

Framing Sustainability in Luxury Hotels: Impact or Commitment?

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how luxury hotels should frame sustainability narratives by comparing achieved environmental impact with future sustainability commitments. It examines their effects on willingness to stay (WTS), with perceived hedonic value (HV) and hotel integrity (HI) as mediators, and message abstraction and greenwashing risk as moderators.

Design/methodology/approach: Two online experiments using scenarios describing a fictitious luxury hotel were conducted. Study 1 (N=329) used a 2×2 design with sustainability message framing (achieved impact versus future commitment) and message type (concrete versus abstract) manipulated. HV and HI were examined as mediating mechanism. Study 2 (N=233) examined the moderating role of greenwashing risk (high versus low) on the effects of message framing through HI.

Findings: Study 1 showed that impact-based framing increased WTS through higher HV, particularly when the message was abstract. Message type did not influence the HI pathway. Study 2 showed that when greenwashing risk was high, impact framing strengthened HI and, in turn, WTS.

Implication: Luxury hotels should focus on verifiable outcomes already achieved when communicating their sustainability efforts. This becomes particularly important when greenwashing risk is salient. Impact-based framing helps preserve anticipated hedonic value. Also, evidence of achieved outcomes can strengthen perceptions of hotel integrity when sustainability claims are questioned.

Originality: This study extends attribution theory and CLT by showing that sustainability messages influence consumers through distinct psychological mechanisms.

Keywords

Luxury hospitality; sustainability communication; message framing; hedonic value; construal level theory; greenwashing risk

Paper Type: Research paper

1. Introduction

The global luxury hospitality sector is projected to grow at an 11.5% compounded annual growth rate and reach \$369.35 billion by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). However, this growth brings significant challenges on the environmental front, driven by high energy consumption and dependence on non-sustainable resources. Luxury hospitality, known for indulgence and abundance, often appears at odds with ideals of sustainability that is driven by moderation and conservation (Naderi and Strutton, 2015). These tensions sit within a broader shift toward ethical and climate-conscious consumption in luxury hospitality (Taheri et al., 2024).

Sustainable luxury has gained focus as a result of evolving consumer expectations, especially the younger generation (ShabbirHusain et al., 2025a). A segment of these travellers seeks out properties that exude integrity in approaching sustainability while ensuring that there is no compromise on luxury experience (Marinakou, 2025). However, managing sustainability with luxury is a tough task since sustainability can have a negative effect on the luxury experience, as it may be perceived to compromise comfort and indulgence (Dekhili et al., 2019). For example, guests may perceive eco-friendly practices, such as reduced in-room amenities or limited linen changes, as detracting from the luxury experience, thereby leading to consumer hesitation. This perception necessitates hoteliers to implement green initiatives without undermining 'a sense of pleasure and self-indulgence' associated with luxury (Peng and Chen, 2019b).

While many hotel chains have adopted sustainability practices ranging from investment-heavy infrastructure changes (e.g., LEED-certified buildings) to guest participation initiatives (e.g., linen reuse programs), the effectiveness of these initiatives often depends on how they are framed and communicated (ShabbirHusain et al., 2025a). Prior studies have explored the hotel guests' willingness to pay premium for green practices (Kang et al., 2012) as well as the scepticism towards poorly executed green messaging resulting in perceptions of greenwashing and perceived compromise on luxury (Sahin et al., 2020). Hence, the critical question pertains not just in what is being done on sustainability front but also how sustainability messages should be framed to positively influence consumer perceptions and behaviours without compromising on their luxury expectations.

Existing hospitality research has examined several forms of sustainability communication, including normative appeals, emotional versus cognitive appeals, and gain versus loss framing

(Belarmino et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2018). However, three gaps remain. First, research have explored mass-market hospitality settings and have not addressed the luxury-specific tension between sustainability and indulgence, where green cues may be interpreted as signals of restraint (Dekhili et al., 2019; Sahin et al., 2020). Second, prior studies have not sufficiently distinguished between sustainability narratives that communicate achieved outcomes and those that communicate future commitments. This distinction is important because the two narrative types differ in evidential strength and may invite different motive attributions (Parguel et al., 2011). Third, limited attention has been given to the psychological mechanisms and message conditions through which these narratives shape willingness to stay in luxury hotels. This is important because sustainability communication in luxury may influence consumers through both anticipated hedonic value (HV) and perceived hotel integrity (HI; Amatulli et al., 2021; Morhart et al., 2015; Ozturk et al., 2016). These gaps underscore the relevance of attribution theory and construal level theory (CLT) for explaining how consumers interpret and respond to sustainability narratives.

Attribution theory explains how consumers infer a hotel's sustainability communication as indicative of either genuine environmental concern or self-serving image management, thereby shaping perceived HI (Parguel et al., 2011). CLT explains how concrete versus abstract wording influences psychological distance and message processing. It provides a theoretical basis for understanding consumers' evaluations of sustainability claims that differ in specificity and measurability (Kang and Atkinson, 2021; Trope and Liberman, 2010). Together, these theories explain why luxury consumers may respond differently depending on whether sustainability narratives are framed as achieved impact or future commitment and expressed concretely or abstractly. Based on this theoretical perspective, this study examines how impact-based versus commitment-based sustainability framing affects luxury hotel customers' willingness to stay (WTS) and the psychological mechanisms underlying this effect. Impact-based messages communicate achieved sustainability outcomes and therefore provide stronger evidence of action. Commitment-based messages communicate future-oriented intentions and may signal aspiration, but remain less immediately verifiable (Ahn and Dias Soeiro, 2022; Parguel et al., 2011). The study also examines message type (concrete versus abstract) as a separate dimension. Concrete messages provide specific and measurable information, whereas abstract messages use broader and less quantified language (Kang and Atkinson, 2021; Trope and Liberman, 2010).

Specifically, the study aims to address the following three research questions:

RQ1: How does an impact-based sustainability message versus a commitment-based message influence consumers' willingness to stay in a luxury hotel?

RQ2: What roles do perceived hotel integrity and perceived hedonic value play in mediating the effect of message framing on willingness to stay?

RQ3: How does the concreteness vs. abstractness of the message moderate the effectiveness of impact-based vs. commitment-based framings?

We conceptualise sustainability communication in luxury hospitality along two attributes: narrative orientation, reflected in achieved impact versus future commitment, and linguistic construal, reflected in concrete versus abstract wording. We then show why these attributes should operate through different psychological routes. The impact-versus-commitment distinction is expected to shape motive inferences and anticipated pleasure, whereas the concrete-versus-abstract distinction determines when framing cues become more or less diagnostic. In doing so, the study clarifies why sustainability communication in luxury does not work through a single persuasive pathway and why pleasure-preservation and credibility-assessment mechanisms can diverge.

