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Systematic Review

A Systematic and Thematic Review of Greenwashing in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

In recent years, greenwashing has been seen as a critical issue in the tourism and hospitality sector. This study is structured to systematically examine the literature on greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality industry and to establish a study identity. The study is based on the evaluation of 42 qualified articles from the WoS and Scopus databases using the SLR method, in harmony with the PRISMA protocol. As a result of the analyses, the research was classified into seven thematic headings: consumer perception and behavioral responses; employee behavior and internal effects; corporate communication and marketing strategies; strategic corporate social responsibility; critical approaches; greenhushing; and conceptual framework development. According to these findings, extensive study has been focused on consumer perceptions and behavioral responses, yet lacks information on environmentally friendly practices, employee behavior, and organizational structures. This study is important because it connects these different views, offering a practical model that works for both researchers and professionals. While the agricultural and retail dimensions have been well-documented, this study distinguishes itself by situating the analysis within the unique framework of tourism and hospitality.

Keywords: greenwashing; sustainability; tourism; hospitality

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality sector is considered a priority area for implementing sustainability principles due to its direct interaction with the environment [1]. The global acceptance of the Sustainable Development Goals [2] and consumers' increasing ecological awareness have led businesses in this sector to develop environmentally sensitive discourses. The food and beverage sector is an essential aspect of tourism and accommodation. It has the capacity to create a substantial impact on the UNSDGs (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals). Today, approximately 79% of customers in the hospitality sector prefer environmentally friendly accommodations during their travels [3]. However, it is believed that many businesses use sustainability rhetoric as a marketing tool rather than as a fundamental operational transformation [4]. The adoption of environmental certifications and green labels for a competitive advantage leads to the implementation of sustainability on a visible but uncontrolled basis. For this reason, managers, directors, or chefs who are in decision-making positions in tourism and hospitality businesses also create obstacles to the promotion of sustainability practices due to greenwashing concerns and personal values [5].

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At this point, the concept of "greenwashing" stands out in the literature. Greenwashing is defined as businesses' efforts to present themselves as more sustainable than they are by providing exaggerated, incomplete, or misleading information about their environmental performance [6,7]. For example, eco-friendly hotels in the tourism sector, also referred to as green hotels, deploy robust environmental management systems encompassing recycling, utility conservation, and a commitment to locally/organically sourced provisions [8,9]. However, due to the expense of implementing genuine green initiatives, some establishments engage in greenwashing, which involves falsely representing their commitment to sustainability [10,11]. According to UNITE HERE (North America's largest hospitality union), 75% of local employees reported that most hotels do not engage in genuine green initiatives to conserve environmental resources as they claim, and that these 'green' assertions constitute deceptive maneuvers aimed at minimizing substantial cleaning expenses [12].

In the tourism industry, these tactics make environmental efforts look fake. This can lead customers to feel cynical and, eventually, they may stop caring or booking [13,14]. Indeed, perceptions of greenwashing reduce the preference for green hotels [15], undermine trust in brands [16], and negatively affect voluntary environmental engagement behaviors [17]. On the other hand, greenwashing is not limited to the consumer perspective; it can also lead to job alienation and anti-sustainability attitudes among employees [18,19]. The spread of such skepticism among tourism and hospitality employees can pose a risk, including financial losses and reputational damage to businesses [20]. Consumers exposed to greenwashing question the credibility of the services in question [13] and exhibit decreased behaviors, such as reduced repurchase intention and negative word-of-mouth [14,15].

For this reason, the greenwashing phenomenon has attracted growing attention, and significant contributions have been made to conceptual mapping. Most studies on greenwashing in hotels provide a general sense of the components that affect customer perceptions of greenwashing [21], customer perspectives on greenwashing [11], and greenwashing itself [22]. On the other hand, there is limited research on this subject that has explored the conceptual understanding of greenwashing in depth and strategies to mitigate its negative consequences [13].

In particular, studies using bibliometric analysis methods have identified the main themes and stages of development [23–25]. However, most studies in the existing literature [24,25] have focused on certain fields, such as agriculture, energy, and retail, while applications in the tourism and hospitality context have remained secondary.

Within this framework, the present study seeks to clarify the concepts by narrowly focusing on the tourism and hospitality sector and to provide a guiding framework for future research by analyzing the multidimensional nature of the greenwashing phenomenon. To that end, this study systematically examines 42 qualified academic articles from the WoS (Web of Science) and Scopus databases, in line with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol [26], and classifies them into thematic categories using content analysis.

