

IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES ON GUEST REVISIT INTENTION: A NARRATIVE REVIEW OF THE MALDIVES TOURIST SECTOR

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Abstract

In emerging tourism-dependent economies, environmentally sustainable practices (ESPs) are essential for competitive advantage. However, evidence linking ESPs to revisit intention remains inconsistent. This study provides a narrative literature review of 40 studies published between 2013 and 2024 that were selected with a structured search and screening process to examine the role of ESPs in resort tourism in the Maldives. Using thematic synthesis, it explores effects on guest behaviour, focusing on the environmental dimension of the Triple Bottom Line. Findings suggest ESPs positively influence revisit intention when integrated into guest experiences. Guest-facing initiatives enhance emotional connection, while back-of-house practices have limited impact unless made visible. Service quality, destination image, and perceived value act as key mediators.

JEL: Q56, L83, Q01

Keywords: Environmental Sustainability, Revisit Intention, Island Resorts, Triple Bottom Line, Tourism Experience Design

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing environmental vulnerabilities faced by small island nations have accelerated the global focus on sustainability in tourism, especially in ecologically fragile destinations such as the Maldives. Tourism contributes significantly to the Maldivian economy, yet it also imposes substantial environmental burdens through energy consumption, waste generation, and marine degradation (UNWTO, 2021). In response, resorts have adopted environmentally sustainable practices (ESPs) ranging from waste-to-wealth systems and renewable energy use to coral reef restoration projects as a dual strategy for environmental protection and competitive advantage (Miller et al., 2019; Papallou et al., 2024).

The Maldives, one of the world's most tourism-dependent economies, is emblematic of a paradox in the global hospitality industry. The archipelago's pristine beauty and resort-based luxury model appeal to high-net-worth tourists; however, its ecological fragility means the industry is intrinsically unsustainable without significant change. Due to exclusively remote island-based resort operations, no public access to desalinated water, and almost total dependence on imported diesel for energy (Belis et al., 2015), the environmental impact of tourism on the Maldives is disproportionately high. Nevertheless, as scientific evidence on climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological degradation continues to mount, stakeholders—ranging from guests to investors and governments—are increasingly demanding that the hospitality and entertainment industries go beyond offering mere leisure and luxury. There is now an expectation for these sectors to take genuine responsibility for their environmental impact and contribute actively to sustainability efforts (Baloch et al., 2022). Hence, in a tourism economy, sustainability is not merely an ethical thought experiment but a commercial necessity.

Environmentally Sustainable Practices (ESPs) such as the adoption of renewable energy use, water conservation, waste reduction, and biodiversity protection have gained popularity in the hospitality industry as mechanisms for eco-centric stewardship and the protection of long-term business resilience (Kholijah, 2024). Belonging to a community that addresses environmental issues is no longer a trend but rather a prerequisite that the modern luxury traveller is already demanding as a part of the value package. High-end resorts in the Maldives that fail to integrate sustainable practices into the luxury experience risk discouraging environmentally conscious travellers, a growing segment whose expectations increasingly prioritise sustainability in tourism (Riyaz, 2024). Consequently, ESPs are now being implemented as a means of cost reduction and regulation as well as to drive guest satisfaction, brand preference, and return intent (Philip et al., 2024).

Several studies suggest that there is a robust and positive relationship between visible and strongly integrated environmental practices and higher levels of guest loyalty. For example, on-site organic farming, coral reef restoration, and refillable amenities have been

found to enhance guest engagement and increase revisit intentions (Hein et al., 2020). Nevertheless, this relationship is not universal. Other studies, however, indicate that the majority of guests do not perceive or underestimate practices that occur toward the backend operations of the industry, for example, solar water heaters or biogas digesters, particularly when they are not connected to their local on-site experience (Ossama et al., 2023). In some cases, sustainability features may be perceived as inconvenient and restrictive when such practices are misapplied; they detract from satisfaction rather than contributing to it (Mathur et al., 2006). Similarly, it has been found that some sustainability initiatives implemented in the tourism sector have negatively affected customers' revisit intentions (Dolnicar et al., 2017; Verma et al., 2019). More importantly, following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, travellers have become increasingly sensitive to environmental sustainability practices (Marinakou, 2025). As found by Marinakou (2025) and Nguyen et al. (2025), customers are willing to pay a premium for environmentally sustainable products and services offered by businesses in the industry.