2. Theoretical background:

Luxury and sustainability are often considered paradoxical (ShabbirHusain, et al., 2025b). While luxury stands for indulgence and abundance, sustainability calls for moderation and resource conservation (Naderi and Strutton, 2015). Luxury hotels therefore need to communicate sustainability without weakening perceptions of a premium experience. Message framing influences consumer perceptions and choices (ShabbirHusain et al., 2025a; He et al., 2022), making it particularly important in luxury hospitality.. It has also been shown to positively affect consumers' perceived benefits (Liu et al., 2025) and value perceptions (Mansoor et al., 2025). Luxury hospitality is a particularly sensitive context for framing effects because consumers actively protect anticipated pleasure and symbolic value when evaluating brand communications. Sustainability cues can unintentionally activate austerity inferences, so how the message is framed becomes central to whether consumers see sustainability as compatible with luxury rather than as a trade-off.

2.1. Sustainability communication in hospitality and the unresolved challenge in luxury

Hospitality research has examined several sustainability communication tactics, including source credibility and framing (Kim and Kim, 2014), message objectivity and focus (Kang and Atkinson, 2021), emotional versus cognitive appeals (Belarmino et al., 2025), and gain-loss framing (Zhang et al., 2018). This stream shows that how hotels communicate sustainability shapes evaluations, yet most evidence is drawn from mass-market settings. In luxury hospitality, this tension is sharper because consumers pay for hedonic gratification and symbolic value, making them highly sensitive to any signal that the experience may be compromised (Dekhili et al., 2019; Peng and Chen, 2019a). Prior work has shown that green message types can affect advertising effectiveness across hotel tiers (Sahin et al., 2020), but we still lack clarity on which sustainability narratives preserve hedonic value while maintaining trust in a luxury context. In particular, the literature has not sufficiently distinguished between sustainability claims that emphasize outcomes already achieved (impact-focussed) versus claims that emphasize future-oriented intention (commitment-focussed). These two narratives invite different motive attributions and different credibility judgments, which should translate into different luxury-relevant outcomes such as perceived hedonic value, perceived integrity, and willingness to stay.

Extant research treats sustainability communication as a broadly positive cue and does not distinguish between claims that demonstrate accomplished action and those that project aspirational intent (Kim and Kim, 2014; Parguel et al., 2011). However, these narratives differ in evidential value and susceptibility to scepticism. In specific, studies on message objectivity and framing often assume that persuasive communication improves evaluations, although this assumption is less certain in luxury contexts. This uncertainty is especially relevant because sustainability cues can also trigger inferences of sacrifice, restraint, or reduced pampering (Dekhili et al., 2019; Sahin et al., 2020). At the same time, related constructs such as message credibility, authenticity, greenwashing scepticism, and integrity are often discussed in related research streams (Amatulli et al., 2021; Morhart et al., 2015; Nyilasy et al., 2014). Yet, they are rarely integrated into a unified, luxury-specific explanation of consumer responses. These limitations suggest that luxury hospitality is not merely another setting in which sustainability communication operates. Rather, it represents a distinct theoretical context in which the meaning of sustainability claims becomes more contested.

The present research advances this discussion by distinguishing between two theoretically separable attributes of sustainability communication. The first attribute, impact versus commitment, captures the temporal-evidential orientation of the claim. It distinguishes between outcomes already achieved and goals the hotel intends to pursue. This attribute was selected because achieved outcomes and future intentions differ in verifiability and may therefore invite different attributions about organisational motives (Parguel et al., 2011). The second attribute, concrete versus abstract, captures the construal level of the wording. It distinguishes between sustainability narratives expressed through specific details and those conveyed through general language. This attribute was selected because specificity influences psychological distance and message diagnosticity. According to CLT, these differences should affect how consumers evaluate the claim (Kang and Atkinson, 2021; Trope and Liberman, 2010). Because the two attributes are independent, an impact claim may be communicated abstractly, whereas a commitment claim may be communicated concretely. This distinction allows us to test whether consumers respond to the narrative itself, the way it is expressed, or the interaction between the two.

2.2. Role of Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is often used to explain how individuals infer the motives behind others' actions. The attributions are treated as intrinsic when they are inferred as coming from genuine concern. On the other hand, attributions are termed as extrinsic when the consumers ascribe a self-serving motive behind the action/communication of others (Parguel et al., 2011). This attribution process influences the perception of hotel's integrity while communicating sustainability related initiatives (ShabbirHusain et al., 2025a). Perceived integrity specifies the extent to which the luxury hotel is seen as being faithful and true to its customers (Morhart et al., 2015). In hospitality, integrity helps build trust and long-term relationships and has been shown to influence both bookings and online travel purchases (Tussyadiah and Park, 2018). Different forms of messaging may activate different types of attributions. For instance, messages showing observable outcomes can be associated with altruistic attributions, whereas forward-looking messages may invite attributions of sustained commitment. In contrast, messages that appear vague or overly promotional are more likely to trigger scepticism and weaken perceptions of integrity. If tourists perceive a hotel's efforts as superficial marketing, they may view the value offering as compromised (Chen, 2019). This highlights attribution theory's role in explaining how consumers interpret hotels' sustainability motives and how these perceptions shape willingness to stay.

2.3. Role of Construal Level Theory (CLT)

CLT explains how abstract and concrete communication influence psychological distance and message processing. CLT (Trope and Liberman, 2010) suggest that consumers view messages at different construal levels. The theory suggests that individuals experience psychological distance from an event, which can take the form of temporal, spatial, social or hypothetical distance. The theory argues that different psychological distances in stimuli elicit differential responses from consumers. For example, in a distant event, consumers may take a higher construct level and focus on information at a greater level of abstraction. On the other hand, for more immediate events, consumers are likely to adopt lower construal level and focus on more concrete events (Kang and Atkinson, 2021). The communication from hotels can also take different construal levels depending on how they are framed. Messages that are abstract are likely to be treated as being at a high construal level while messages that are framed in a concrete manner may appear closer and actionable and hence considered at a low construal level. In the case of sustainability communication, both abstract messages (that emphasize long-term goals) and concrete messages (that highlight specific outcomes) can influence how consumers interpret psychological distance and assess credibility. When applied to luxury hotel settings, this distinction between concrete and abstract messaging, and the associated psychological distances, provides a useful lens for understanding sustainability communication.

3. Hypotheses development:

Hedonic value refers to the level of pleasure, indulgence and enjoyment derived from the experience with the product/service (Butcher and Chomvilailuk, 2022). The role of hedonic pleasure is particularly critical in luxury hospitality where guests pay a premium to pamper themselves. Impact-based messages provide tangible evidence that sustainability initiatives have been implemented in past. By talking about real outcomes (e.g. “our smart lighting solutions reduced carbon emissions last year”), the hotel implicitly signals that eco-initiatives were achieved without a compromise on luxury or guest experience. This type of framing provides a reassurance that indulgence remains intact despite environmental initiatives (Kang and Atkinson, 2021). On the other hand, a forward looking (commitment-based) message (e.g. "we are committed to reducing emissions next year") may appear uncertain and distant. The lack of immediacy and reassurance leads to higher level processing raising doubts about how the changes will affect the indulgent experience (Dekhili et al., 2019). Given that luxury

consumers are highly sensitive to any cues of diminished comfort, a forward-looking sustainability messaging may appear as a threat to indulgence, if they entail any moderation or change.