In this context, the introduction to the present study first presents the research problem, highlighting its originality in a general-to-specific manner. Then, under the heading "Materials and Methods," the methodology is presented in detail. Under the heading "Results," the main themes emerging from the analysis are examined. Next, under the "Discussion" heading, the findings are evaluated. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations section presents theoretical and practical outcomes and develops suggestions for future research.

2. Literature Review

In the tourism and hospitality sector, environmental awareness has become a significant component of consumer behavior and corporate culture. A 2007 study by the Travel Industry Association found that 78% of Americans identify as environmentally conscious [27]. This increasing demand for environmentally friendly travel has also raised concerns that it is being used as a marketing strategy to increase revenue through greenwashing practices [28]. In this context, the issue of greenwashing has become increasingly important in the tourism and hospitality sectors. In the tourism and hospitality literature, the phenomenon of greenwashing is most often addressed through the inconsistency between businesses' actual environmental performance and their narratives about that performance [29–32]. Empirical studies focusing on the tourism and hospitality sectors primarily examine how greenwashing is perceived by consumers and the effects of this perception on behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention, trust, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth communication [14,16,17]. These studies largely position the phenomenon of greenwashing in tourism and hospitality as a consumer-centric perception and response problem.

When systematic review studies focusing on the tourism and hospitality sector are examined, it is evident that studies directly addressing the concept of greenwashing are limited; research primarily focuses on its internal organizational implications or on scientific mapping. For example, Suleman et al. (2025), in their systematic review of green human resource management practices in the tourism and hospitality sector, draw attention to the inconsistencies between sustainability discourses and organizational practices [33]. Garcia and Vargas (2024), on the other hand, examine the greenwashing literature in the tourism and hospitality sector through bibliometric analysis, offering a perspective that reveals the structural and relational dynamics of the subject, including authors, keywords, journals, and years [34]. However, these studies have not focused on an in-depth discussion of greenwashing in tourism and hospitality and on identifying research gaps. This situation indicates that the issue of greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality sector has not been evaluated holistically.

Methodologically, a systematic literature review is considered a fundamental tool for providing conceptual clarity on scattered topics such as greenwashing [35,36]. The methodological reliability of such studies relies on the use of comprehensive and verifiable academic databases [37]. WoS and Scopus were chosen for their reliability because they are databases that scan journals with high impact factors worldwide [38,39]. Unlike other studies in the literature, this study aims to make a unique contribution by focusing only on studies published in the relevant databases (WoS and Scopus), and by revealing thematic structures and neglected areas through a systematic approach.

The study aims not only to make a conceptual contribution to the literature but also to provide guidance for regulatory bodies and businesses in developing strategies to prevent greenwashing. Within the scope of this objective, it addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the research profile of tourism and hospitality studies on greenwashing?

RQ2. Which thematic dimensions of greenwashing are addressed in the tourism and hospitality literature?

RQ3. What are the negative consequences of greenwashing and mitigation strategies in the tourism and hospitality literature?

3. Materials and Methods

The structure of this research is as follows: a systematic review of greenwashing in tourism and hospitality. For this purpose, a systematic literature review was adopted as the core research methodology. An SLR can not only chart the existing body of knowl-

edge systematically but also provides a critical synthesis, enabling conceptual clarity and identifying research gaps [35,40].

This approach maintains very high levels of objectivity, which also help the research be free from the researcher's bias, and thus the research becomes a verifiable basis for subsequent scholarly inquiry [36]. Moreover, this literature review used the PRISMA framework [26] to make the analysis clear and reproducible. The review was performed prior to registration but all methodological documents were later made available to the Open Science Framework (OSF) for transparency and reproducibility. This study was registered at DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/5QC8W to ensure a thorough and accountable search process. The authors retrieved bibliographic materials through their use of WoS and Scopus, which were the two databases initially proposed for this study, chosen on the basis of the article's scope and target audience. The combination of those two databases enabled an accurate implementation of the search strategy, making use of their sophisticated filtering capabilities, which was in accordance with systematic review guidelines [38]. In fact, these two databases are considered the preferred sources for systematic reviews since they are composed of leading scientific works conducted in a multitude of disciplines and also provide advanced search facilities [37,41].

3.1. Selection Process and Identification of Keywords

This study employed criterion sampling, which is a type of purposive selection, to keep conceptual and sectoral consistencies throughout the dataset. This intentional method made it possible to carry out a clear thematic synthesis of the literature. It was, therefore, ensured that the chosen articles were not only relevant but also focused sufficiently on the main objectives of the research. Structuring criterion sampling in this way reinforces the methodological rigor and verifiability often emphasized in systematic literature reviews [40]. In this study, "keywords" determine the criterion sample. The WoS dataset was created by entering the keyword "greenwashing," and the authors selected the topic (title, abstract, keywords, and author keywords). All these were chosen again by selecting 'add row,' and this time, 'tourism' or 'hospitality' keywords were searched. In the selection of keywords, we considered terms belonging to broader categories or derivative concepts such as "green sheen", "green brand", "green brand washing", "green scamming", 'blue-washing', "green lighting", "green rinsing", and "bluewashing", which were excluded; although conceptually related to greenwashing, these are often discussed in the context of general sectors or product-based marketing and do not provide sufficient contextual depth in the tourism/hospitality-specific context.

