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SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW FOR RE-DEFINING 'GREEN' IN HOSPITALITY: TYPOLOGY-SENSITIVE INTERPRETATIONS

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ABSTRACT

"Green" practices are central to sustainability in hospitality, influencing environmental, social, and economic outcomes. Yet, definitions of "green" remain ambiguous and often fail to reflect the diverse operational realities of hotel typologies. This study offers a typology-sensitive redefinition of "green hospitality" through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), guided by the Context–Intervention–Mechanism–Outcome (CIMO) framework. Excluding the mechanism to focus on conceptual mapping, 137 peer-reviewed Scopus articles were reviewed to trace the evolution of "green," identify 19 thematic dimensions, and analyse their relevance across five hotel types: beach/island, mountain/lake, jungle/forest, urban/city, and mixed-type. Findings reveal significant variation in sustainability priorities by typology—urban hotels emphasize technology and HR equity, while forest lodges prioritize biodiversity and community engagement. A typology-based matrix highlights these contextual differences, challenging the adequacy of one-size-fits-all certification systems. Thematic dimensions span core areas like energy efficiency and water stewardship, and extend to emerging concerns such as staff equity, green financing, and green mobility. By mapping sustainability themes to hotel contexts, this study advances a more nuanced understanding of "green hospitality." The findings inform the development of context-aware strategies and offer practical guidance for researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders seeking more effective, typology-sensitive sustainability practices.

Keywords: *Green Certification; Green Hospitality; Hotel Typologies; Thematic Dimensions; Systematic Literature Review.*

1. INTRODUCTION

As global sustainability efforts accelerate, the hospitality sector faces increasing pressure to reduce its environmental and climate impacts. Characterised by high energy use, water consumption, and waste generation, hospitality spans accommodation, food, and recreation services, making it a resource-intensive industry (Kim et al., 2017; Zhan et al., 2022). In response, "green" practices—strategies that promote environmental

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responsibility and operational efficiency—have gained momentum (Kim et al., 2017). Yet, definitions of "green" remain inconsistent, often merging authentic efforts with marketing narratives (Kim et al., 2017; O'Gorman, 2010). Though technological progress and rising environmental awareness have improved practices (Asadi et al., 2020; Songur et al., 2022), a coherent, typology-sensitive framework remains absent (Silva et al., 2021). This ambiguity persists even as the concept of "green" has evolved from a narrow focus on environmental stewardship (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Villares et al., 2007) to a multidimensional paradigm that includes social, economic, and technological dimensions (Kim et al., 2017; Abdullah-Fauzi et al., 2024; Elkhwesky et al., 2022). Practically, green practices are now strategic differentiators in an increasingly competitive hospitality industry (Dodds & Holmes, 2023). Yet, in the absence of context-aware frameworks, sustainability efforts often fall short of addressing diverse stakeholder needs (Rassiah et al., 2024; Jacob et al., 2025). Theoretically, existing literature tends to generalise green practices and lacks a consolidated synthesis that accounts for varied hotel typologies—such as beach, mountain, forest, city, and mixed-use—each with unique sustainability priorities (Rodríguez-García et al., 2023). This highlights a critical research gap. To address this, the present study offers a typology-sensitive redefinition of "green hospitality" through a systematic literature review (SLR). The objectives are: (1) to trace the evolution of the term "green" in hospitality literature, (2) to identify key thematic dimensions of green hotels, and (3) to examine how these dimensions vary across hotel typologies. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature, Section 3 outlines the methodology, Section 4 presents findings and thematic analysis, and Section 5 concludes with implications and future directions.

2. LITERATURE SYNTHESIS

2.1 EVOLUTION OF GREEN HOTEL DEFINITIONS

The definition of "green hotels" has shifted from a general environmental notion to a structured sustainability model that enhances guest experience (Abdullah-Fauzi et al., 2024). Certifications such as LEED and Green Key provide standardised criteria for evaluating sustainability in hospitality (Rokip et al., 2022), supporting operational transparency aligned with consumer expectations (Budarma et al., 2020). Green practices—energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction—vary across hotel typologies (Mishra & Shekhar, 2019). Coastal resorts prioritise marine conservation (Kunchornsirimongkon & Ditta-Apichai, 2020), mountain and forest hotels favour ecological design (Damaianti et al., 2023), while urban hotels adopt green building technologies (Kunchornsirimongkon, 2020). Younger travellers also show greater willingness to pay for sustainable options (Phan-Huy et al., 2023). Despite growing adoption, limited research addresses how typology-specific practices impact guest satisfaction or operational performance—underscoring the need for context-sensitive frameworks in green hospitality.