Impact-based messages, by highlighting sustainability results without signalling sacrifice, may reassure guests that sustainability and luxury coexist. They may even reinforce the perception that sustainability is delivered through innovation, care, and design sophistication. Accordingly, compared with commitment-based framing, impact-based framing should be more likely to preserve anticipated pleasure and elevate perceived hedonic value in luxury hospitality.

H1: Impact-based framing will lead to higher perceived hedonic value than commitment-based framing.

Perceived hotel integrity refers to the extent to which a hotel is seen as genuine, principled, and consistent in honouring what it stands for (Amatulli et al., 2021; Morhart et al., 2015). In sustainability communication, integrity judgments are shaped less by the mere presence of a green claim and more by the quality of evidence behind that claim. Attribution theory suggests that consumers are more likely to infer intrinsic motives when a message points to accomplished, observable action, because realised outcomes are harder to dismiss as symbolic impression management (Parguel et al., 2011). By contrast, commitment-based messages rest on intentions and aspirations that are not yet verifiable. Such claims may still be evaluated positively, but they leave greater room for scepticism, greenwashing concerns, and extrinsic attributions about reputation building or premium justification (Ahn and Dias Soeiro, 2022; Nyilasy et al., 2014). This distinction is especially important in luxury hospitality, where sustainability claims must appear authentic rather than merely promotional if they are to reinforce trust in the hotel's values (Morhart et al., 2015; Sahin et al., 2020). Accordingly, compared with commitment-based framing, impact-based framing should be more likely to enhance perceived hotel integrity.

H2: Impact-based framing will lead to higher perceived hotel integrity than commitment-based framing.

Environmental psychology suggests that service evaluations depend strongly on the pleasure they provide (Peng and Chen, 2019a). In luxury hospitality, hedonic value is central since they go beyond basic needs (Wu and Yang, 2018). Customers often pay premiums and are likely to engage with the sustainable hotels when indulgence is preserved (Butcher and Chomvilailuk,

2022). If guests perceive that sustainability initiatives are integrated without diminishing indulgence, they are more likely to book a stay. Research on luxury services and tourism has shown that perceived hedonic value strongly shapes the overall experience (Peng and Chen, 2019a). Drawing on hedonic value and environmental psychology, we propose that the perceived hedonic value of luxury hotels improves willingness to stay.

H3: Perceived hedonic value will positively influence willingness to stay.

Perceived hotel integrity has been noted to be particularly important in case of luxury hospitality in influencing consumers' intention to book (Tussyadiah and Park, 2018). Perceived integrity becomes crucial determinant of purchase intention because guests are making high-involvement decisions and need confidence that premium promises will be fulfilled (Tussyadiah and Park, 2018). When guests see a hotel's sustainability as honest and principled, trust and a favourable attitude follow. This is likely to raise booking intention. The argumentation aligns well with past luxury research showing that credible responsibility signals lift desirability by increasing perceived integrity (Amatulli et al., 2021). Hence, we posit that perceived hotel integrity should increase willingness to stay.

H4: Perceived hotel integrity will positively influence willingness to stay.

Together, the arguments point to two routes from framing to willingness to stay. Impact messages reassure guests that luxury is intact. This increases perceived hedonic value. Impact messages also signal sincerity and principled conduct. This strengthens perceived hotel integrity. Since both hedonic value and integrity are central drivers of booking intentions in luxury hospitality, we propose that the relationship between framing and willingness to stay is mediated by these two perceptions. Hence, we propose the following mediations:

H5: The effect of framing (impact vs. commitment) on willingness to stay is mediated by:(a) perceived hedonic value (b) perceived hotel integrity.

According to CLT, individuals experience psychological distance from a stimulus, which can take the form of temporal, spatial, social, or hypothetical distance . These distances stimulate different construal levels in individuals and affect their perceptions and behaviours. Messages from a hotel that are abstract are likely to be treated as being at a high construal level, while messages that are framed in a concrete manner may appear closer and actionable, and hence considered at a low construal level. When applied to the luxury hotel setting, such concrete detail enhances credibility and reassures guests that sustainability achievements are compatible

with indulgence (Kang and Atkinson, 2021). Specific outcomes feel close and verifiable, which reassures guests about the present experience. When outcomes are stated broadly that link is weaker. For example, stating that a hotel reduced water usage by 26% while maintaining uninterrupted luxury service signals that sustainability can coexist with hedonic value. By contrast, abstract phrases such as “noticeable improvements” lack measurable detail and leave doubts about whether indulgence was preserved. We hence propose that perceived hedonic value will be higher when the impact message is concrete (vs. abstract) leading to the following hypothesis:

H6: Message type (concrete vs. abstract) moderates the relationship between framing and perceived hedonic value, such that the effect of message type (impact/commitment) on perceived hedonic value is stronger when the message is concrete (vs. abstract).

Perceptions of integrity depend on how consumers attribute motives to the marketing communication. Attribution theory suggests that when actions include objective evidence, intrinsic motive attributions are more likely. This results in favourable evaluation of the brand and strengthens perceived integrity (Parguel et al., 2011). Concrete message type provides measurable details and, as a result, reduces scepticism (Chen, 2019). In contrast, abstract framing appears vague and subjective, leaving room for extrinsic attributions and concerns of opportunism. Thus, we propose that when framing is communicated concretely, it should have a greater positive influence on perceptions of hotel integrity compared to abstract communication.

H7: Message type (concrete vs. abstract) moderates the relationship between framing and perceived hotel integrity, such that the effect of message type (impact/commitment) on perceived hotel integrity is stronger when the message is concrete (vs. abstract).

Since message type changes the influence of the framing cue, it should also alter the size of the indirect effect through hedonic value. As argued for H3, hedonic value lifts willingness to stay in turn. It follows that the indirect effect of framing on willingness to stay via hedonic value should be stronger under concrete messaging than under abstract messaging. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H8: The indirect effect of message framing on willingness to stay through perceived hedonic value is moderated by message type, such that the indirect effect is stronger when the message is concrete (vs. abstract).

Since integrity rests on inferences about sincerity and principled conduct, the extent to which framing affects willingness to stay through perceived hotel integrity should depend on how concrete the message wording appears to consumers. Message type should therefore moderate the indirect effect of message framing on willingness to stay through perceived hotel integrity.

H9: The indirect effect of message framing on willingness to stay through perceived hotel integrity is moderated by message type, such that the indirect effect is stronger when the message is concrete (vs. abstract).

Collectively, H1–H9 define our conceptual model. Figure 1 depicts the full set of relationships.