Indeed, most of these concepts are shaped around sustainability communication and are generally limited to perception management at the product level [22,42,43]. Therefore, to maintain this study's contextual clarity, the inclusion criteria were limited to studies focusing solely on the relationship between "greenwashing" and tourism and hospitality. To create the dataset in the Scopus database, the keywords "greenwashing and tourism" and "greenwashing and hospitality" were searched, and the article title, abstract, and keywords were selected. The limitations of this research are that full-text articles were searched using keywords in the WoS and Scopus databases through to June 2025. Figure 1 shows in detail how a data source is accessed in the PRISMA flowchart outline.

These words, determined as criteria, were searched in all text fields, and 42 qualified articles suitable for content analysis were selected by ensuring compliance with the thematic scope. In the data analysis process, a thematic analysis approach based on the qualitative content analysis method proposed by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was adopted [44]. Each article was read independently by two researchers and analyzed first with open and then axial coding. The studies were analyzed descriptively with respect to the sample

structure, data collection techniques, methodological approach, theoretical framework, country/regional context, and variables used. In addition, seven main thematic categories were created by considering the similarities and differences between the codes, and all articles were classified under these axial coding themes. These are Consumer Perception and Behavioral Reactions, Employee Behavior and Internal Effects, Corporate Communication and Marketing Strategies, Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Organizational Structures, Critical Approaches, Greenwashing, and Developing a Conceptual Framework through Literature Reviews. The objective of this approach is to deliver not only a systematic synthesis of the existing literature but also a theoretical and practical framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of the greenwashing phenomenon.