Hotels certified for sustainability may have great potential to increase their key performance indicators (KPIs) compared to competitors through a first-mover advantage. Eco-certifications can enhance brand image and provide a competitive advantage in the hospitality sector (Bianco et al., 2022). However, some studies argue that sustainability initiatives are sometimes used more as marketing tools than as genuine environmental commitments, raising concerns about greenwashing (Bianco et al., 2022). In such cases, sustainability ends up being just another piece of marketing material rather than something that is deeply embedded within the institutional framework. Resorts may then risk jeopardising brand authenticity or the trust of environmentally conscious hotel guests by failing to credibly and transparently integrate environmental practices into service delivery. In the Maldivian context, the implementation of environmental practices is often constrained by logistical and cost-related challenges, including the transportation of recyclable materials, the need for on-site waste management or recycling facilities, and the high cost of renewable energy generation (Riyaz, 2024).

The central issue, therefore, is that although environmental sustainability has been widely adopted, its behavioural effects on guest satisfaction and revisit intention are not fully realised by resort management and policy makers. This has resulted in the misapplication of such practices and the integration of ineffective practices. A comprehensive literature review is therefore critical to identify the importance of integrating effective environmental sustainability practices that have great potential to encourage guests' revisit intentions and to determine which specific environmental practices guests prefer. It also helps identify when such practices are likely to have a positive impact on operational or perception-related aspects. Similarly, the mediation of other factors such as service quality, destination image, and price-value perception must be recognised in the context of sustainability-based loyalty. Without this insight, resort managers are potentially exposing themselves to risks by investing in sustainability efforts chosen for

their benefit to the environment alone and do not drive the desired behavioural and competitive outputs.

As such, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of environmental sustainability practices on guest revisit intention in the Maldives resort setting. The present study seeks to move beyond linear models of causation to consider the processes through which ESP is broadly constructed, requested, and responded to by guests. It does so in three ways: first, the study investigates the influence of environmental sustainability initiatives on guest return behaviour. Second, the study identifies which practices are most effective in influencing perceptions of value and the intention to return, and third, the study reveals how mediating variables, such as emotional satisfaction, service experience, and destination image, influence the sustainability-loyalty relationship. The study, therefore, aims to systematically review the existing literature to understand the relationship between environmental sustainability practices and revisit intentions in luxury resorts.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a narrative literature review, appropriate for synthesising diverse perspectives across empirical, theoretical, and conceptual studies (Ferrari, 2015). Peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, and case-based publications between 2013 and 2024 were sourced using Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases and were supplemented by a backward search review of the relevant studies. The search initially produced a broad set of publications, after which titles and abstracts were screened to identify studies directly relevant to environmentally sustainable practices and guest behavioural outcomes in tourism contexts. The primary terms searched for included combinations of: “environmentally sustainable practices”, “green hotel practices”, “eco-friendly hotels”, “sustainable resorts”, “guest satisfaction”, “revisit intention”, “tourist loyalty”, “behavioural intention”, “Maldives tourism”, “island resorts”, and “luxury tourism”. The studies of interest were those that were published between the years 2013 and 2024, were in the English language, and were related to the tourism and/or hospitality and/or resort industries, specifically regarding the practice of environmental sustainability, and included guest perceptions and/or satisfaction, loyalty, and/or behavioural intention. Exclusion criteria were studies that focused solely on technical environmental systems of inclusion with no guest-related outcomes, studies that were unrelated to tourism and/or hospitality, duplicate records, or were of insufficient relevance to the focus of the review.

After the screening of titles, abstracts, and full texts, 40 studies were included in the synthesis. Studies were thematically synthesised by the environmentally sustainable practices framework, and the effects on guest satisfaction, revisit intention, and the mediating and/or moderating factors of the framework. This thematic structure was used to develop the conceptual framework of the study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Understanding the relationship between environmental sustainability in hospitality and guest revisit intentions requires engagement with behavioural and economic theories that explain how tourists perceive and respond to environmentally sustainable practices (ESPs).

From a psychological perspective, the **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)** has been widely employed to explain pro-environmental intentions, including tourists' decisions to revisit environmentally sustainable resorts. Ajzen (1991) suggests that behavioural intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Applying the TPB to tourism, Han et al. (2010) found that tourists with favourable attitudes toward ESPs were more likely to return to eco-certified accommodations. Nevertheless, the TPB has limitations in luxury tourism contexts like the Maldives, where emotional, sensory, and symbolic experiences often outweigh cognitive deliberation (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). While the TBL model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding sustainability, other theoretical perspectives further explain how sustainable practices influence guest perceptions and organisational performance.

Utility Theory offers another perspective, highlighting how tourists evaluate trade-offs between benefits and costs in making choices. In luxury tourism, perceived utility includes both comfort and ethical alignment. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) propose that tourists derive satisfaction not only from tangible amenities but also from the intrinsic value of supporting environmental sustainability. López-Mosquera and Sánchez (2012) observed that visitors are more willing to pay and return when they perceive ESPs as enhancing — not diminishing — their experience.