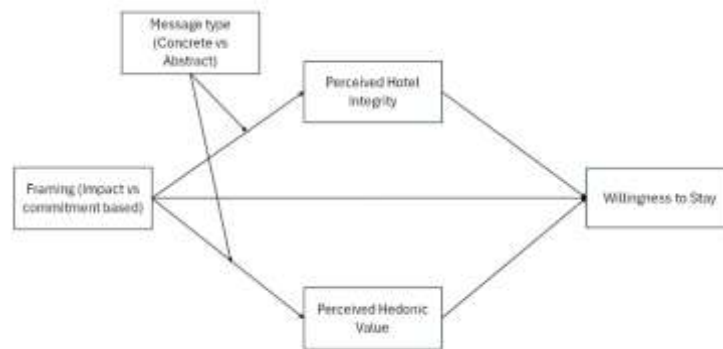


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Alt-text: Conceptual model showing links between message framing, hedonic value, hotel integrity, and willingness to stay, moderated by message type (concrete vs. abstract).

Source: Developed by authors.

4. Methodology

4.1. Study 1

4.1.1. Method: subjects, design and procedure

A total of 520 participants were approached by email, of whom 329 completed the questionnaire. The study received institutional ethical approval and followed relevant guidelines for research with human participants. Before beginning the survey, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, what participation involved, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained before participation. No identifying

information was collected and aggregate data were securely stored and used only for research purposes.

Data for study 1 were collected through an online survey using a convenience sampling approach. A post-hoc G*Power analysis confirmed that the achieved sample size ($N = 329$) exceeded the G*Power minimum requirement of 160 ($f^2 = .15$, power = .95, eight predictors). Gender, age, income, and employment status were included as covariates in the subsequent analyses. Of the participants, 22% were female. The sample was largely middle-aged, with 22.8% aged 21–35 years, 40.1% aged 36–45 years, and 37.1% aged 46 years and above. Most respondents were employed full-time (81.2%), followed by self-employed respondents (10.3%), retired respondents (4.3%), students (2.4%), and others (1.8%).

Consistent with the hospitality communication literature (Bernard et al., 2024; Topcuoglu et al., 2022), the study examined how consumers respond to controlled message cues rather than how actual guests evaluate a specific hotel after a stay. To strengthen external relevance, the study shared the stimulus of an advertisement from a luxury hotel. Further, message-type context resembling the quantifiable and specificity of the message was displayed in the advertisement text as stimuli. Participants were initially instructed to imagine that they have been looking to book a luxury hotel for their vacation. They were then told that an advertisement from a luxury hotel was displayed based on past internet search. In this study, the imaginary luxury hotel was portrayed in varying ways according to the conditions shown in Figure 2.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (framing: impact vs commitment) $\times$ 2 (message type: concrete vs abstract) between-subjects design. In the impact–concrete condition, the message emphasized outcomes already achieved using objective metrics (e.g., achieved 26% reduction in water use). In the impact–abstract condition, the message emphasized outcomes already achieved but used general, non-quantified language (e.g., “achieved noticeable environmental improvements”). In the commitment–concrete condition, the message emphasized future-oriented sustainability intentions using objective, specific targets (e.g., plan to eliminate a 15,000 single-use items). In the commitment–abstract condition, the message emphasized future-oriented intentions using general and subjective language (e.g., “plan to significantly reduce environmental impact”).



Figure 2. Stimuli for different scenarios

Alt-text: Four experimental conditions: impact–concrete, impact–abstract, commitment–concrete, and commitment–abstract.

Source: Developed by authors.

After reading the scenario, participants initially completed a three-item scale measuring perceived hedonic value based on Ozturk et al. (2016). An example of the item includes “The actual process of staying at this hotel is pleasant”. Following which, a four-item scale on perceived hotel integrity by Amatulli et al. (2021) is completed. An example of the item includes “I believe that this is a hotel with moral principles”. Finally, a three-item scale by Song et al. (2018) on willingness to stay is collected. An example of the items includes “My willingness to book a room in this hotel is ____”. Finally, the demographic information about the participants was collected. As a manipulation check across the survey, participants indicated their response to four statements (“The message provided concrete details about the hotel’s sustainability efforts”, “The message used general or abstract language without specific evidence”, “The message emphasized the impact the hotel has already made on the

environment”, “The message focused on the hotel’s commitment to making an impact in the future”).

5. Results

5.1. Measurement model assessment

We first conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on all measurement items to assess factor structure. Items that showed substantial cross-loadings or low primary loadings were removed to improve construct distinctiveness, resulting in eight retained items from the initial ten. We then conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the three-factor measurement model (HV, HI, WTS). All retained items loaded strongly on their intended constructs and the model demonstrated acceptable fit (Table 1; Hu and Bentler, 1999). Reliability and validity indicators supported the measurement model: Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability were high, AVE values supported convergent validity, and Fornell–Larcker comparisons supported discriminant validity (Table 2). To assess common method bias, we used Harman’s single-factor test on the pooled items. The first unrotated factor accounted for 51% of the variance, suggesting that common method variance could be present. However, the analysis identified three distinct factors with eigenvalues greater than one, implying common method bias may not be a serious threat to the study's validity (Molinillo et al., 2022). To further ensure the robustness of our results, we utilized experimental design and manipulation checks to minimise method-driven bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 1: Results of CFA model - Study 1

Construct	Item	Item description	Squared multiple correlation	Factor loading	Mean	SD
Willingness to stay	WTS1	The likelihood of me booking a room in this hotel is	0.960	0.980***	3.457	1.018
	WTS2	My willingness to book a room in this hotel is	0.986	0.993***		
	WTS3	The probability that I would consider booking a room in this hotel is	0.850	0.922***		
Perceived hedonic value	HV1	Staying at this hotel is fun to me	0.609	0.781***	3.426	0.87
	HV2	The actual process of staying at this hotel is pleasant	0.786	0.887***		

Perceived hotel integrity	HV3	Staying at this hotel is enjoyable	0.936	0.967***		
	HI2	I believe that this is a hotel with moral principles	0.888	0.942***	3.688	0.962
	HI3	I believe that this is a hotel true to a set of moral values	0.841	0.917***		

n = 329, ****p* < 0.001

Source: Developed by authors.

Table 2: Construct's validity and reliability- Study 1

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	WTS	HV	HI
WTS	0.937	0.955	0.932	0.966		
HV	0.868	0.871	0.777	0.625	0.881	
HI	0.891	0.883	0.865	0.553	0.594	0.93

Note: N = 329; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; diagonal figures are the square roots of the AVE of each construct; off-diagonal figures indicate inter-construct correlations.

Source: Developed by authors.

5.1.1. Manipulation check:

To assess whether participants accurately perceived the message framing as either impact-based or commitment-based, they were asked to rate how impactful and how committed they perceived the luxury hotel to be. Results indicated that participants who viewed the impact-based message rated the hotel as significantly more impactful ($M=4.04$; $t(308)=6.31$, $p < .001$) than those who viewed the commitment-based message ($M=3.19$). Conversely, participants who viewed the commitment-based message rated the hotel as significantly more commitment-oriented ($M=4.00$; $t(309)=4.12$, $p < .001$) than those who viewed the impact-based message ($M=3.43$). These results suggest that the message framing manipulation was successful.