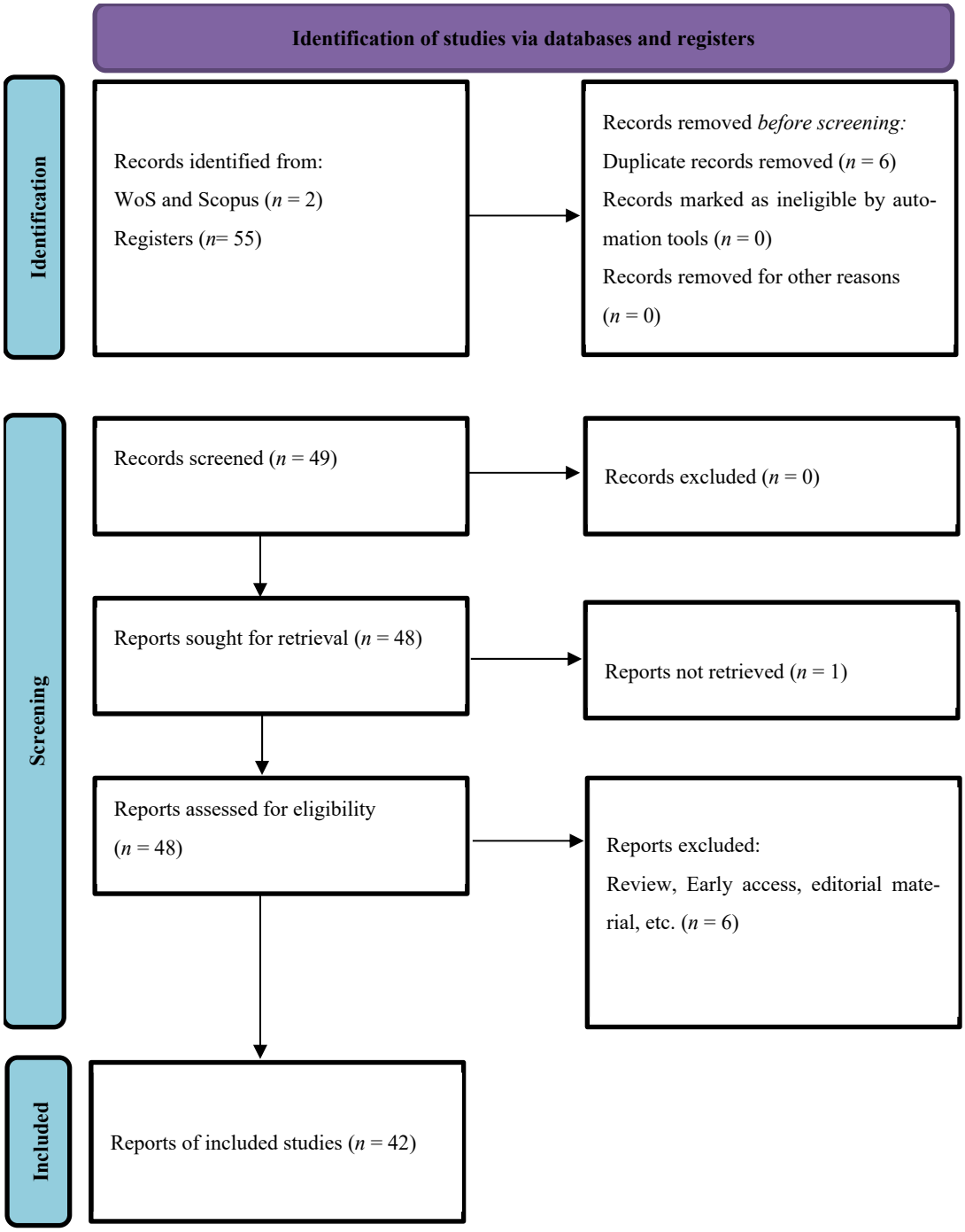

Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart. Source: Page, M.J., et al., *BMJ* [26].

3.2. Research Profiling

Within the scope of the systematic literature analysis, it became evident that indicated on Figure 2, Xavier Font is among the authors who have contributed most to the subject of greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality literature. Font has made a significant addition to the greenwashing literature, appearing in 6 of 42 articles (14.29%). He was followed by Ansh Gupta, Victoria Louise Smith, Imran Rahman, and Sergej Gričar. Each of these authors has two articles (4.76%). Different authors produced the remaining 28 articles (66.67%). This distribution shows that, despite recurrent contributions from a few core researchers, the majority of the work is produced by a large, dispersed body of authors. Font, in particular, appears well represented in the literature across systematic reviews, bibliometric analyses, and applied studies (Figure 2).

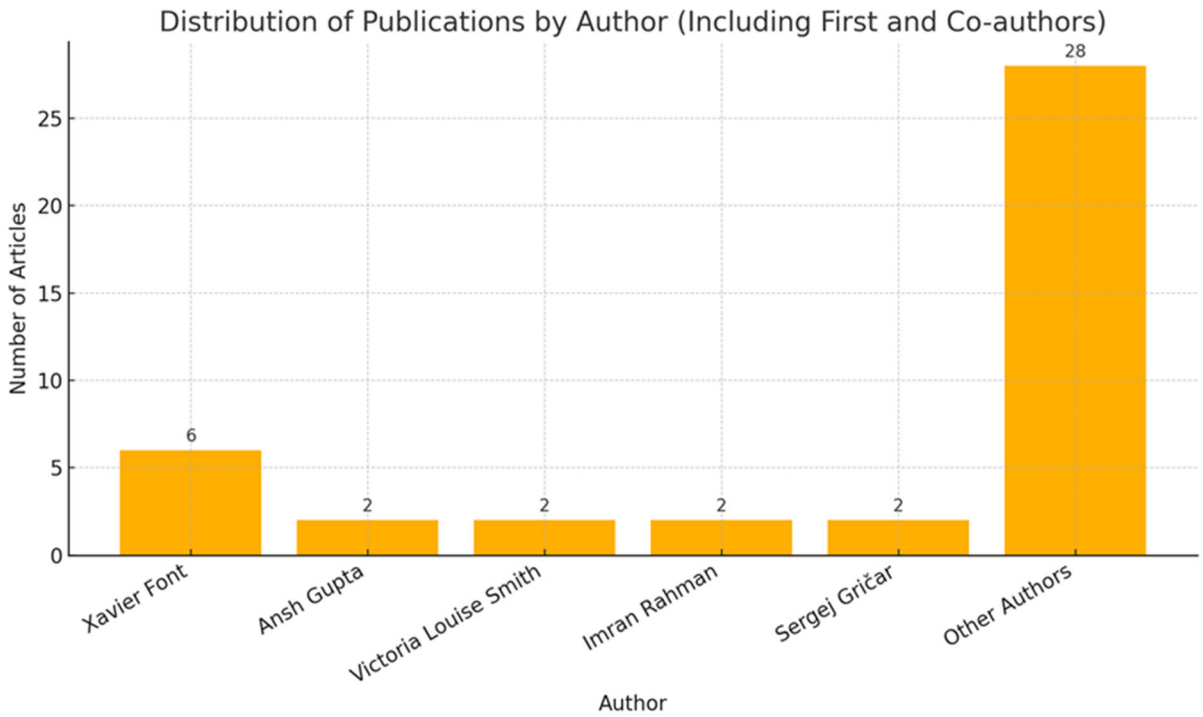

Figure 2. Distribution of studies by authors.