2.3 LIMITATIONS OF GREEN CERTIFICATIONS ACROSS HOTEL TYPOLOGIES

Certifications like LEED, BREEAM, Green Key, and EPC standardise green practices but vary in addressing product plus process paradigms. LEED and BREEAM cover materials and energy management, suiting urban hotels (Darko & Chan, 2017), yet falter in beach and forest settings where biodiversity matters (Damsari et al., 2021). Green Key focuses on operational training, fitting beach and forest needs (Rokip et al., 2022), while

EPCs target energy performance, missing community engagement (Hadjithoma et al. 2024). Ayuso (2007) and Kim et al. (2017) note generalised limitations, suggesting typology-specific adjustments.

3. METHODOLOGY

Systematic literature reviews (SLRs) reduce bias and structure complex inquiry (Naldi et al., 2022). This review applies the CIMO framework to address definitional inconsistencies in green hospitality (Denyer et al., 2008), omitting Mechanism to prioritize conceptual mapping. Following PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2022), Scopus was selected for its broad peer-reviewed coverage. The search string combined terms on hotel typologies and definitions as follows:

(("greenhotel*"OR"ecohotel*"OR"sustainablehotel*"OR"greenhospitality"OR"ecohospitality"OR"sustainablehospitality"OR"beachresort*"OR"islandresort*"OR"mountainresort*"OR"lakeresort*"OR"foresterort*"OR"jungleresort*"OR"urbanresort*"OR"cityresort*")AND("definition*"OR"criteria"OR"concept*"OR"interpretation*"OR"standard*"OR"certification*")AND("evolution"OR"change*"OR"trend*"OR"development*"OR"variation*OR"difference*"OR"inconsistency*"))

After filtering for relevance, 112 articles were retained from 10,343 records (see PRISMA diagram, Figure 1).

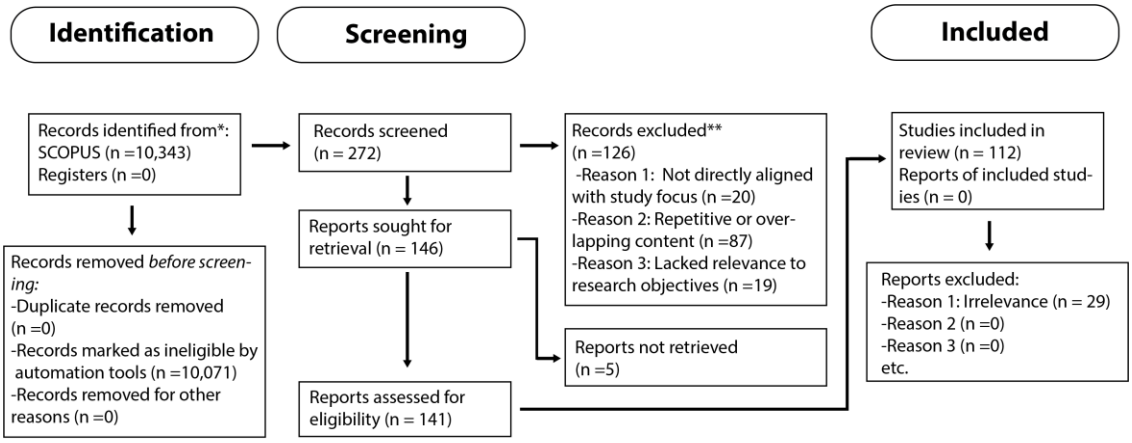

Figure 1: Stages of PRISMA systematic literature review

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section traces the evolution of "green" in hospitality literature, identifies its key themes, and analyses them through a typology-sensitive lens.