To assess whether participants recognized the message type as either concrete or abstract, they were asked to rate how concrete and how abstract they perceived the message to be. Results indicated that participants who viewed the concrete message rated it as significantly more concrete ($M=3.91$; $t(315)=6.83$, $p < .001$) than abstract ($M=3.02$). Similarly, participants who viewed the abstract message rated it as significantly more abstract ($M=3.64$; $t(324)=7.41$, $p < .001$) than concreteness ($M=2.59$). These findings confirm that the message type manipulation was successful.

5.1.2. Hypotheses testing:

To test H1 and H2, we created a binary variable, assigning a value of 1 to the impact-based message framing and 0 to the commitment-based message framing condition. We conducted an ANOVA with message framing as independent variable, HV/HI as dependent variable, and age, gender, income and employment as control variables. The results show that HV was significantly higher when message framing was impact-based ($M=3.564$, $SD=0.874$, $n=164$), $F(1,323) = 8.50$, $p < 0.01$, $\text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.03$, thus supporting H1. However, no significant difference was observed between the conditions for HI, thus not supporting H2. Similarly, Hypotheses H3 and H4 were tested by regressing the dependent variable WTS on independent variable HV and HI. Results show that HV ($\beta = 0.496$, $p < 0.001$) and HI ($\beta = 0.283$, $p < 0.001$) were positively related to WTS, providing support for H3 and H4.

Hypotheses 5 was tested using simple mediation (Hayes PROCESS model 4 with default 5000 bootstrap samples) with message framing as the independent variable, HV and HI as parallel mediators, and WTS as the dependent variable. The results indicated a significant total indirect effect of the framing effect on WTS through the mediators ($b = 0.2091$, $SE = 0.0716$, 95% CI [0.0635, 0.3465]). Specifically, the indirect effect through HV was significant ($b = 0.1545$, $SE = 0.0516$, 95% CI [0.0552, 0.2583]), suggesting that HV mediates the relationship between the framing effect and WTS. However, the indirect effect through HI was not statistically significant ($b = 0.0546$, $SE = 0.0300$, 95% CI [-0.0017, 0.1162]). The direct effect of the framing effect on WTS remained significant when controlling for both mediators ($b = 0.1872$, $SE = 0.0680$, 95% CI [0.0533, 0.3210]), indicating partial mediation.

The interaction effect of message type between message framing and HV ($\beta = -0.4705$, $SE=0.1995$, 95% CI= [-0.8629, -0.0780]) was significant. The conditional effect of message framing was significant when the message type was abstract. Specifically, HV was lower for abstract messages framed as commitment-based communication and higher for those framed as impact-based communication. However, there is no significant difference in message framing when the message type is concrete. Thus, H6 is partially supported. Figure 3 shows the interaction effect of message type.

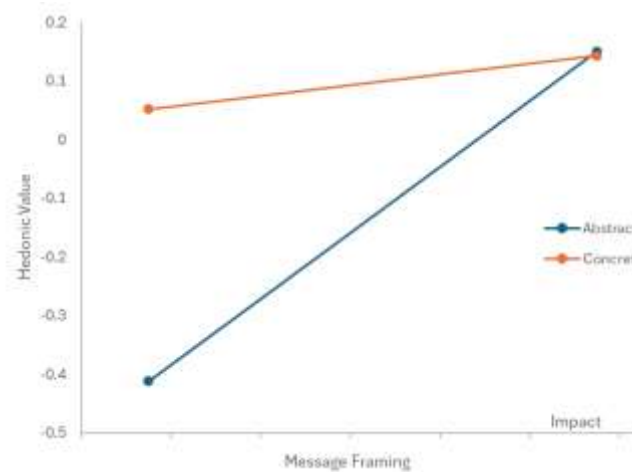


Figure 3: Interaction effect: Message framing x Message type on HV

Alt-text: Graph of interaction between framing (impact vs. commitment) and message type on hedonic value. Impact framing scores higher under abstract messages, with little difference under concrete messages.

Source: Developed by authors.

The interaction term between message type and message framing on HI was not statistically significant ($F(1, 321) = 0.087, p = .7685$). This suggests that message type does not significantly moderate the relationship between message framing and HI. Thus, H7 is not supported.

Hypotheses H8 and H9 were tested using Hayes PROCESS model 7 with default 5000 bootstrap samples. H8 examined whether HV mediates the impact of message framing by message type on WTS. Results showed that the index of moderated mediation was negative and significant ($b = -0.2332$; 95% CI $[-0.4464, -0.0358]$). In the abstract message condition, message framing had a significant indirect effect on WTS, such that participants in the impact condition reported higher WTS through increased hedonic value (HV) compared to those in the commitment condition ($b = 0.2785$, 95% CI $[0.1350, 0.4354]$). However, the indirect effect was not significant in the concrete message type condition. Thus, message framing loses its effectiveness when the message is concrete. Figure 4 shows the moderating effect of message type on the relation between message framing and WTS.

For H9, the index of moderated mediation was not significant ($b = -0.0163$, 95% CI $[-0.1297, 0.0944]$), indicating no significant moderation by message framing on the indirect effect via HI (Figure 5). Table 3, the descriptive means provide additional context for interpreting the hypothesis testing

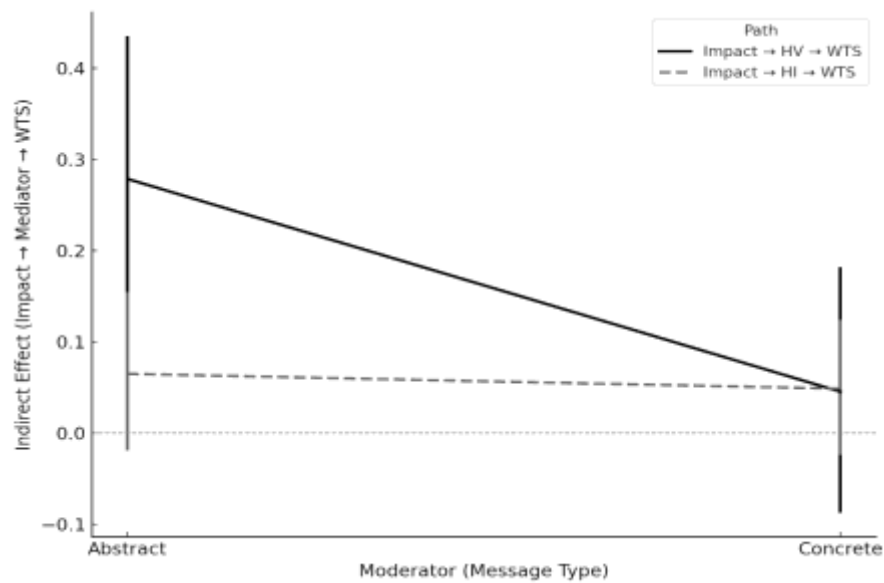


Figure 4: Conditional indirect effects of message framing on WTS

Alt-text: Conditional indirect effects of framing on willingness to stay. Mediation by hedonic value occurs under abstract but not concrete messages.