In this light, environmentally sustainable practices such as solar-powered transport, reef-safe sunscreens, and climate-sensitive infrastructure may positively influence revisit intention, provided they are seamlessly embedded in the guest journey and their value is communicated (Hilmi et al., 2025; Cumo et al., 2015; Papallou et al., 2024). However, **Perceived Value Theory** (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) suggests that not all guests interpret these practices equally; their emotional and social resonance plays a key role in influencing loyalty. Papallou et al. (2024) emphasise that guests are more likely to return when they perceive that their consumption actively contributes to environmental restoration without compromising comfort or luxury.

The existing theoretical models often fail to capture the full convergence of environmental sustainability, luxury, and behavioural intention. This theoretical gap is particularly relevant in the Maldivian resort context, where ecological vulnerability intersects with ultra-premium guest expectations. Tourists are not only seeking comfort but also alignment between their personal values and the resort's environmental practices. Therefore, revisit intention is not solely about experiencing sustainable amenities; it

emerges when guests perceive that environmental sustainability practices align with their own ethical standards, economic fairness, and service expectations.

Under such circumstances, the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model of sustainability and the way it presents sustainability as the balancing act between environmental, economic and social performance is a particularly solid theoretical springboard for analysis of ESPs and behavioural intention (Elkington, 1997). In the TBL framework, the environment is subsumed within operational efficiency, consisting of waste reduction and use of renewable energy and mixed with broader goals such as the protection of ecosystems, the prevention of pollution and intergenerational fairness (Correia, 2019). Through examining the environmental pillar and its relationship to behavioural intentions such as intention to revisit, the present study contributes to a more context-driven grasp of sustainability in hospitality. It places environmental practices not as separate initiatives but as part of a broader value-laden system of guest experiences, destination branding and long-term sustainability of tourism.

Environmental Pillar of Triple Bottom Line (TBL) in Practice

In the Maldivian resort sector, the environmental component of the TBL framework (Elkington, 1997) has transitioned from symbolic declarations to tangible strategic action. Efficiency in resource consumption (energy, water, waste) is increasingly paired with guest-facing innovation (Gürlek & Köseoglu, 2021; Miller et al., 2019), which illustrates this through initiatives like waste-to-wealth systems and biogas production that merge ecological goals with operational gains and guest engagement. Biodiversity conservation is notable, given the Maldives' marine-based economy. Practices such as coral gardening and sea turtle protection are not only ethical but also essential to maintaining the core tourism product. The Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru exemplifies this through its dual-role marine centres, which serve both ecological and experiential purposes (UNWTO, 2021).

Nevertheless, the authenticity of sustainability varies across resorts. While some embed conservation in their brand identity, others perform tokenistic projects primarily for marketing purposes (Cowburn et al., 2018). This discrepancy reflects a broader divide between deep sustainability and shallow compliance, where the latter merely satisfies certification checklists without delivering true environmental value (Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019). Certifications like EarthCheck and Green Globe offer a degree of assurance, but their credibility depends on rigorous audits and adaptive governance, an aspect insufficiently explored in the loyalty and trust literature. Abidin et al. (2021) warn that if not grounded in verifiable impact, certifications may devolve into symbolic capital that fails to influence discerning guests. Digital and architectural innovation increasingly shape the green transition. Passive cooling systems, real-time consumption monitoring, and renewable platforms such as LUX Resort's Solar Sea combine efficiency with guest

intrigue (Cumó et al., 2015; Sowamber & Ramkissoon, 2019). Such innovations do more than reduce impact; they also differentiate brands and create emotional narratives.

Ultimately, climate vulnerability makes environmental stewardship an economic imperative for Maldivian resorts. Rising sea levels, coral bleaching, and environmental shocks threaten tourism's viability. Resorts that integrate ESPs into their core strategy not only mitigate risks but also secure long-term competitiveness (Wolf et al., 2021).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this narrative review are organised based on the main themes. The analysis is structured according to major themes such as environmental sustainability measures in the tourism and hospitality industry, their effect on guest satisfaction and revisit intention and the mediators that influence such relationships. This framework provides a systematic integration of the iterative mechanisms through which environmentally sustainable behaviours influence guest behaviour outcomes in the context of resort tourism.

