influencing selection behaviour. However, the findings suggest that value-driven decision-making among young travellers may exceed TRA's rational evaluation framework, incorporating moral obligation and identity-based considerations not explicitly addressed by the theory.

The study found that perceived eco-sustainability significantly enhances trust, credibility, and emotional attachment toward luxury hotels. Visible practices such as plastic elimination, waste segregation, renewable energy use, and responsible sourcing were repeatedly cited as trust-building mechanisms. This aligns with Gössling et al. (2020), who argue that tangible sustainability actions strengthen consumer confidence and reduce scepticism.

Consistent with Credit Suisse (2022), the findings confirm that young consumers are more likely to support brands that demonstrate authentic commitment to environmental and social responsibility. Importantly, the present study highlights that perception is shaped not only by the existence of sustainable practices but also by their visibility and clarity. Hotels that actively communicated their initiative through in-room messaging, staff explanations, or digital platforms were perceived as more trustworthy than those engaging in silent sustainability.

This finding refines existing literature by demonstrating that sustainability communication functions as a mediating factor between actual practices and consumer trust. While Fernando et al. (2015) emphasised operational sustainability, the current findings indicate that uncommunicated green practices fail to generate behavioural impact among young travellers.

The results demonstrate that eco-sustainable values foster emotional engagement and brand attachment. Participants expressed pride, satisfaction, and a sense of personal alignment when staying at hotels that reflected their environmental values. This supports Deloitte (2020), which identified authenticity and purpose-driven branding as key motivators for Millennials and Generation Z.

The study further reveals that young travellers value opportunities for participation, such as towel-reuse programs, community clean-ups, and conservation activities. This supports Gössling et al. (2020), who emphasised experiential sustainability as a driver of positive tourist attitudes. The findings extend this literature by showing that participation strengthens emotional bonds, transforming guests from passive consumers into active contributors.

Although TRA explains the translation of values into attitudes, emotional engagement suggests the influence of affective factors beyond rational intention formation. This indicates that sustainability-driven luxury consumption is simultaneously ethical, emotional, and experiential.

A major contribution of this study is its identification of fintech as a facilitator that bridges sustainability values and actual purchasing behaviour. Digital payments, eco-booking platforms, mobile applications, and technology-enabled loyalty programs were found to enhance convenience, transparency, and engagement. These findings align with Deloitte (2020), which highlighted digital integration as essential to meeting young travellers' expectations.

Fintech-enabled tools were particularly valued when they visibly supported sustainability objectives, such as paperless transactions, digital receipts, carbon footprint tracking, and reward systems linked to eco-friendly behaviour. This extends prior tourism literature by positioning fintech not merely as a transactional tool but as a behavioural reinforcement mechanism.

Within TRA, fintech functions as an enabling condition that reduces behavioural barriers, allowing positive attitudes to translate into action. However, the findings suggest that fintech's influence depends on its alignment with sustainability values. Technology perceived as purely convenience-driven, without ethical relevance, generated limited behavioural impact.

Despite strong sustainability values, the findings reveal that inconsistent communication and perceived greenwashing significantly weaken trust. Participants expressed scepticism toward vague claims such as "eco-friendly" or "green hotel" when unsupported by evidence. This aligns with Gössling et al. (2020), who warned that superficial sustainability messaging can undermine credibility.

The study advances existing literature by showing that young travellers actively evaluate the authenticity of sustainability claims, often cross-checking information through websites, social media, and online reviews. In the Sri Lankan context, where sustainability standards vary widely across hotels, transparency becomes especially critical. Poor digital visibility of green initiatives was found to reduce the influence of sustainability on booking decisions, even when hotels engaged in responsible practices.

The discussion indicates that luxury hotels in Sri Lanka must reconceptualise sustainability as a strategic core rather than a peripheral marketing feature. Consistent with Ranasinghe et al. (2020), sustainability-driven differentiation is essential for post-crisis competitiveness. However, the present findings emphasise that sustainability must be value-driven, visible, participatory, and digitally reinforced.