Source: Developed by authors.

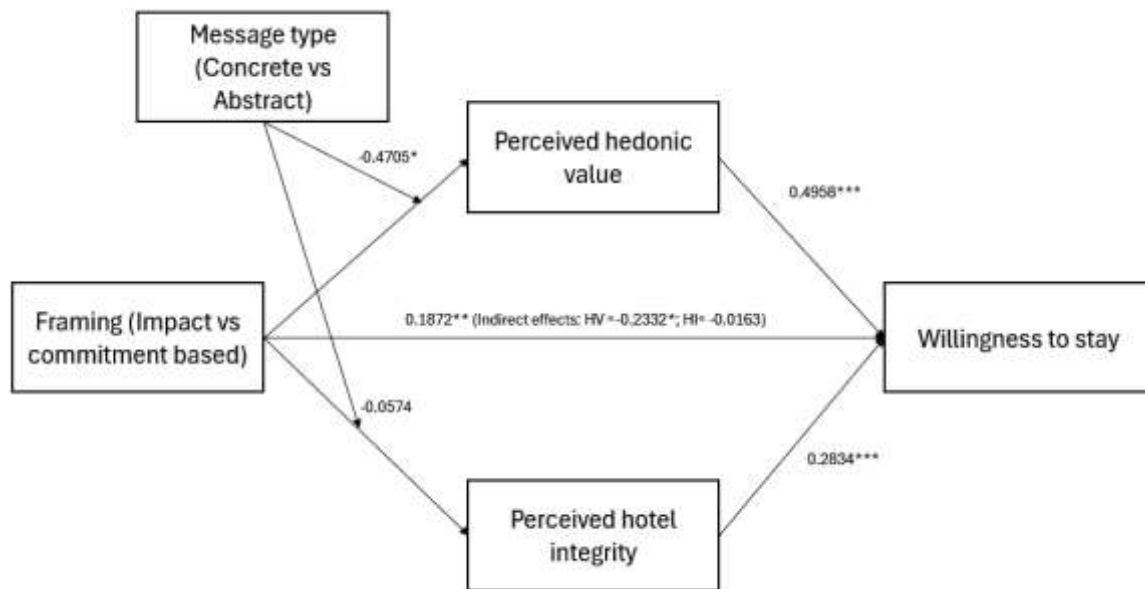


Figure 5: Moderated mediation effect by message type.

The indirect effect is shown in parenthesis. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Alt-text: Moderated mediation diagram. Hedonic value mediates framing effects on willingness to stay, stronger under abstract conditions.

Source: Developed by authors.

Table 3: Descriptive means of HV, HI and WTS across message framing and message type conditions

Message framing	Message type	Sample size	HV	HI	WTS
Commitment-based	Abstract	77	-0.405	-0.334	-0.461
Commitment-based	Concrete	87	0.052	0.071	0.003
Impact-based	Abstract	80	0.145	-0.108	0.131
Impact-based	Concrete	85	0.141	0.237	0.220

Source: Developed by authors.

6. Follow-up study (Study 2)

To further examine the non-significant effect of framing–HI–WTS pathway in study 1, study 2 introduced greenwashing risk as a moderator of the framing–HI relationship. Study 1 suggested that message type did not sufficiently differentiate impact-based and commitment-based framing on HI, although HI remained relevant to WTS. Greenwashing risk was selected because it is directly linked to whether consumers view sustainability claims as genuine action or promotional intent (Font et al., 2025). Prior research indicates that perceived greenwashing increases scepticism toward hotel’s environmental claims and encourages consumers to scrutinise the motives underlying sustainability communication (Rahman et al., 2015; Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013). Specifically, Rahman et al. (2015) show that hotel consumers respond less favourably when environmental initiatives are perceived as symbolic rather than substantive. Study 2 therefore treats greenwashing risk as a contextual cue that heightens attention to message credibility and authenticity, making integrity judgments more contingent on whether the hotel communicates verified impact or unverified commitment (Morhart et al., 2015; Nyilasy et al., 2014; Parguel et al., 2011).

6.1. Method: subjects, design and procedure

A total of 233 participants took part in study 2. Study 2 used a between-subjects experimental design with message framing (impact-based versus commitment-based) and greenwashing risk (high versus low). The sample was fairly balanced across the four conditions: High-risk commitment framing (25.8%), High-risk impact framing (25.3%), Low-risk commitment framing (25.8%), and Low-risk impact framing (23.2%). The same luxury hotel context was retained to ensure comparability with study 1. However, unlike study 1, participants were first exposed to guest reviews that manipulated greenwashing risk. In the high greenwashing-risk

condition, the reviews questioned whether the hotel's sustainability communication matched its actual practices. In the low greenwashing-risk condition, the information indicated that the hotel's sustainability claims were credible and consistent with its practices. After this greenwashing-risk manipulation, participants viewed the official property description of the hotel. The message-framing was presented through the hotel's own sustainability communication. The impact-based message emphasised sustainability progress already achieved. The commitment-based message emphasised future sustainability targets. Participants then completed measures of HI and WTS. The procedures for both studies are shown in Appendix A.

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Measurement model assessment:

EFA was conducted to assess the factor structure, with all items loading clearly on their intended constructs and no substantial cross-loadings. All items were therefore retained. CFA subsequently confirmed adequate item loadings and acceptable model fit (Table 4).

Table 4: Results of CFA model-Study 2

Construct	Item	Squared multiple correlation	Factor loadings	Mean	SD
Willingness to stay (WTS)	WTS1	0.670	0.732***	3.279	1.117
	WTS2	0.978	0.983***		
	WTS3	0.924	0.949***		
Perceived hotel integrity (HI)	HI1	0.693	0.762***	3.439	0.915
	HI2	0.865	0.904***		
	HI3	0.925	0.929***		
	HI4	0.822	0.846***		

n = 233, ****p* < 0.001

Source: Developed by authors.

Reliability and validity estimates supported the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability exceeded recommended thresholds, AVE values supported convergent validity, and Fornell–Larcker comparisons confirmed discriminant validity (Table 5). Harman's single-factor test was used to assess common method bias. The first unrotated factor accounted for 38.9% of the variance, suggesting that common method variance was unlikely to bias the findings.

Table 5: Construct's validity and reliability- Study 2

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	WTS	HI
WTS	0.921	0.935	0.858	0.926	
HI	0.920	0.941	0.826	0.288	0.909

n = 233; Source: Developed by authors.