Environmental Sustainability in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector

Meta-analyses conducted on tourism sustainability research between 2019 and 2021 group sustainability practices into categories such as eco-efficiency, social justice, and corporate responsibility, while also recognising equity, stakeholder participation, and ecological sustainability as key components of tourism policy (García-García et al., 2023). The hospitality industry and tourism play a significant role in the global economy by contributing to both economic and social progress (Nasiche, 2024). This industry delivers a wide range of services, many of which rely heavily on natural resources. However, business operations in the sector often produce significant amounts of solid and liquid waste, which may end up polluting nearby land or water sources, leading to serious environmental and health concerns. Overall, the hospitality industry has been linked to various environmental challenges due to its extensive use of natural resources, emissions of greenhouse gases, and substantial waste generation (Sadi & Adebitan, 2014). Hotels consume large quantities of water and energy, and the energy production process contributes further to greenhouse gas emissions, thereby harming ecological systems (Abdou et al., 2022). Bhatti et al. (2024) also emphasise that greenhouse gas emissions are a major contributor to regional climate change. This intensive resource usage has led to environmental degradation, prompting the hotel industry to implement environmentally sustainable policies and practices (Khatter et al., 2019). Growing global concern around energy conservation and environmental preservation has encouraged hotels to explore various strategies to manage their ecological impact (Lin et al., 2023). As a result, the industry is increasingly adopting greener operational models. Among these efforts, reducing energy consumption has emerged as a top priority in environmental management within hospitality (Makoondlall-Chadee & Bokhoree, 2024). To further mitigate their environmental footprint, Olya et al. (2023) propose that hotels engage in environmental

monitoring and collaborative initiatives, such as redesigning products and making production processes more sustainable (Philip et al., 2024).

Environmental sustainability in the tourism sector, especially in ecologically fragile destinations such as the Maldives, has evolved from a symbolic marketing add-on to a strategic operational imperative (Waseema, 2017). Empirical work focuses largely on the industry's large ecological footprint. It is estimated that an average hotel generates 160-200 kg CO₂/m²/year, consumes 170-440 L of water/guest night, and produces approximately 1kg of waste/guest-night (Khatter et al., 2019; Abdou et al., 2020). A global review (covering the period 2001–2020) by García-García et al. (2023) suggests rising numbers of visitors and corresponding CO₂ emissions - from about 5% in 2016 projected upwards - and urges sustainable consumption, corporate responsibility and governance, and social responsibility. The water-energy footprint is also studied specifically for coastal destinations and water-scarce tourist regions like Costa Brava, where there is an urgent necessity for conservation (Arimany-Serrat & Gomez-Guillen, 2023). There are also many studies on the adoption of environmental management practices (EMP) in hotels. For instance, emerging-market hotels in Malaysia are primarily influenced by normative and cognitive institutional pressures (e.g., stakeholder or competitor norms and expectations) rather than by formal government regulation (Rassiah et al., 2024). Likewise, in Sri Lanka, a survey of approximately 200 tourist hotels found that environmental sustainability initiatives were being prioritised over their socio-cultural and economic counterparts, which shows both the sectoral focus of efforts as well as the need for broader approaches across the three dimensions of sustainability (Wijesundara et al., 2024).

In the Maldives, leading resorts implement a combination of practices, including waste reduction, renewable energy usage, water conservation, and biodiversity preservation (Papallou et al., 2024). For instance, the integration of a waste-to-wealth model connecting a glass studio with organic gardens at Soneva Fushi exemplifies eco-circularity that guests can directly experience (Miller et al., 2019). Similarly, the Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru's coral reef restoration and marine discovery centre institutionalise sustainability within the guest experience (UNWTO, 2021). Although infrastructure like solar panels and energy-efficient systems contributes meaningfully to environmental goals, these efforts remain largely unnoticed by guests unless explicitly integrated into storytelling or guest-facing interactions. The current literature also offers limited insight into effective communication mechanisms (Kularatne et al., 2019). Initiatives like sewage treatment or Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system upgrades often remain back-of-house operations that lack an influence on guest perception unless translated into experiential knowledge (Arimany-Serrat & Gomez-Guillen, 2023). Moreover, not all resorts can implement robust sustainability initiatives equally. High-end resorts are more capable of investing in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED-certified buildings or on-site biowaste systems, whereas mid-range properties are

less likely to commit unless assured of immediate returns (Yi, 2024; Guden et al., 2021; Abdou et al., 2020). This financial disparity leads to uneven guest exposure to sustainability efforts across resort tiers, reinforcing the notion that eco-consciousness is a luxury commodity (Álvarez Jaramillo et al., 2019). Varied motivations for implementing ESPs, from authentic stewardship to regulatory compliance or brand positioning, can further complicate guests' interpretation of these practices (Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019).

