



“Sustainable Development Goals in Star Hotels; A Systematic Literature Review of Integration Practices, Drivers & Implications of Sustainable Hospitality”

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Abstract

The hospitality industry plays a critical role in advancing sustainable development due to its significant environmental, social, and economic impacts. The SDGs offer an extensive framework for directing sustainability measures in hotel operations. However, there is still a lack of systematic synthesis and fragmentation in the current research on SDG integration in star hotels. With a focus on integration strategies, important drivers, and implications for sustainable hospitality, this study attempts to methodically assess and analyse academic literature on the integration of SDGs in star hotels. The study uses a Systematic Literature Review technique and adheres to PRISMA principles to find, filter, and evaluate peer-reviewed publications that were published between 2020 and 2025. Thematic analysis is employed to synthesize finding & the review reveals that star hotels predominantly integrate SDGs related to responsible consumption and production, decent work, and clean energy through operational, strategic, and human resource practices. Key drivers influencing SDG adoption include regulatory pressures, market demand, cost efficiency, and top management commitment. The findings further highlight positive environmental, social, and economic implications of SDG integration for sustainable hospitality, while also identifying gaps related to measurement, reporting, and underexplored SDGs and outline directions for future research in sustainable hospitality management.

Key Words – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Star Hotels, Sustainable Hospitality, SDG Integration Practices, Drivers of Sustainability Adoption.
Capability

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is increasingly recognized as a significant contributor to global environmental, social, and economic systems due to its very high use of energy, water, employee, and supply chain resources for its operations (Pradip Kumar, 2023). As sustainability becomes central & vital to global development, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for guiding responsible business practices across sectors. Star hotels, Hospitality & Tourism, given their scale, level of operations, brand visibility, and resource consumption patterns, are uniquely placed to contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the SDGs (Moyeen & Mehjabeen, 2024). In recent years, many hotels & organizations have adopted sustainability initiatives aligned with goals such as responsible consumption and production, climate action, clean energy, and decent work.

Despite this growing emphasis, academic studies examining SDG adoption & integration in star hotels and hospitality sector remains scattered across various themes including corporate social responsibility, environmental management, and sustainable operations. There is limited understanding of how SDGs are systematically integrated within hotel strategies and operations, what factors drive their adoption, and what implications such integration holds for advancing sustainable hospitality (Fauzi, 2025).

To address this gap, the present study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize existing scholarly evidence on SDG integration in star hotels and hospitality Sector. By analysing adoption & integration practices, identifying key drivers, and evaluating sustainability implications, this review aims to provide a structured understanding of the industry engagement with the SDGs and to highlight future research directions for sustainable hospitality management.

Research Question

The hospitality sector has seen the substantial influence that sustainability has had on this rapidly expanding sector; the SDGs' integration and implementation have become crucial success factors in a number of ways. In this study, this systematic review will look for solutions to the questions listed below.

1. Which Sustainable Development Goals are most frequently addressed by star hotels in existing literature?
2. What SDG integration practices are reported in Hospitality Industry?
3. What drivers influence SDG adoption in Hospitality Industry?
4. What implications does SDG integration have for sustainable hospitality?
5. What research gaps and future directions are identified in the literature?

Research Objectives

1. To systematically identify and review scholarly literature on the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in star hotels.
2. To examine and classify the SDGs most frequently addressed within star hotel operations and sustainability initiatives.
3. To analyse the integration practices adopted by star hotels to implement SDGs across operational, strategic, and managerial dimensions.
4. To identify and synthesize the key drivers influencing the adoption of SDGs in star hotels.
5. To evaluate the environmental, social, and economic implications of SDG integration for advancing sustainable hospitality and to identify research gaps for future investigation.

Research Methodology

The Study is based on the Systematic Literature Review process using PRISMA flowchart & Protocol (Page et al., 2021). The study was conducted by adopting; (1) PRISMA Framework, (2) Conduct Thematic Synthesis, (3) Identifying and completing content analysis, and (4) Developing an conceptual framework that completes the research process. (Bizami et al., 2023)

In order to ensure that the most recent information is included, the time frame was capped between 2020 and 2025 and a number of key words were taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to include the database(Kamble & Dandge, 2025). The exclusion criteria concerned non-peer-reviewed and instructional works that did not have a hospitality focus. Electronic search engines and database systems, including Scopus Indexed Journals, Web of Science, Research Gate, SpringerLink Journal, EBSCO, Science Direct Journal, and others, were used in the study. Searches were limited to title, abstract, and keywords.