4.1 "GREEN" EVOLUTION IN HOSPITALITY LITERATURE

Figure 2 illustrates the concept of "green" in hospitality evolved from cost-saving and stewardship (Kirk, 1995; Horobin & Long, 1996) to certified accountability via ISO 14001. By the 2000s, it encompassed efficiency, branding, and consumer appeal (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Ayuso, 2007; Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Han et al., 2009; Kim & Han, 2010). From 2011 to 2019, "green" in hospitality expanded to include CSR, ethical consumption, and Green HRM (Merli et al., 2019; Pham et al., 2019). Recent trends emphasise digital integration and ethical alignment in shaping consumer expectations

(Kruesi & Remy, 2024). Technology now complements ecological goals—e.g., energy monitoring supports water resilience in beach resorts and biodiversity in forests (Jacob et al., 2025). This marks a shift toward holistic sustainability. Consumer mindsets have also evolved, favouring a transparent, product-plus-process paradigm over product-centric products (Han et al., 2009; Kim & Han, 2010; Abdullah-Fauzi et al., 2024; Abdullah et al., 2019).

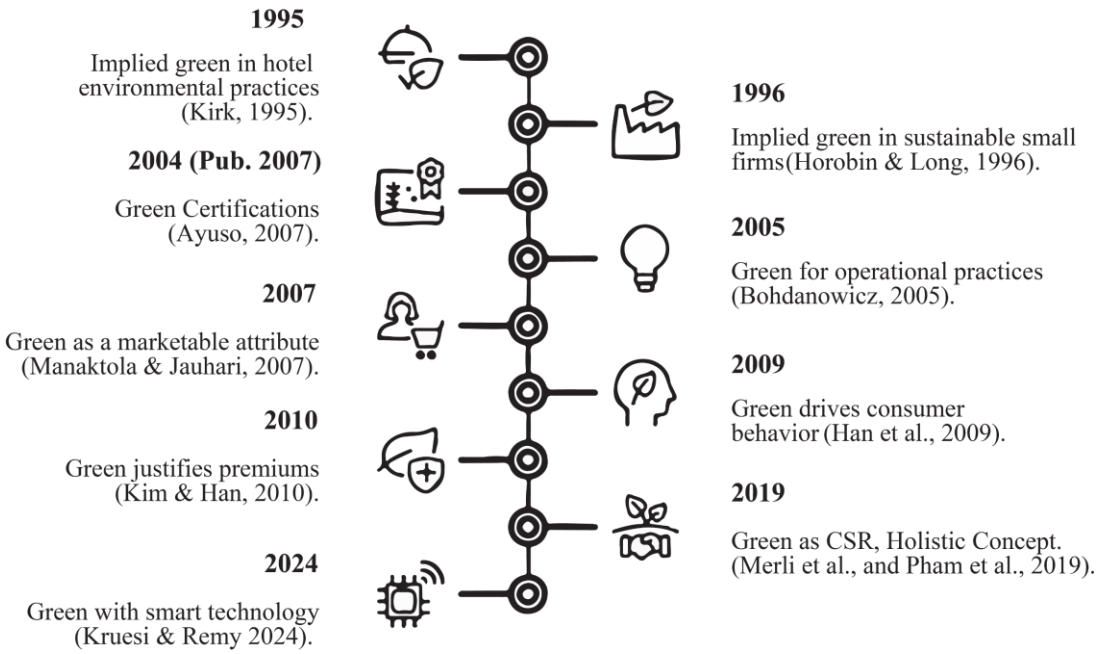

Figure 2: Evolution of the term 'green' within hospitality sustainability literature

4.2 KEY THEMATIC DIMENSIONS OF "GREEN" HOSPITALITY

A context-driven coding process identified 19 key "green" dimensions in hospitality, from core themes like energy efficiency to emerging areas like wellness and resilience. Each is traceable via P-code references linked to the reviewed papers in Table 1.

Table 1: Key thematic dimensions of 'green' hotels

Theme	Description	Codes
Water resilience and stewardship	Strategies for efficient water use, recycling, rainwater harvesting, and greywater treatment within hospitality settings.	P10, P104, P105, P116, P125, P128, P130, P131, P132, P133, P44, P8, P95,
Overtourism and carrying capacity	Addressing the ecological and social pressures from excessive tourist numbers, especially in sensitive zones.	P15, P8, P96
Carbon emissions and climate action	Policies and operational strategies that target the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the hospitality industry.	P12, P2, P21, P22, P27, P29, P30, P32, P4, P64, P70, P73, P74, P86, P9
Tourist education and behaviours	Guest-facing communication and programs designed to promote responsible travel behaviour.	P110, P111, P114, P115, P17, P18, P26, P28, P29, P32, P42, P45, P67, P86, P88,