However, the impact of these sustainability practices on guest perceptions and behavioural outcomes remains mixed. While some studies indicate that sustainability initiatives have significant potential to enhance guest satisfaction and revisit intention, others suggest that poorly implemented or inconvenient practices may negatively influence the guest experience (Han et al., 2018; Verma et al., 2019). Philip et al. (2024) highlighted that green waste management practices such as recycling, composting, and eco-friendly packaging can influence guest perceptions and satisfaction. These practices can enhance guest satisfaction and promote repeat visitation, yet implementation remains complex due to financial and operational constraints (Wilson, 2025). Nevertheless, sustainable operations positively influence tourist perceptions and willingness to stay in eco-friendly accommodations (Rawashdeh & Al-Ababneh, 2021). Moreover, studies show that guest engagement in environmental programs improves satisfaction levels and strengthens behavioural intentions toward repeat visitation (Han et al., 2018). A recent study by Serio et al. (2024) reports that eco-channels driven by the corporate sector (e.g., eco-certifications) have a larger direct effect on tourism demand. Similarly, Hadassa (2024) found that sustainable labels are directly linked to tourism flow, thus confirming that eco credentials also play a prominent role in influencing tourists' decisions by acting as pull factors. In addition, both public and private sustainability initiatives generate positive regional spillover effects, highlighting the broader benefits of integrated sustainability planning. As noted by Kularatne et al. (2019), effective communication is essential to encourage the positive effect of implementing eco-friendly practices on organisational success in terms of customer satisfaction.

Kularatne et al. (2019) further argue that environmentally sustainable practices can also make hotels more efficient, thereby increasing customer satisfaction. This is consistent with the findings of Philip et al. (2024), who show that there is a positive effect of environmentally sustainable practices on guests' satisfaction and retention. Hotels can, therefore, use these strategies to improve their competitive image and guest satisfaction. It is essential to prioritise sustainable policies in hotels to mitigate the adverse effects of industrial activities on the environment. The literature indicates that the adoption of environmental sustainability practices is increasing across the hospitality sector, providing a foundation for influencing guest satisfaction and behavioural outcomes.

Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty in Tourism

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are two distinct concepts. Loyalty is about the likelihood of returning to a place, making referrals, promoting word-of-mouth marketing, and providing publicity for the place using other channels (Han et al., 2018; Rather et al., 2021). Though some studies show that there is a weak or no correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty, as satisfied guests are more likely to explore new experiences in travelling rather than being loyal to a single destination (Zakiah et al., 2023), there are many that find a positive relationship between the two variables. As identified by Cavalcante et al. (2025), loyalty in the tourism sector is influenced by both guest satisfaction and the destination image. According to Almeida and Moreno-Gil (2017), overall destination image is a key factor that influences customer loyalty in the sector. These findings indirectly imply that sustainability practices that affect the quality of the destination image have significant potential to strengthen customer loyalty.

When it comes to the effect of environmentally sustainable practices on guest loyalty in the industry, several scholars find that environmentally responsible operations alone cannot influence guest satisfaction and loyalty; other factors such as service quality, perceived value, destination image, and overall guest experience affect customer loyalty, and these factors must be effectively managed to build a loyal customer base. The affective-meaningful-experiential dimensions of service offered in island resorts commonly dominate the material substance of sustainability in the way that the revisit intention decision is made (Zolfani et al., 2015). The priorities for tourists are relaxation, exclusivity, and aesthetic immersion, and only when environmental practices become part of the narrative do they influence behavioural intention (Prayag et al., 2013). Expectation here is less logical than it is a combination of atmospheric signals, perceived value, and emotional connection. Hence, this finding indicates that there is no single key factor that influences the revisit intentions of guests through guest satisfaction and loyalty.

Given the Maldives' exclusivity, remote location, and high substitution cost, revisit intention is influenced by multiple competing factors (Ibrahim & Bouchon, 2014; Dell'Agnese, 2019). For example, long-haul travel and emerging destinations with similar luxury offerings reduce the likelihood of return visits, even when guests report high satisfaction (Ibrahim & Bouchon, 2014; Jalilvand & Heidari, 2017). Furthermore, the perception of the Maldives as a once-in-a-lifetime experience may intensify emotional attachment but diminish repeat visitation probability (Rather et al., 2021). Hence, resorts must actively transform fleeting luxury into enduring connection through tailored communication, hands-on sustainability, and immersive natural encounters. Some studies reveal that sustainability practices have greater potential to influence revisit intention and customer loyalty than the cost or luxuriousness of the service, as travellers are willing to visit places that prioritise sustainability (Abidin et al., 2021). A study by Abidin et al. (2021) identifies that tourist attitudes towards environmental sustainability are a key factor in determining the revisit intention of guests. The findings demonstrate that sustainability

practices have a significant impact on the revisit intention of guests, thereby affecting their loyalty towards the business.