Following are the specific Key Words used to initiate the review search, (a) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s), (b) Star Hotels, (c) SDG Integration Practices, (d) Drivers of Sustainability Adoption, (e) Sustainable Hospitality.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criterion

Table 01 – Developed by the authors

Inclusion Parameters	Exclusion Parameters
Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters, editorials
Studies focusing on hotels or hospitality sector	Studies not related to hotels/hospitality
Explicit reference to SDGs or sustainability practices aligned with SDGs	Purely conceptual sustainability papers without SDG linkage
English language publications	Non-English publications
Published between 2020 (post-SDG adoption) and 2025	Duplicate records

This systematic structuring of the available literature resulted in identifying total 150 studies in given set parameters, and subsequent to the initial selection, potential research was filtered by eliminating duplicate titles, abstracts, non-empirical studies, and non-peer-reviewed studies, resulting in the exclusion of 65 studies. This led to identifying 85 remaining studies suitable for the consideration of the scope and relevance of the present study to examine further(Kamble & Dandge, 2025). These studies are further assessed using (Gough, 2007) Gough’s Weight of Evidence method to generate more precise results (Page et al., 2021).

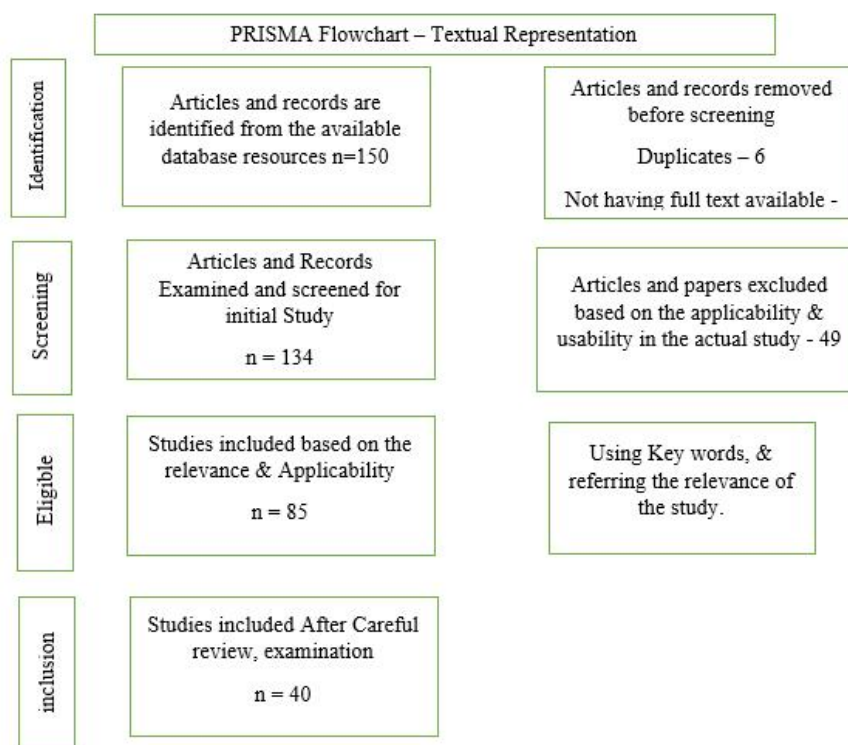


Figure 1 - Source – The model is developed by the author. (Page et al., 2021)PRISMA Model concept taken with (Gough, 2007)

After further screening and discussion among authors, total of 40 research articles (Table 2) are selected for this study and will be further reviewed and examined.

Table 2 – Developed by the authors for illustration of details.

Sr. No	Concept Base	Number of Articles / Studies included
1	SDG Integration Practices	18
2	Drivers of SDG Adoption	15
3	Implications for Sustainable Hospitality	07
	Total	40

Literature Review

This study explores green hotel practices and their impact on environmentally sustainable development goals (SDGs). A survey was conducted from four and five Green Star hotels in Egypt, revealing a positive contribution to SDGs 6, 12, 7, and 13. The findings suggest that hotels' commitment to sustainability drives the adoption of Green Star standards, with notable differences in sustainability efforts between the two categories of hotels. The key takeaway is that effective integration of green practices into hotel operations is essential for achieving relevant environmental SDGs (Abdou et al., 2020).