6.2.2. Manipulation check:

To assess whether participants perceived greenwashing risk as intended, they rated the genuineness of the hotel's sustainability efforts and their suspicion toward the hotel's environmental practices. Participants in the low greenwashing-risk condition perceived the hotel's sustainability efforts as more genuine ($M=4.15$; $p < .001$) than those in the high greenwashing-risk condition ($M=3.08$). They also reported lower suspicion of the hotel's environmental practices ($M=2.59$; $p < .001$) than participants in the high greenwashing-risk condition ($M=3.56$). These results confirm that the greenwashing-risk condition was perceived as intended. The message-framing check confirmed that participants perceived the framing as intended. Participants exposed to the impact-based message rated the hotel as more impactful ($M = 3.96$; $p < .001$) than those exposed to the commitment-based message ($M = 3.09$). Conversely, participants exposed to the commitment-based message rated the hotel as more commitment-oriented ($M = 3.64$), than those exposed to the impact-based message ($M = 3.27$, $p < .001$).

6.2.3. Hypotheses testing:

Results showed that message framing (reference category: commitment-framing) had a significant effect on HI, ($b = 1.177$, $SE=0.1347$, $p<0.001$). Participants exposed to impact-based framing reported higher HI than those exposed to commitment-based framing. The interaction between message framing and greenwashing risk (reference category: high-risk) on HI was significant ($b= -1.079$, $SE=0.1918$, $p<0.001$). The effect of impact-based framing on HI was significantly weaker under low greenwashing risk than under high greenwashing risk. Figure 6 shows the interaction effect of greenwashing risk.

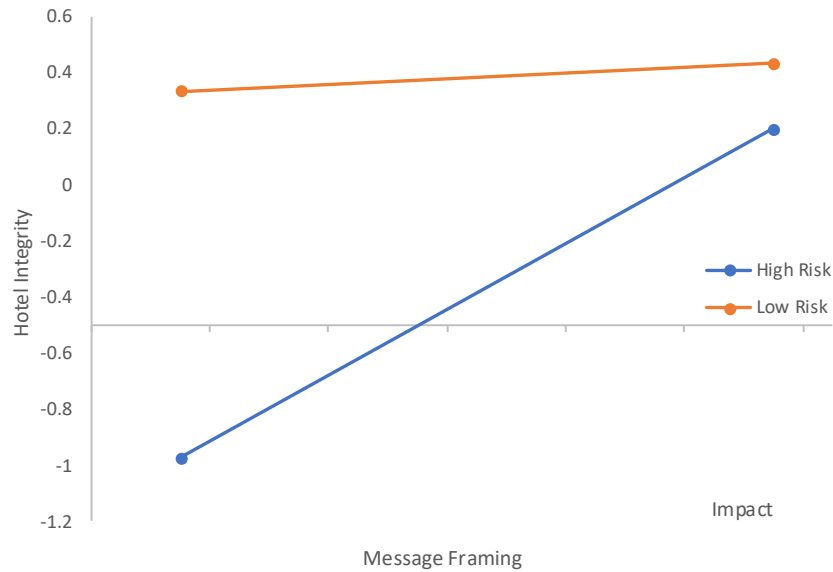


Figure 6: Interaction effect: Message framing x Greenwashing risk on HI

Source: Developed by authors.

The Hayes Process model 7 (with 5000 bootstrap samples) results also showed that HI significantly influenced WTS ($b = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$) and the indirect effect of message framing on WTS through HI was significant ($b = 0.2399$; 95% CI [0.1362, 0.3653]). The index of moderated mediation was negative and significant ($b = -0.4131$; 95% CI [-0.6161, -0.2358]). In the high-risk condition of greenwashing, message framing had a significant indirect effect on WTS, such that participants in the impact condition reported higher WTS through increased HI compared to those in the commitment condition ($b = 0.4506$, 95% CI [0.2897, 0.6291]). However, the indirect effect was not significant in the low-risk condition of greenwashing. These findings suggest that impact-based framing increased WTS through HI under high greenwashing risk. Figure 7 shows the moderating effect of greenwashing risk on the relation between message framing and WTS.

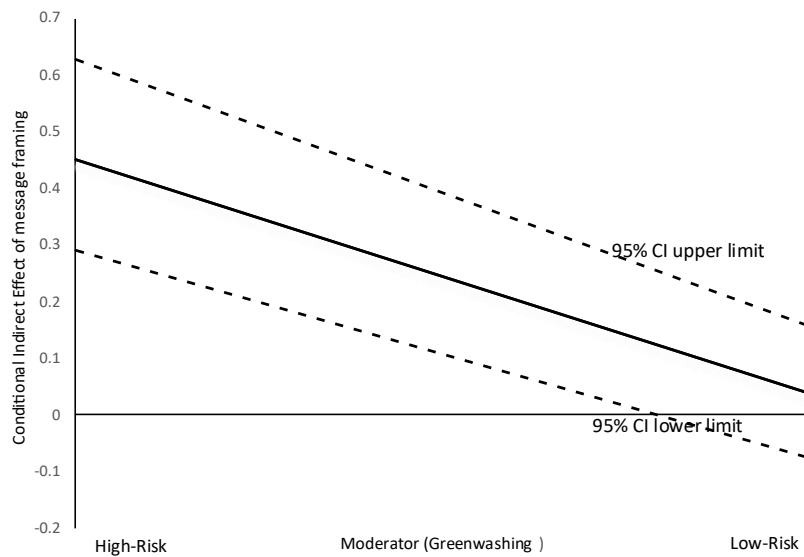


Figure 7: Conditional indirect effects of message framing on WTS

Source: Developed by authors.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The two studies showed that sustainability framing in luxury hospitality operated through different psychological routes depending on the communication context. Study 1 showed that impact-based framing increased WTS primarily through higher HV, particularly when the message was abstract. However, impact versus commitment framing did not influence HI in Study 1. Study 2 showed a different pattern. When greenwashing risk was high, impact framing strengthened HI, which in turn increased WTS. Thus, achieved outcomes supported both pleasure preservation and credibility, although the underlying mechanism depended on what consumers were evaluating.

The HV pathway helped explain why impact framing was particularly effective in luxury hospitality. Sustainability could signal moderation or sacrifice, which could conflict with the indulgence associated with luxury (Dekhili et al., 2019; Sahin et al., 2020). By communicating outcomes that had already been achieved, impact framing reassured consumers that environmental improvements had been implemented without necessarily reducing the quality of the experience. This was consistent with the mediation through HV and with prior research linking hedonic value to hotel choice and loyalty (Han et al., 2018; Peng and Chen, 2019a). The non-significant HI pathway in Study 1 suggested that message framing alone was not sufficient to influence integrity judgments.

Study 2 showed when such credibility considerations became more important. Under high greenwashing risk, impact-based claims became more diagnostic because they provided evidence of action already taken. Commitment-based claims remained future-oriented and were therefore less verifiable. This was consistent with attribution theory, which suggests that consumers examine motives more closely when the sincerity of a claim is uncertain (Parguel et al., 2011; Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013). It also helped explain why HI emerged as a significant mediator only when greenwashing risk was high.

The studies therefore pointed to two context-dependent routes. Impact framing protected anticipated pleasure when consumers were evaluating whether sustainability was compatible with luxury. It strengthened integrity when consumers were assessing whether sustainability claims were genuine. The same sustainability message could therefore operate differently depending on the information available and the credibility context.