Similarly, according to Zakiah et al. (2023), destination image and memorable tourism experience positively influence guest satisfaction and loyalty in the industry. This indicates that while guests may report high levels of satisfaction with service quality and experience, it does not automatically translate into loyalty behaviours such as repeat visitation or positive word-of-mouth. Factors such as destination novelty, high travel costs, availability of alternative destinations, and the perception of the Maldives as a once-in-a-lifetime experience can weaken the link between satisfaction and loyalty (Ibrahim & Bouchon, 2014; Rather et al., 2021). The study highlights that tourists who prefer sustainability practices demonstrate loyalty towards the business and are willing to pay a premium for their services. This is consistent with the findings of Philip et al. (2024) that guest perceptions and revisit intentions are influenced by well-communicated ESPs.

The literature review suggests that sustainability practices can enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty when they are effectively implemented and aligned with the service quality expectations of guests.

Impact of ESPs on Tourists' Revisit Intention

There has been a growing interest in the relationship between environmentally sustainable practices (ESPs) and tourists' intention to revisit, especially in environmentally vulnerable tourism locations such as the Maldives. In a context where resorts are increasing their sustainability initiatives, spanning from waste-to-wealth systems and coral reef restorations to net-zero energy-based architecture, understanding their impact on consumer behaviour is crucial (Papallou et al., 2024). When the environmental sustainability practices add value to the overall guest experience, their integrated and visible ESP is objectively linked with intentions to revisit. For instance, organic farming, water refill stations and reusable amenity dispensers are initiatives that provide emotional satisfaction, enhance emotional engagement and increase the likelihood of guests returning (Hein et al., 2020). Some post-pandemic travellers are also willing to pay more for eco-responsible hospitality services, reinforcing sustainability as a value-driven and behavioural characteristic (Marinakou, 2025).

However, these results are not universally consistent. This seems to be the case in particular for back-end operations sustainability efforts such as solar water heating or cleanliness programs. When these practices are implemented but not directly communicated or incorporated into the customer experience, they tend to remain hidden and therefore unable to influence loyalty (Ossama et al., 2023; Kularatne et al., 2019). Furthermore, poorly applied sustainability initiatives may even hamper satisfaction because they may be perceived as restrictions or inconveniences (Mathur et al., 2006). As such, the theme of perception and communication comes to the forefront. Even so, while certifications of sustainability such as Green Globe and EarthCheck are popular ways to

announce dedication, their overuse as marketing numbers rather than real change threatens to deplete trust (Bianco et al., 2022). Guests today have become more deliberate, and they expect ESPs to be transparently integrated with the service experience and not just publicised.

The second complexity is that loyalty is multi-dimensional. Sustainability adds to the perceived value and destination image, but it is only one among many competing factors influencing revisit intention (Philip et al., 2024). These factors encompass other experiential attributes such as associated service quality, the formation of an emotional bond, perceived uniqueness or exclusivity, travel time to and within the destination, and even one-time experience (relevant to long-haul destinations like the Maldives) (Ibrahim & Bouchon, 2014). Thus, satisfaction in itself does not lead to loyalty; guests may be satisfied but decide not to return because of logistical or experience-related issues. Furthermore, there are the differing abilities of resorts to implement these ESPs. While high-end properties excel at implementing higher-end ESPs, such as biogas systems and LEED-certified buildings, mid-range resorts are distinctly lagging due to cost (Yi, 2024). Such inconsistent implementation strengthens the narrative that eco-friendly travel is still a luxury, further complicating mass behavioural change.

As per this review, environmental practices affect involuntary tourist revisit intentions, but not all practices do so equally. Only observable, experiential, and credibly communicated environmental practices positively affect voluntary revisit intentions, while forced visit associations among tourists give rise to negative revisit intentions. The literature generally supports a positive relationship; however, gaps in guest perception, lack of communication, and the infrastructure of some resorts are problematic. It is worth noting that relatively little research has identified which ESPs are likely to lead to the strongest behaviour change, or how affective and cognitive mediators such as emotional satisfaction and perceived service quality contribute to the sustainability-loyalty connection. This reveals an important gap: more research is needed to understand which guest-perceived ESPs are effective and can affect loyalty measurably. Without addressing this, resorts risk investing in sustainable practices only to comply with reporting requirements, foregoing the full potential of sustainability to add behavioural and strategic value.