This review paper provides key elements of current green practices and sustainable initiatives for the hotel's operations, as proactive measures. The novelty of the findings is to be able to convey valuable inputs to the relevant stakeholders (hotel's owner, consultants, designers, maintenance officers, hoteliers, staffs, customers and end-users) in perceiving the elements of green practices into the preliminary planning of the hotel's design. The review also helps to identify practices and measures to the performance impact to the hotel's operations. (Khalil et al., 2022)

The review highlights a significant gap in research on sociocultural sustainability in tourism and hospitality, which focuses primarily on community well-being and cultural heritage preservation. It notes that themes such as social equity, resident behaviour, and intercultural exchange are underexplored, with most studies relying on qualitative approaches. This study serves as one of the first systematic reviews of sociocultural sustainability in the field, pointing out the marginalization of these issues in sustainability discourse and proposing a structured research agenda for future exploration. (Sharifpur Shirazi et al., 2026)

The contribution of this paper is twofold: firstly, to provide an in-depth reflection with an ecosophical approach on which company's values are meaningful to sustainability, and secondly, to propose a theoretical framework with an ecosophical approach for 4S-SM-HCs to advance from their purpose to the SDGs and thus, to contribute to a Triple Wellbeing of people, the community and the planet. (Rubio-Mozos et al., 2020)

Recent CSR research has tended to shift towards issues such as CSR communication and reporting from its earlier focus on the perceptions and practices of CSR. The SDGs, in general, and environmental sustainability, in particular, remain on the periphery of hotel industry's CSR initiatives. This raises concern about the ability of CSR programs to facilitate the SDGs by 2030. This study highlights that both stakeholders (e.g. consumers, employees) and business forces (e.g. financial bottom line) can shape the hotel industry's CSR strategies in contributing to the SDGs and greater sustainability. (Moyeen & Mehjabeen, 2024)

This study combines a systematic and bibliometric review covering 20 years (2002-2022) to explore sustainability initiatives and technologies like AI in the hospitality sector. It addresses motivations, barriers, and impacts, providing insights for practitioners and academics on the current state of these implementations. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of sustainability in hotel management, offering practical recommendations based on existing literature. (A. B. Singh et al., 2024)

The findings indicate that business-led sustainability models can drive systemic change through clear metrics and cross-sector collaboration. While the lack of pre-2019 baseline data and direct health outcome measurements limits causal inference, the study offers a framework

for aligning private enterprise practices with global health and sustainability goals. This information is pertinent for policymakers, hospitality operators, and public health stakeholders seeking to enhance synergies among tourism, agriculture, and well-being.(Petelos et al., 2025)

Following a brief review of sustainable development and corporate sustainability, the concept and rationale behind ESG is discussed with an emphasis on the criteria and limitations of ESG scores. ESG matters are mostly limited to global hotel chains but critical to an entire industry that seeks to decarbonize its operations until 2050 while also tackling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is a potential misalignment of the ESG criteria to achieve the ambitious SDGs based on the narrow, environmentally based view on sustainability in the hotel sector.(Legrand & Matthew-Bolofinde, 2022)

This study assesses the sustainable practices of Agra's five-star hotels based on a survey of 252 employees from 13 hotels. It examines economic, social, and environmental sustainability efforts, their integration into operations, and the relationship between employee satisfaction and sustainability initiatives.(Pradip Kumar, 2023)

This research paper examines the relationship between green hotel practices and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India, focusing on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). It assesses the views of environmental management representatives in four and five-star hotels, highlighting the hotel industry's contributions to these goals while identifying areas needing improvement. The findings are significant for policymakers, hoteliers, and sustainability advocates, emphasizing the industry's crucial role in global sustainability efforts.(Goa College of Hospitality and Culinary Education, Goa India & D'Souza, 2023).

A model integrating technology readiness with the technology acceptance model and planned behavior theory was developed. Data analysis revealed the significant influence of variables such as technology readiness, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, confirming all hypotheses. The framework effectively explained consumers' behavioral intentions and highlighted managerial implications of the findings.(Kim & Han, 2022)

This study reviews the potential of Industry 4.0 technologies to enhance sustainability, proposing a scalable architecture that integrates various such technologies. It also analyzes real-world examples of these technologies' adoption in the hospitality industry, aiming to promote innovation and sustainable practices.(R. Singh et al., 2024)

A qualitative content analysis reveals that companies frequently referencing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demonstrate greater involvement in SDG-related initiatives, supporting the "signaling role" of such mentions. This study enhances the SDG reporting literature by showing that incorporating SDGs into sustainability reports aligns company performance with the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, it offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners to align tourism sector strategies and outcomes with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.(Damiano & Picciotto, 2026)