7.1 Conclusions

The research shows that how luxury hotels communicate sustainability matters: ‘what they say and how they say’. Its effectiveness depends on both how sustainability is framed and the context in which consumers evaluate the claim. Impact-based communication was more effective when it addressed concerns about either the luxury experience or the credibility of the sustainability claim. The findings therefore suggest that the effectiveness of sustainability communication in luxury hospitality depends on what consumers are evaluating and the concerns that are most relevant in that context. These findings (leveraging Attribution theory and CLT) deepen theoretical insights into sustainability framing. As sustainability becomes central to luxury positioning, effective communication will be key to winning trust while continuing to signal luxury.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings extend sustainability communication research by showing that the effect of impact versus commitment framing depended on message construal. Impact framing was more effective under abstract messaging, with the effect operating through HV. This positions sustainability communication as the joint effect of narrative orientation (impact versus commitment) and linguistic construal (abstract versus concrete), rather than as independent message characteristics.

The study also identifies two psychological routes through which sustainability communication can influence WTS. HV reflects a pleasure-preservation route, whereas HI captures a credibility-assessment route. These routes became relevant under different conditions. HV explained the framing effect when consumers assessed whether sustainability was compatible with luxury, while HI became important when greenwashing risk increased scrutiny of claim sincerity. Prior research shows that green authenticity can strengthen consumer well-being and approach behaviour toward green hospitality brands (Yu et al., 2024). Together, these routes refine the sustainability–luxury paradox by showing when pleasure preservation and credibility assessment become consequential for WTS.

The findings also refine the application of CLT to sustainability communication. Concrete messages did not necessarily strengthen persuasion. Instead, concrete detail appeared to reduce consumers' reliance on framing by providing more information for evaluating the claim. Abstract messages left greater room for interpretation, making the distinction between achieved impact and future commitment more influential. The effect of framing therefore depended on both the psychological concern being evaluated and the amount of concrete information available.

7.3 Practical Implications

The findings offer three practical implications for luxury hotel managers. First, where hotels have measurable sustainability achievements, managers should give greater prominence to outcomes already achieved rather than rely primarily on future commitments. Evidence of action can make sustainability claims more meaningful to consumers. This is also consistent with research showing that perceived green authenticity strengthens positive consumer responses toward hospitality brands (Yu et al., 2024). Second, where consumers are likely to question the credibility of sustainability claims, impact claims should be supported with quantified outcomes, independent certifications, or other forms of verifiable evidence. Such information can reduce uncertainty about the claim. Eco-certification may also have commercial value, with recent evidence linking certification to greater revenue efficiency and the ability of many hotels to command a green premium (Arbelo et al., 2025). This becomes particularly relevant when consumers are sceptical about firms' sustainability motives (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013). Third, evidence of sustainability should be accompanied by signals that the luxury experience has not been compromised. Hotels need to communicate what they have achieved while continuing to convey comfort, service quality, and indulgence.

Six Senses, for example, reports quantified sustainability outcomes across its properties (Six Senses, 2025). The managerial task is therefore to make sustainability claims more verifiable without weakening the signals associated with luxury.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. Both studies used controlled scenarios and measured WTS rather than actual booking behaviour, which is relevant given the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable hospitality (Khan et al., 2024). Future research could test these effects using real hotel brands, booking-platform settings, and verified luxury-hotel guests. Replication across more diverse demographic and cultural samples would also help establish the generalisability of the findings.

The studies also captured responses at a single point in time, although perceptions of hotel integrity may develop through repeated communication, prior brand experience, and observed sustainability performance. Longitudinal research could examine whether repeated evidence of achieved impact strengthens credibility over time. In Study 2, greenwashing risk was manipulated through guest reviews, which may have influenced broader hotel evaluations. Future studies could isolate this effect using third-party verification or certification. Finally, this research focused on sustainability communication rather than the organisational capabilities that support credible claims. Future work could examine whether alignment between communicated impact and actual sustainability performance, including employee practices (Arhin and Martin, 2026), further strengthens hotel integrity.

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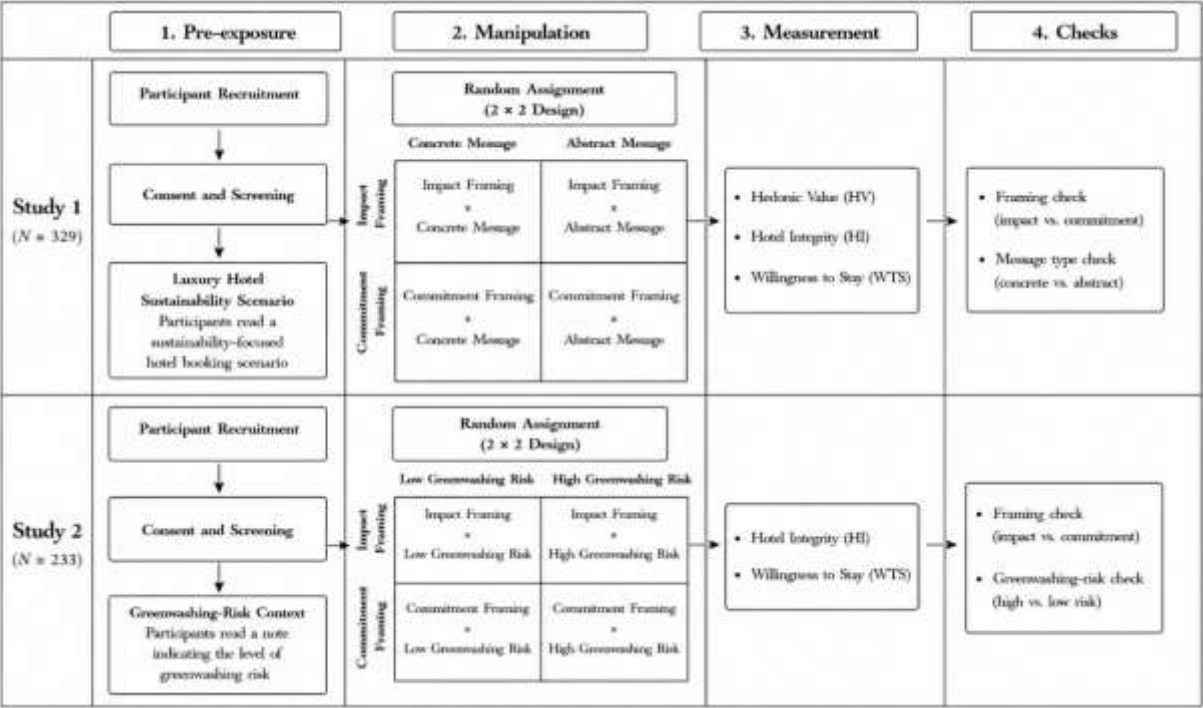
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Appendix A

Research Procedure



Source: Developed by authors.