Based on the results of this study, academic production on greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality context is predominantly clustered within the discipline of "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, and Tourism" (n = 26). The second- and third-ranked fields are Environmental Studies (n = 10) and Management (n = 8), which indicate that greenwashing is studied in both environmental policy and corporate governance. Other fields include Green Sustainable Science and Technology (n = 8), Environmental Sciences (n = 6), Business (n = 6), Ethics (n = 2), Anthropology (n = 1), Architecture (n = 1), and Agricultural Economics and Policy (n = 1).

In the analysis, by country of study, it can be seen that global or multi-country studies (n = 20) are prominent in the literature. This density indicates that researchers tend to address the greenwashing phenomenon from a broader perspective, focusing on cross-cultural comparisons and general trends. Studies conducted in multinational contexts are an important factor in determining how greenwashing is handled across different geographies, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector. In addition to multinational studies, the United States (n = 3) and India (n = 3) are among the countries with the most studies. The large combined populations of these countries [45] enable greater data collection. By taking a country-by-country approach, the comprehensive research on greenwashing

reveals the practices and perceptions globally, covering developed and emerging economies. This finding implies that the greenwashing phenomenon in tourism and hospitality is increasingly being studied from both interdisciplinary and international perspectives.

Within the 42 scholarly publications examined, a clear dominance of quantitative research is observable, thereby indicating a methodological leaning towards obtaining empirical data for investigating greenwashing in the hospitality sector. Eighteen of the articles utilized quantitative research methods, such as survey, SEM (structural equation modeling), regression, and panel data analysis. On the other hand, 13 papers used qualitative methodologies (thematic analysis, case study, discourse analysis), and 7 were based on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach. In addition, four articles used secondary data analysis with methods involving SLRs (systematic literature reviews) or bibliometric analyses. This pattern reflects a strong inclination toward model-based studies using measurable variables and statistical analyses in this research domain. There has been shows on Figure 3 an increased focus on greenwashing in scholarly research, as shown by a steady rise over the years. According to the data, there was a record number of publications in 2025 after a rapid increase in the number of research papers post-2024 (Figure 3).

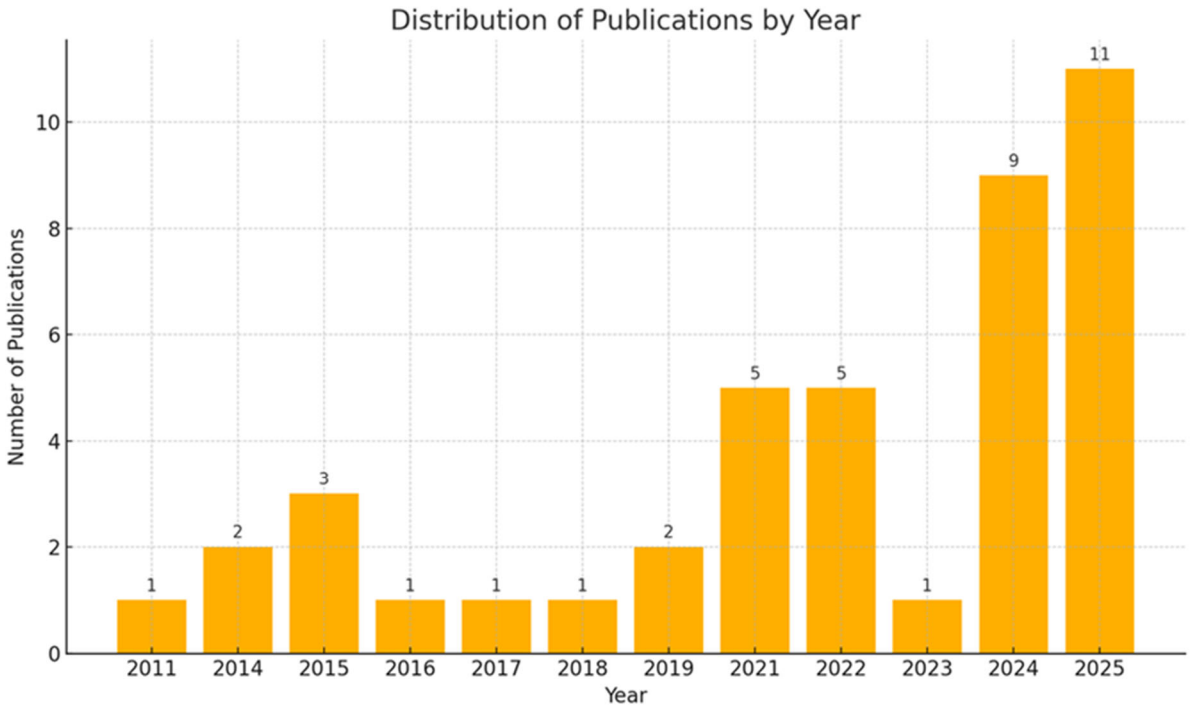

Figure 3. Distribution of studies by year.