Moderating and Mediating Factors of Environmental Sustainability Practices that Affect Guest Satisfaction

The link between ESPs and revisit intention is moderated and mediated by several factors. Among the strongest moderators is perceived service quality. High responsiveness, empathy, and attentiveness enhance the guest experience, offsetting any perceived inconveniences associated with sustainability (Tabaeeian et al., 2023). On the contrary, when service quality is lacking, sustainability may be perceived as frugality rather than responsibility (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022). Destination image also moderates the ESP-

loyalty relationship. Resorts that authentically embody ecological values reinforce guest trust and revisit intentions (Gonzalez-Rodriguez et al., 2019). In a country like the Maldives, where nature is central to the tourist offering, visible degradation or contradictory practices can damage a resort's brand, despite its environmental messaging (Waseema, 2017). Price-value perception plays a dual role as a moderator and an outcome variable. Guests are more accepting of premium pricing when they believe sustainability adds to comfort or authenticity (Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernández, 2017). However, without clear experiential or narrative justification, even well-intended green fees may appear unjustified, weakening loyalty (Rather et al., 2021). The sensory and experiential components of resort life, especially food and leisure, mediate how guests perceive ESPs. Incorporating sustainability into dining (e.g., zero-waste menus, organic sourcing) or recreation (e.g., reef cleaning) transforms abstract principles into memorable personal experiences (Han et al., 2018).

Importantly, guest satisfaction operates as a core mediating variable. When ESPs enhance comfort, aesthetics, and meaning, satisfaction improves, increasing loyalty (Prud'homme & Raymond, 2013). Conversely, misunderstood or intrusive green practices may reduce satisfaction, negating their intended effect (Gürlek & Köseoglu, 2021). Sustainability should, therefore, be embedded in the broader service experience, not merely added on. However, the existing research often overlooks how this integration affects guest satisfaction and loyalty over time.

Development of a Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework can be developed based on the narrative review carried out:

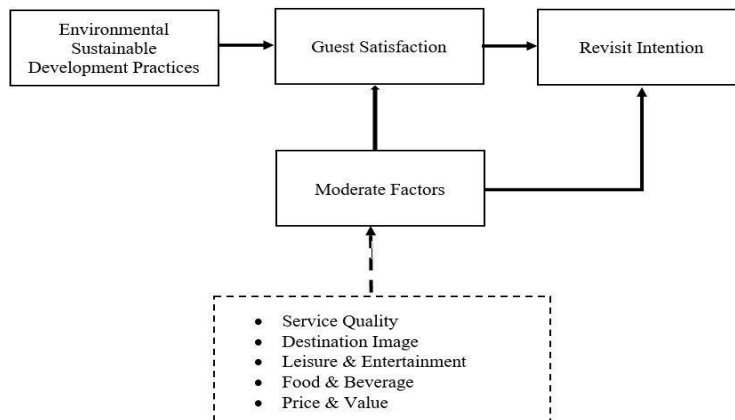


Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between environmental sustainability practices, guest satisfaction and revisit intention, with moderating influences from guest characteristics

Source: Author generated

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this narrative literature review, practices that are guest-facing, such as coral reef restoration, organic farming on-site, in-room refillable toiletry dispensers, and in-house marine discovery centres, seem to rank the highest in terms of emotional value and involvement (Hein et al., 2020). These initiatives invite guests to view themselves as partial custodians of the environment, which increases the brand preference and intention to revisit (Philip et al., 2024; Marinakou, 2025). On the contrary, back-of-house systems such as solar water heaters, biogas digesters, and wastewater infrastructure are rarely seen by guests unless communicated effectively (Ossama et al., 2023; Kularatne et al., 2019). If ESPs are perceived as inconvenient or intrusive, poorly implemented ESPs may even reduce satisfaction (Mathur et al., 2006).

Another challenge identified in the literature is that the trust of guests and sustainability initiatives are not always linked. In resort tourism, guests perceive sustainability initiatives as greenwashing if there is a disparity between a resort's sustainability promotion and its service delivery. This is true for luxury island resorts. In such resorts, eco-certifications, reef-conservation storytelling, and plastic-reduction initiatives can assist in promoting the brand, but only when there is supporting evidence, clear communication, and consistency in the experience provided. When sustainability messaging is unclear or when there are luxury consumption contradictions, guests may doubt the resort's sustainability initiatives. Thus, the behavioural value of ESPs is determined by their implementation as well as their perceived authenticity and activeness.

A strong, immersive ESP tends to correlate positively with stronger levels of guest satisfaction and intent to revisit (Philip et al., 2024; Hein et al., 2020). Sustainability is considered part of the luxury experience, not a trade-off (Riyaz, 2024). This alignment magnifies revisit intention, especially in ecologically sensitive segments that require premium prices for sustainability (Marinakou, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2025). However, this relationship is not linear or universal. ESPs that cannot be experienced by tourists or are poorly incorporated into the delivery of service may not be appreciated by guests (Ossama et al., 2023). Furthermore, resort-level differences, where both certification and biogas systems are adopted in high-end resorts but not mid-range ones, reinforce the idea of sustainability as a high-cost luxury amenity (Yi, 2024; Abdou et al., 2022).