This study identifies essential environment-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the hospitality industry, highlighting the significance of digitalization. It emphasizes the need for an inclusive environment and a seamless customer experience while considering both positive and negative impacts of digital transformation.(Chatterjee & Karmakar, 2023)

The study identifies Sustainability Higher Education (SHE) as an emerging field with five key themes: SHE and perspectives, sustainability and curriculum, implications of sustainability education, learning related to sustainability, and students' perception and literacy. It highlights the imbalance and scarcity of SHE in developing countries. The findings, accompanied by a bibliometric analysis, provide insights into current trends and future research directions in this area.(Piramanayagam et al., 2023)

The hotel sector demonstrates a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with variations in their approaches. The five profiled hotels contribute to the economy, society, and environment, engaging in sustainable practices that lower ecological impacts and

benefit guests, staff, and hoteliers. The findings may guide hotels yet to adopt the SDGs.(Bacari et al., 2021)

The study indicates initial steps by hotel companies, particularly Cresta Hotels and the African Sun group, in localizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are still in the early stages, concentrating on relevant SDGs that address local socio-economic and environmental needs. As SDG efforts began around 2018-2019, considerable progress remains to be seen before 2030. Nonetheless, preliminary evidence suggests that the hotel industry could achieve significant advancements in SDG localization, barring disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic.(Dube, 2021)

This systematic review supports the development of a tool for sustainable hotel strategy decision-making, utilizing systems thinking and system dynamics. It models the complex interdependencies within hotel systems and enables scenario simulations for strategic evaluation. A literature review was conducted to investigate existing sustainable strategy execution models relevant to tourism and the hotel industry.(Migale et al., 2019)

The study analyses the knowledge structure around Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the tourism and hospitality sector through document citation, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analyses. It identifies significant clusters and discusses their theoretical and managerial implications.(Fauzi, 2025)

In the context of tourism and hospitality's impact on sustainability, this sector is pivotal in global sustainability efforts, especially concerning the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and emissions reductions from COP summits. A qualitative study of 4- and 5-star hotels in Dubai indicates that while there is enthusiasm for sustainability initiatives, there is a notable gap in awareness and understanding regarding their effective implementation.(S. Singh & Dutt, 2024)

This study explores the impact of sustainable hospitality practices on consumer happiness, loyalty, and destination choice. It finds that eco-friendly practices in the hospitality sector enhance customer happiness and their willingness to pay a premium for sustainable options. Additionally, effective sustainable hospitality supply chain management contributes to consumer happiness, highlighting the link between social activities and customer loyalty.(Rana et al., 2023)

This study highlights the limitations of traditional behavior theories in sustainable hospitality, advocating for a reassessment of frameworks. It provides actionable insights for researchers, marketers, and policymakers to address the intention-behavior gap in this field.(Khan et al., 2024)

This paper discusses techniques for integrating sustainability into hotel management. It highlights the importance of sustainable practices, including the use of LED lights, key-card systems, water restrictors, and paperless systems to reduce energy and water usage. It also mentions the use of electronic devices to minimize paper waste and the implementation of reward programs to encourage eco-friendly guest participation. Although initial costs may be high, the long-term benefits include an enhanced hotel image and consideration for future resource availability.(Huff, 2019)

Research Gaps and Need for Integrated Frameworks

Despite the widespread discussion of sustainability and technology adoption, the published material is still divided among operational, strategic, and customer-focused perspectives. Star hotels' SDG-specific integration processes are not well-consolidated, and there aren't enough defined measurement frameworks. This emphasizes the necessity of thorough models and methodical synthesis that connect drivers, practices, and sustainability implications.

Data Analysis & Result Discussion

In order to derive the conclusions and solutions of this research study, phases of discussion and analysis were carried out based on the methodology of the screened papers and articles, followed by a thorough review of the results of these articles.