The trend of more and more studies on greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality literature is attributed to the surge in sustainability-related publications. The heightened level of environmental damage worldwide could be one reason for this trend, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals putting that on the global agenda [2]. Svanström et al. (2008) emphasize that sustainability, encompassing its economic, social, and environmental dimensions, should be evaluated holistically in colleges and universities [46]. Furthermore, the rise of sustainability in the literature has led to the emergence of comprehensive studies across a broad range of fields, including environmental sciences, management, education, tourism, and architecture [47,48]. In this context, the findings are striking, revealing an increasing academic interest in greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality fields (Figure 4).

The distribution of publications by journal shows on Figure 4 that studies on greenwashing are concentrated in specific journals. Journals such as *Tourism Management*, *Sustainability*, the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, and the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* have become leading journals in the tourism and hospitality literature for examining greenwashing. Furthermore, owing to the topic's multidisciplinary scope, it is published in journals from diverse disciplines. This result demonstrates that greenwashing has become a topic of mutual interest not only in marketing or environmental management but also in ethics, governance, and corporate communications.

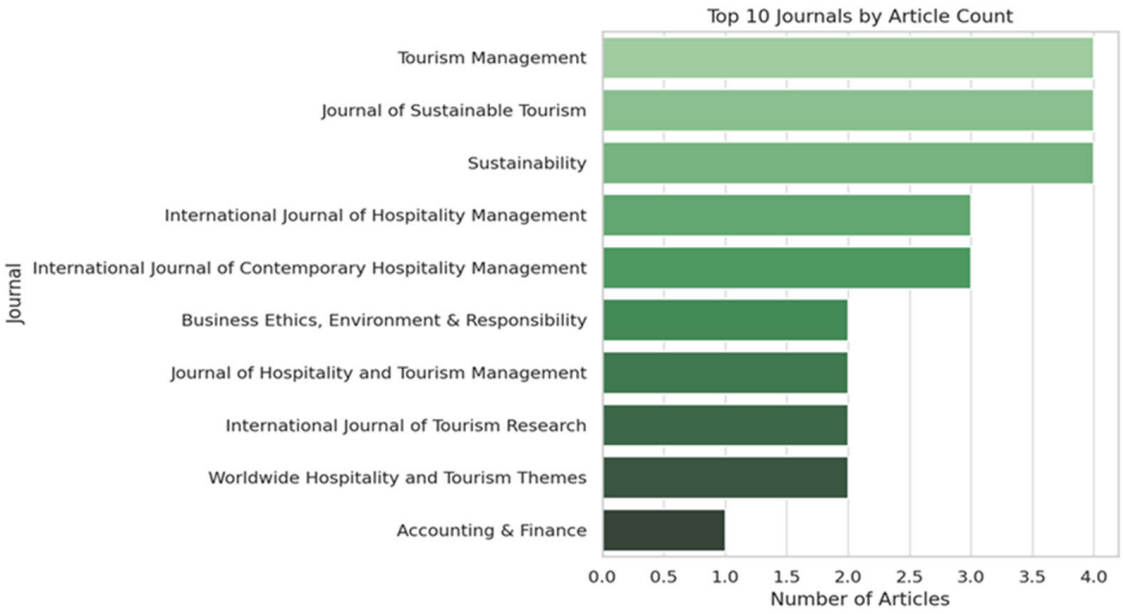

Figure 4. Distribution of studies by journals.

The thematic analysis conducted as part of this research classifies the greenwashing literature under seven main headings. Each thematic focus represents in Table 1 different dimensions of greenwashing and structurally classifies studies in the field (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of articles on greenwashing in tourism and hospitality.