Theme	Description	Codes
Green financing	Investment models, funding mechanisms, and financial incentives to support green hotel development.	P11, P119, P67, P95
Technology integration	Use of digital and smart technologies to enhance sustainability, from energy monitoring to mobile check-in.	P14, P29, P33, P35, P42, P5, P63, P64, P67, P75, P78, P84
Staff equity and social sustainability	Fair employment practices, diversity, gender equity, and worker well-being in hospitality HR systems.	P116, P117, P122, P14, P25, P37, P55, P59, P76, P86, P93
Green mobility and access	Encouraging low-impact transport such as bicycles, electric vehicles, or walkable tourism infrastructure.	P14, P22, P42, P45, P61, P98
Cultural heritage	Preservation and promotion of local traditions, architectural styles, and intangible heritage within hotel practices.	P114, P115, P134, P4, P40, P42, P45, P58, P85, P96
Sustainable construction and materials	Use of environmentally friendly building techniques, green architecture, and sustainable sourcing of construction materials.	P10, P24, P29, P30, P51, P6, P60, P64, P67, P71, P78,
Community engagement and local economies	Involvement of local communities in tourism supply chains, employment, and decision-making processes.	P25, P3, P30, P72, P84, P86, P90, P95
Certification and regulatory governance	The role of eco-labels, sustainability standards, and legal compliance in defining and assessing green hotels.	P2, P24, P30, P4, P44, P52, P55, P7, P8
Disaster resilience	Preparedness for climate-related risks such as storms or floods, and operational resilience in hospitality.	P103, P104, P32, P4, P90, P95,
Generational responsiveness and experience	Tailoring sustainability features and green messaging to suit millennial, gen z, or older demographics.	P1, P111, P14, P15, P30, P46, P54, P95,
IEQ	Indoor environmental quality factors including lighting, air quality, noise levels, and thermal comfort.	P116, P87
Wellness restorative hospitality	Integration of spa, nature-based healing, and wellness architecture as part of green hotel design.	P22, P30, P32, P4, P41, P5, P50, P51, P6, P8
Energy efficiency and renewable integration	Practices focused on reducing energy consumption and integrating solar, wind, or other renewable energy sources in hospitality operations.	P105, P116, P124, P133, P64, P74
Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation	Efforts aimed at preserving local flora, fauna, and habitats, especially in ecologically sensitive areas such as coastal or forest resorts.	P11, P21, P25, P30, P4, P54, P60, P74

Theme	Description	Codes
Food sustainability	Practices related to organic sourcing, food waste reduction, and support for local agriculture in hotel operations.	P116, P20, P37, P52, P60
P1 Staffieri et al. (2018), P2 Thomas et al. (2020), P3 Cai et al. (2024), P4 Jamilah et al. (2025), P5 Kauppila et al. (2004), P6 Halford et al. (2004), P7 Hyde et al. (2007), P8 Villares et al. (2007), P10 Kaiser et al. (2010), P11 Lowe et al. (2008), P12 Horstman et al. (2009), P14 Roper et al. (2010), P15 Zhong et al. (2011), P17 Wei (2011), P18 Goh et al. (2014), P20 Pirani et al. (2014), P21 Tolvanen and Kangas (2016), P22 Unger et al. (2016), P24 Darko and Chan (2017), P25 McDougall (2017), P26 Al-Aomar and Hussain (2017), P27 Zhong and Chen (2019), P28 Juliao et al. (2019), P29 Anzagira et al. (2019), P30 Kulusjarvi (2019), P32 Thomas et al. (2020), P33 John (2020), P35 Ibarnia et al. (2020), P37 Gandhi et al. (2020) , P40 Saracevic and Schlegelmilch (2021), P41 Yin et al. (2021), P42 Anzorova et al. (2021a), P44 Damsari et al. (2021), P45 Sarbassova et al. (2021a), P46 Kele et al. (2021), P50 Elkhwesky et al., (2022), P51 Han, & Zhang (2022), P52 Kasavan and Mohamed (2022), P54 Checon et al. (2022), P55 Bawa et al. (2022) , P58 Králiková and Kubát (2022), P59 Aggarwal and Sharma (2022), P60 Dilshan and Toko (2022), P61 Hoagland et al. (2023), P63 Arsawan et al. (2023), P64 Wallius et al. (2023), P67 De-beer and Kajimo-Shakantu (2023), P70 Xames et al. (2023), P71 Abdulaali et al. (2023), P72 Singh and Khanwani (2023), P74 Fan et al. (2023), P75 Singh et al.(2024), P76 Tahir et al. (2024), P78 Li et al. (2024), P84 Sanz-Lopez et al. (2024), P85 Kurniawan et al. (2024), P86 Lim et al. (2024), P87 Abdulaali et al. (2024), P88 Hadjithoma et al. (2024), P90 Zielinski et al. (2025), P93 Jamil et al. (2010), P95 Narain et al. (2015), P96 Sari and Rahayu (2018), P98 Bachtiar (2020), P103 Mead and Atkin (2023), P104 Velea et al. (2024), P105 Khuri et al. (2024), P110 Lim et al. (2019), P111 Abdullah et al. (2019), P114 Sarbassova et al. (2021b), P115 Anzorova et al. (2021b) , P116 Dani et al. (2021), P117 Qiu and Zhao (2024), P119 Kruesi and Remy (2024), P122 Han et al. (2009), P124 Kirk (1995), P125 Manaktola and Jauhari (2007), P128 Jacob et al. (2025), P130 Hu et al. (2020), P131 Foster (2021), P132 Ibrahim and Yusof (2017), P133 Prakash et al. (2023), P134 Owen (2018).		