Hotels targeting young travellers should integrate fintech solutions that support transparency and engagement while ensuring that sustainability claims are specific, measurable, and verifiable. Failure to do so risks alienating ethically conscious consumers who view sustainability as a baseline expectation.

Finally, the findings strongly align with existing literature while offering new insights into the moral centrality of eco-sustainability and the facilitating role of fintech in young travellers' luxury hotel selection. Eco-consciousness, perceived sustainability, and value alignment shape attitudes, trust, and emotional engagement, while fintech enables behavioral realization. However, weak communication and perceived greenwashing disrupt this process. The discussion confirms the partial relevance of TRA while highlighting the need for broader theoretical perspectives that incorporate ethics, emotion, and technological mediation in sustainable luxury tourism. The study concludes that for Millennials and Generation Z, eco-sustainability and fintech are no longer optional "add-ons" but are integrated pillars of the modern luxury experience. The research demonstrates that while

eco-consciousness acts as the internal driver, fintech services provide the transparency and convenience necessary to translate these values into actual purchasing decisions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined how eco-consciousness, eco-sustainability perceptions, and eco-sustainable values influence luxury hotel selection among Millennials and Generation Z travellers in Sri Lanka, while exploring the role of fintech-enabled sustainability features in supporting sustainability-oriented buying behaviour. Using an interpretivist qualitative approach, the study identified three interconnected dimensions that shape sustainable luxury hotel selection: internal sustainability motivations, visible sustainability actions and engagement, and technology-enabled sustainability reinforcement.

The findings addressing Research Objective 1 revealed that sustainability has evolved beyond a desirable hotel attribute and is increasingly perceived as a moral expectation among young travellers. Participants associated sustainable luxury experiences with personal values, authenticity, mental wellbeing, and environmental responsibility, while demonstrating strong sensitivity toward greenwashing and misleading sustainability claims. These findings indicate that sustainability has become embedded within the identity and decision-making processes of younger travellers.

In relation to Research Objective 2, the study found that visible sustainability practices play a significant role in influencing hotel preferences and trust. Participants responded positively to tangible environmental initiatives, opportunities for active participation in sustainability activities, and meaningful community engagement programmes. Sustainability was therefore valued not only through environmental outcomes but also through authentic experiences and social connections.

Regarding Research Objective 3, the findings demonstrated that fintech-enabled sustainability features strengthen sustainability-oriented decision-making by enhancing convenience, transparency, and engagement. Digital services such as paperless transactions, sustainability dashboards, and eco-gamification mechanisms increased confidence in sustainability claims while encouraging environmentally responsible behaviour.

The study contributes theoretically by extending the application of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) within a sustainable luxury hospitality context and demonstrating how sustainability-related attitudes and social influences are experienced within digitally enabled environments. Methodologically, the study addresses the predominance of quantitative research in this area by providing rich qualitative insights into travellers' perceptions, meanings, and lived experiences. Practically, the findings offer guidance for luxury hotel operators seeking to integrate authentic sustainability practices with digital innovation to better engage environmentally conscious younger generations.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 Policy Implications

The findings offer actionable insights for the Sri Lankan hospitality sector: Hotels need to ensure operational sustainability instead of merely "green branding," as young travellers are vigilant against greenwashing. Investing in digital tools like Fintech hubs can enhance guest experiences through paperless services and real-time impact tracking. Emphasising local culture by empowering staff and artisans can boost emotional connections that drive bookings. Lastly, introducing gamified eco-incentives can encourage sustainable guest behaviours while maintaining luxury.

6.2 Future Research and Limitations

The study is limited by its focus on the Sri Lankan luxury segment and its reliance on self-reported qualitative data, which may involve social desirability bias. Future research should employ quantitative methods to test the generalizability of these findings across different geographic contexts and hotel categories. Additionally, the potential of blockchain and AI-driven personalisation to further enhance transparency and eco-experiences remains a fertile ground for further inquiry

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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