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
1	Examining whether publicly traded companies in the tourism and hospitality sector engage in greenwashing and the impact of this behavior on sales	Tourism Management	253 tourism and accommodation companies	Global/multiple countries	Panel data analysis, instrumental variable approach	Environmental actions, environmental discourse, and sales performance	In general, it was found that greenwashing was not practiced, but sales declined in companies that greenwashed.	Papagiannakis et al., 2024 [49]
2	Examining the impact of greenwashing on tourists' green trust and green word-of-mouth communication	Business Ethics, Environment & Responsibility	289 hotel guests	Vietnam	Structural equation modeling (SEM)	Greenwashing, green trust, green WOM, commitment to nature	Greenwashing erodes consumers' green trust and undermines word-of-mouth communication (WOM). However, individuals' level of attachment to nature significantly influences these relationships.	Pham et al., 2024 [14]
3	Investigating the relationship between CSR performance, reporting, and external auditing in the tourism and hospitality sector	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Tourism and accommodation companies in various countries	Global/multiple countries	Panel data analysis	CSR performance, reporting, GRI adoption, and external audit	High corporate social responsibility (CSR) performance increases the adoption rate of Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards and external audit practices. No greenwashing tendencies were observed in the scope of the research.	Koseoglu et al., 2021 [21]
4	Investigating how the relationship between workforce diversity and strategic CSR can prevent greenwashing	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	202 coastal accommodation facilities	Spain	PLS-SEM	Workforce diversity, strategic CSR, performance	Workforce diversity increases CSR, while strategic CSR contributes to performance and reduces greenwashing.	Poveda-Pareja et al., 2024 [50]
5	Investigating the impact of greenwashing on guest trust and hotel choice, and to determine the role of green transparency and authenticity	Sustainability	309 hotel guests	Egypt	SEM (Smart PLS 4)	Greenwashing, green trust, hotel preference, transparency, authenticity	Greenwashing reduces green trust and intentions to purchase green products. Transparency and authenticity mitigate these adverse effects.	Alyahia et al., 2024 [13]
6	Defining sustainable tourism business networks and examine the role of cognitive/geographical proximity in the formation of these networks	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Tourism companies in the Veneto region of Italy	Italy	Social network analysis, web data mining, and machine learning	Cognitive proximity, geographical proximity, and sustainability statement	According to sustainability principles, there are cognitive and geographical connections among tourism companies, and the greenwashing effect is low.	Blasi et al., 2024 [51]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
7	Systematically reviewing the literature on greenwashing and propose a comprehensive framework	Accounting & Finance	180 academic articles	Global/multiple countries	Systematic literature review	Definition of greenwashing, measurement methods, motivations, and results	In this study, definitions, driving factors, and consequences related to greenwashing are brought together to form a comprehensive theoretical framework.	Huang et al., 2025 [24]
8	Examining the factors that influence tourists' readiness for net-zero transformation	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	430 tourists, Türkiye	Türkiye	Survey, structural equation modeling	Environmental information, ostentatious philanthropy, and perception of greenwashing	Environmental information and ostentatious philanthropy increase individuals' readiness levels, whereas perceptions of greenwashing weaken this effect.	Aktan et al., 2024 [52]
9	Investigating how employees perceive greenwashing and its impact on non-environmental behavior in the workplace	Cogent Business & Management	419 employees (tourism sector)	Global/multiple countries	Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)	Greenwashing perception, green craftsmanship, and alienation from work	Greenwashing leads to employee alienation and non-green behavior.	Elshaer et al., 2025 [19]
10	Analyzing sustainability practices and the impact of greenwashing in hotel businesses in the Galápagos Islands	Revista Turismo y Sociedad	Hotels in Puerto Ayora	Ecuador	Qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews	Perception of sustainability, management practices, and green marketing	Although some hotels practice sustainability, many use it only as a marketing tool (greenwashing).	Torres & Muñoz, 2022 [53]
11	Examining the impact of greenwashing on green product experience and customer behavior	Sustainability	440 hotel guests	Pakistan	Survey, CFA, SEM	Greenwashing, green product experience, WOM, repurchase intention	Greenwashing negatively affects the green product experience, harming repeat purchases and word-of-mouth marketing.	Zhang et al., 2022 [15]
12	Bibliometric analysis of the literature on greenwashing	British Food Journal	351 articles	Global/multiple countries	Bibliometric analysis	Number of publications, subject distribution, and influential publications	The literature on greenwashing has grown rapidly since 2016 and is particularly relevant to the food sector.	Montero-Navarro et al., 2021 [23]
13	Examining the impact of sustainability information overload on the perception of greenwashing	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	808 British and German hotel guests	Global/multiple countries	Online survey, S-O-R model	Information overload, greenwashing perception, perceived value, eWOM, reservation intention	Information overload increases the perception of greenwashing, thereby reducing perceived value and behavioral intent.	Font et al., 2025 [54]