As summarised in Table 1, 19 key thematic dimensions reflect the evolution of green hospitality into a multidimensional sustainability model. Core environmental themes—water stewardship, carbon reduction, biodiversity, and energy efficiency—remain central, especially in ecologically sensitive areas (Villares et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2020; Saracevic et al., 2021). Urban contexts prioritise technological and economic themes like green financing, sustainable construction, and digital innovation (Cai et al., 2024; Halford et al., 2004). Social and cultural dimensions—staff equity, community engagement, and heritage—underscore stakeholder inclusion (Zhong et al., 2011; Goh et al., 2014). Regulatory, wellness, and resilience themes reflect growing concern for guest well-being and governance (Thomas et al., 2020; Narain et al., 2015).

4.3 TYPOLOGY-BASED THEME MATRIX

Findings reveal a shift from generic checklists to typology-sensitive sustainability strategies. As shown in Figure 3, 19 green themes vary by hotel type and are categorised as Core, Contextual, or Peripheral. The heat map illustrates theme distribution across typologies. Guided by qualitative content analysis, the heat map aids interpretation but is not used as a standalone analytical tool.

Themes	Beach/ Island	Mount	Lake	Forest/ Jungle	Mixed	Urban/ City
Energy Efficiency & Renewable Integration	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Staff Equity & Social Sustainability	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Carbon Emissions & Climate Change	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Overtourism & Carrying Capacity	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Water Resilience & Stewardship	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Sustainable Construction & Materials	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Community Engagement & Local Economies	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Food Sustainability	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Tourist Education & Behaviour	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Disaster Resilience	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Wellness Restorative Hospitality	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Biodiversity &Ecosystem Conservation	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟡
Certification & Regulatory Governance	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
Cultural Heritage	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
Technology Integration	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
Generational Responsiveness	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
IEQ	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
Green Financing	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟠	🟢
Green Mobility	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟡	🟠	🟢

Figure 3. Key thematic dimensions across different hotel typologies

Core Themes (🟢): Core sustainability themes are consistently prioritised across hotel typologies due to their foundational role in green operations. **Energy Efficiency and Renewable Integration** is universally critical in both off-grid and high-consumption environments (Ivanov et al., 2014; Nicholls & Kang, 2012; Prakash et al., 2023; Jacob et al., 2025). **Water Resilience and Stewardship** is vital in Beach/Island, Lake, Forest/Jungle, Mixed, and Urban hotels, where ecological fragility and consumption pressure necessitate careful management (Omune et al., 2021; Nicholls & Kang, 2012; Sanjiwani & Dewi, 2023). Similarly, **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change** demand strategic attention, particularly in climate-sensitive or high-footprint settings such as Lake, Forest, and Urban hotels (Prakash et al., 2023; Jacob et al., 2025). **Biodiversity Conservation** is essential in Beach/Island and Forest/Jungle hotels, where guest experiences are closely tied to ecosystem integrity, while **Overtourism and Carrying Capacity** further reinforce the need for ecological balance in these nature-dependent contexts. Additional core themes include **Staff Equity and Social Sustainability**, which spans all typologies due to the role of HR and CSR in sustaining green practices (Prakash et al., 2023; Jacob et al., 2025); **Sustainable Construction,** especially in ecologically sensitive areas (Hu et al., 2020; Foster, 2021); and **Wellness, Tourist Education, Community Engagement, and Disaster Resilience**, which together reflect the experiential and socio-environmental dimensions of sustainable hospitality (Miller et al., 2015; Jamaludin & Yusof, 2013). While these themes form the backbone of green hotel strategy, others fluctuate based on location and operational structure, transitioning us into the domain of contextual priorities. **Contextual Themes (🟠):** Contextual themes in green hospitality gain or lose prominence depending on the unique characteristics of a