Conceptual Framework

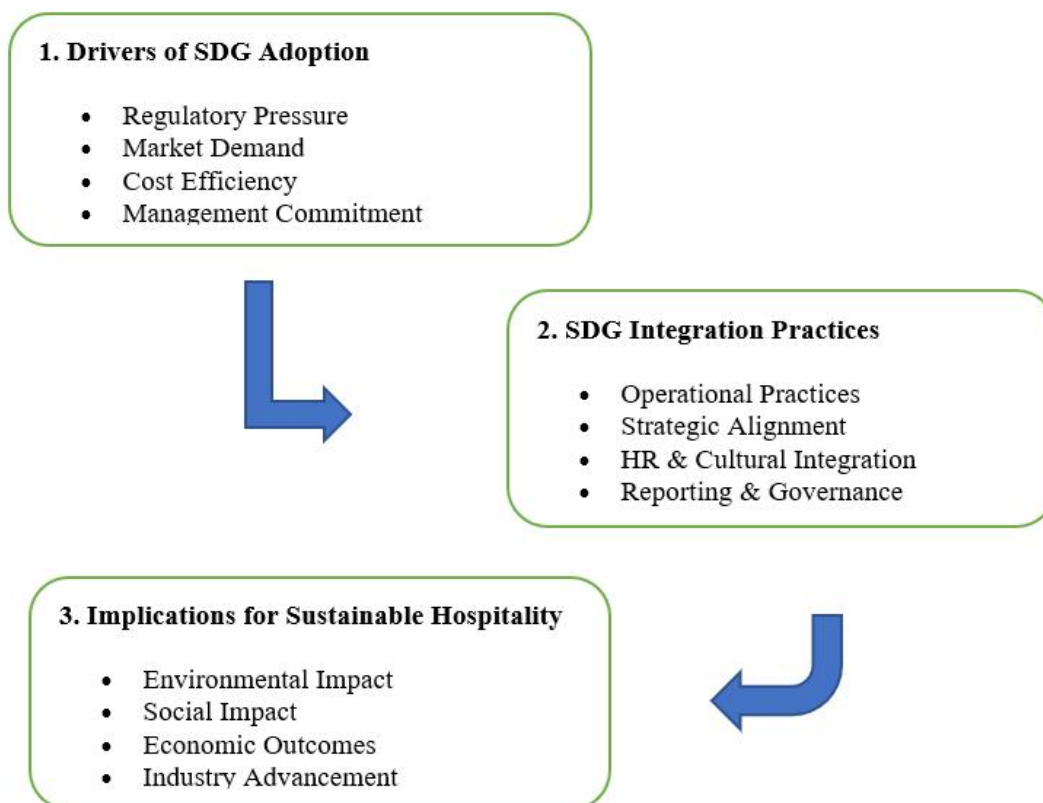


Figure 02: - Conceptual Framework – developed by the authors

The systematic review reveals that star hotels predominantly engage with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)(Abdou et al., 2020). Integration practices are largely concentrated in operational domains, including energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction systems, water conservation programs, green procurement policies, and environmental certification adoption. Strategic-level integration is observed through sustainability reporting, corporate social responsibility alignment, and long-term environmental commitments embedded within brand positioning(Goa College of Hospitality and Culinary Education, Goa India & D’Souza, 2023).

The findings further indicate that SDG adoption is driven by a combination of regulatory requirements, stakeholder expectations, market competitiveness, technological advancements, and top management commitment to the market. International hotel chains offer significantly higher levels of organized SDG alignment, which are frequently strengthened by global sustainability frameworks and dynamic capacities.

Sustainable practices have a favorable impact on customer happiness, loyalty, and willingness to pay, especially when mediated by perceived service quality. This makes customer perception a crucial reinforcing factor. IoT-enabled smart rooms and digital sustainability infrastructure are examples of technological advancements that greatly improve operational performance and resource efficiency.

However, the review also identifies inconsistencies in standardized SDG reporting, selective engagement with certain goals, and limited empirical measurement of long-term sustainability impact. Overall, the results highlight that while star hotels are progressively integrating sustainability initiatives, a more comprehensive and measurable SDG-aligned framework is necessary to advance sustainable hospitality in a structured and accountable manner.

Conclusion

A comprehensive and critical synthesis of academic research on the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in star hotels is provided by this systematic literature review. The results show that although hotels actively participate in several SDGs, especially those related to operational effectiveness and environmental management, the integration process is still uneven and frequently strategically selective. Drivers such as regulatory pressure, competitive positioning, stakeholder expectations, and leadership commitment significantly influence adoption patterns. However, the review reveals gaps in standardized measurement frameworks, limited cross-regional comparative studies, and insufficient attention to underrepresented SDGs, particularly those related to partnerships and institutional governance. The study contributes theoretically by structuring SDG engagement through a Drivers–Integration Practices–Implication’s framework, offering a foundation for future empirical validation. Practically, it underscores the need for comprehensive alignment between corporate strategy and global sustainability agendas. Strengthening reporting transparency and developing measurable SDG performance indicators will be essential for advancing sustainable hospitality in a meaningful and accountable manner.

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