Therefore, guests will only experience satisfaction from sustainability when they enjoy authenticity and experiential value. This study identifies three mediating variables (1) service quality, (2) destination image, and (3) price-value perception, which describe the potential mechanisms through which ESPs can enhance satisfaction and loyalty. A high-level service quality increases positive perceptions toward ESPs and vice versa; poorly planned or cumbersome green features may reduce overall satisfaction (Tabaeeian et al., 2023; Laukkanen & Tura, 2022), suggesting that a positive destination image rooted in

genuine ecological stewardship makes for a strong reconsideration of visit intention, while signals of inconsistency or greenwashing erode trust.

Price-value is tested in the context of whether ESPs are a meaningful contribution to comfort and identity for guests. When guests recognise that they are supporting biodiversity or local culture, premium pricing is welcomed; otherwise, it is met with doubt (Rather et al., 2021; Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernández, 2017). When sustainability is embedded in sensory experiences through food, leisure, and décor, it is more salient, resulting in a stronger mediation of the loyalty effect than abstract practices (Han et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, the overarching positive signals are undermined by critical gaps in the literature. The most important issue is the lack of longitudinal and behavioural data. Many studies depend on surveys conducted soon after consumers' physical visits, which are likely to inflate the behavioural intentions as compared to genuine return bookings (Scheyvens, 2011; Rather et al., 2021). Furthermore, guest segmentation lacks sophistication: differences in sustainability expectations based on culture, generation, and psychographics are under-explored, resulting in limited generalizability (Abidin et al., 2021; Budeanu et al., 2016). Moreover, many theoretical models consider service, satisfaction, and sustainability as additive constructs rather than systemic (one-to-one, one-to-many, etc.), while there are systemic frameworks that integrate ESPs, perceived authenticity, emotional satisfaction, and behavioural intention in a one-to-one fashion. Even though Gürlek and Köseoglu (2021) present a multidimensional model relating experiential quality and environmental authenticity, it is still under-applied in practice.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review aimed to analyse the effect of environmentally sustainable practices (ESPs) on guest revisit intention in the Maldivian resort context. The study aimed to: (1) identify the effective environmental sustainability practices followed by Maldivian resorts; (2) study the relationship between the environmental sustainability practices and guest satisfaction and behavioural intention; and (3) understand the contextual factors that influence the perception and experience of the implementation of these practices.

On the first objective, the review presented numerous ESPs implemented by Maldivian resorts, with evidence indicating that guest-oriented initiatives such as coral restoration programs, on-site organic farming, refillable amenities, and experiential sustainability education prove to be more effective. These practices enhance emotional connection and create memorable experiences that strengthen revisit intention (Hein et al., 2020; Philip et al., 2024).

On the second objective, the review finds that the literature indicates a relationship between ESPs, satisfaction, and revisiting intention. This relationship, however, is not linear: though guest-facing ESPs or those with emotional salience raise satisfaction and

loyalty, back-of-house ESPs or technical sustainability measures have limited impact unless at least partially communicated (Ossama et al., 2023; Kularatne et al., 2019).

On the third objective, the review finds that service quality, destination image, and price-value perception act as principal mediators and moderators in shaping the responses of guests to the ESPs. When service quality is high, it supplements the positive impacts of ESPs, but where service quality is lacking, it may cause a negative effect upon the perceptions engendered by ESPs (Tabaeeian et al., 2023). Likewise, loyalty is reinforced when an authentic destination image and justified price-value relationship exist (Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernández, 2017).

The review yields a number of actionable insights for practitioners and policy-makers seeking to enhance the behavioural and competitive value of environmentally sustainable practices. Accordingly, resorts should consciously incorporate ESPs into the guest journey from visible, credible, and emotional angles to avoid their reduction to merely symbolic expressions of sustainability. Policymakers, on their part, should incentivise certifying systems with legitimate accountability and offer frameworks conducive to promoting guest participation in ecological stewardship.

Overall, the review indicates that environmentally sustainable practices influence guest revisit intention, but their effectiveness depends on their visibility, authenticity, and integration into the other elements of the service experience. The study objectives were achieved by synthesising evidence that identifies effective ESPs; clarifying their relationship to guest satisfaction and loyalty; highlighting contextual factors that mediate this relationship; and providing strategic insights for managing a sustainable resort.

It should be noted that the results of the review are limited by the special case of the Maldives, where most resorts target international luxury guests whose environmental concerns are not necessarily aligned with the mass-market tourist or the mid-range accommodation guest. Therefore, the relationship of ESPs with guest satisfaction and the intention to return, as presented in this review, may not be applicable to tourism more broadly. Future research could include a more detailed segmentation of the guest population in terms of age, environmental concern, and experience with sustainable tourism.

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