hotel's typology. For example, while **Community Engagement** is central to Island and Forest hotels, it is more peripheral in Urban settings where supply chains and community linkages are less direct (Zambrano et al., 2010). Themes such as **Certification, Cultural Heritage, Technology Integration, Generational Responsiveness, and Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ)** hold contextual value across most typologies, with increased significance in cities due to tighter regulatory controls and advanced infrastructure (Zambrano et al., 2010; Foster, 2021). **Certification and Regulatory** governance vary by typology. LEED and BREEAM excel in urban hotels with their technology focus (Darko and & Chan, 2017), but struggle with biodiversity in beach and forest settings, where Green Key's operational training fits better (Rokip et al., 2022; Damsari et al., 2021). EPCs often neglect factors like varying operating conditions where beach resorts operate with high cooling demands due to warm climates, and Forest resorts could indicate heating needs depending on the remote location and its climate thus relying on generalised rating may not fully capture the unique complexity of the hotel type (Yilmaz & Cesur, 2023). Ayuso (2007) highlights that generalised certifications cause coastal misalignment, supporting typology-specific standards. **Green Financing**, though critical in Urban contexts, is less accessible in remote regions, where funding tends to align with specific conservation or local development goals (Jacob et al., 2025; Sanjiwani& Dewi, 2023; Ibrahim & Yusof, 2017). These contextual patterns underscore the importance of tailoring financial, regulatory, and operational sustainability approaches according to typology-specific realities. However, certain themes, while relevant, remain consistently limited in applicability—especially in remote environments—thereby falling into the category of peripheral concerns. **Peripheral Themes (🟡):** Among all sustainability dimensions, **Green Mobility** is the only theme widely classified as peripheral across typologies, with the notable exception of Urban hotels where it holds strategic value (Jamaludin & Yusof, 2013). In cities, green mobility takes the form of EV charging, bicycle rentals, and transit partnerships, enhancing low-carbon access. In contrast, Mountain and Island hotels often face infrastructure constraints that limit mobility choices, focusing instead on local shuttles or limited transit initiatives (Hu et al., 2020; Jacob et al., 2025). Although green transport plays a role in reducing emissions, its typology-dependent feasibility reflects the broader challenge of applying uniform sustainability measures across diverse hospitality environments. The findings demonstrate that the concept of "green" in hospitality has progressively evolved between 1990 and 2024—from an operational focus on environmental efficiency to a multidimensional framework incorporating social, economic, technological, and experiential dimensions. The identification of 19 thematic dimensions, along with their typology-sensitive variation, highlights the contextual nature of sustainability priorities across hotel types, reinforcing the need for adaptive, typology-specific strategies over standardized green frameworks.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study redefines "green" in hospitality by tracing its evolution and variation across hotel typologies. A systematic literature review identified 19 thematic dimensions, reflecting a shift from basic environmental actions to a multidimensional sustainability model encompassing ecological, economic, social, and technological domains. These themes were classified into: **Core themes;** Universal elements (e.g., energy efficiency, water stewardship, carbon reduction, biodiversity, and staff equity), **Contextual themes;** typology specific (e.g., community engagement, green financing, and cultural heritage),

and **Peripheral themes;** location limited elements (e.g., green mobility, especially in urban settings). Findings underscore the importance of typology-sensitive strategies that reflect ecological settings, infrastructure, and stakeholder needs. Existing certification systems should evolve from standardised models to modular frameworks that accommodate operational diversity. Practitioners are encouraged to prioritise core themes while adapting contextual and peripheral elements to local challenges. Future research should assess these frameworks' impact on operations, guest satisfaction, and environmental outcomes. This study offers a foundation for advancing green hospitality.

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