14	Examining the impact of green destination characteristics on trust and brand value	Event Management	739 Indian tourists	India	Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)	Green service attributes, green Trust, brand equity, greenwashing	Greenwashing undermines green trust and reduces brand value.	Malik et al., 2022 [55]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
15	Testing the effect of self-harmony perception on greenwashing perception	Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing	Modeling with the EasyJet example	Global/multiple countries	Moderated mediation model	Self-congruence, authenticity, perceived greenwashing	High ideal self-congruence reduces the perception of greenwashing by increasing perceived sincerity.	Olk, 2021 [56]
16	Examining responsibility signaling in volunteer tourism marketing	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	8 volunteer tour operators	Global/multiple countries	Content analysis, comparative evaluation	Responsibility indicators, price, and legal status	It has been stated that companies do not use their responsibility as a marketing tool, and greenwashing is widespread.	Smith & Font, 2014 [57]
17	Analyzing the intellectual structure of greenwashing research	Universidad & Empresa	282 scientific publications	Global/multiple countries	Bibliometric analysis and narrative review	Authors, sources, thematic clusters	As a result of the review, three thematic focuses that stand out in the literature have been identified: sustainability, social responsibility, and green marketing.	Vieira & Echeverri Rubio, 2024 [25]
18	Investigating the co-development of green place branding and policy tourism	Urban Studies	Case study on Växjö, Sweden	Sweden	Case study	Brand statements, political developments	The green image is used both as a strategic element in entrepreneurial activities and as a representation of corporate values.	Andersson & James (2018). [58]
19	Examining the impact of greenwashing on employee behavior	Business Ethics, Environment & Responsibility	311 employees (tourism and hospitality sector)	Global/multiple countries	Survey, structural equation model	Relative CSR perception, anti-sustainability behaviors, and trust	Greenwashing reduces trust and increases negative behavior.	Ahmad, Jamali & Khattak, 2025 [18]
20	Defining the concept of greenhushing and analyzing its causes	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	31 small tourism businesses (United Kingdom)	England	Audit documents, web analytics, and interviews	Communication style, sustainability actions	Businesses deliberately limit communication about their green practices due to ethical dilemmas.	Font, Elgammal & Lamond, 2017 [6]
21	Examining the role of cognitive linguistics in sustainability communication and the impact of language structure on consumer behavior	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	Hotel guests (on-site and online participants)	USA	Experimental study, two-stage analysis	Perceived environmental performance, greenwashing, environmental concern, reservation intention	Research findings indicate that restrictive language structures elicit more positive consumer responses and increase reservation intent.	Bernard, Rahman& Douglas, (2024) [59]
22	Examining the contribution of ecofeminism and food activism to ethical and sustainable practices in transformative tourism	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	Online interviews with women activists, data from the eco-feminist travel initiative	Global/multiple countries	Qualitative method, grounded theory	Ecofeminism, food activism, ethical consumption, and social justice	Ecofeminism and food activism play an effective role in social transformation; however, prejudices and financial constraints make it challenging to adopt these approaches.	Orea-Giner (2025). [60]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
23	Analyzing the dual environmental impact (double pollution) and green silence of bicycle tourism	Sustainability	2011–2021 Slovenya verileri	Slovenia	Factor analysis, VAR modeling	Dual pollution, green silence, CO2 emissions, and demand for bicycle tourism	It has been determined that bicycle tourism reduces environmental benefits; this situation has been evaluated within the framework of the "green silence" phenomenon.	Gričar, Bojnec & Šugar, 2025 [61]
24	Examining the alignment between green hotels' marketing messages and customer perceptions	International Journal of Tourism Research	Hotel websites and user reviews	Global/multiple countries	Content and sentiment analysis	Projection perception, perceived green image, communication strategy	Research findings reveal inconsistencies between the messages presented in green marketing communications and actual practices; this contradiction points to both green silence and greenwashing tendencies.	Seyfi et al., 2025 [62]
25	Analyzing the environmental impacts and greenwashing rhetoric of sporting events such as Formula 1 and FIFA	Environmental Communication	Secondary data analysis	Global/multiple countries	Critical discourse analysis	Greenwashing, social license, sports, and the environment	Organizations such as F1 and FIFA, despite contributing to environmental destruction, seek to gain social legitimacy through sponsorship.	Miller (2016). [63]
26	Examining the effects of ethical tourism on development and the replacement of individual/social responsibility discourses with political analysis	Tourism Recreation Research	Kuramsal inceleme, örneklem yok	Global/multiple countries	Theoretical study, no sample	Ethical behavior, responsibility, awareness, and discourse on development	The discourse of ethical tourism emphasizes individual consumer virtue while ignoring structural inequalities and political responsibilities, thereby overshadowing critical debates on development.	Butcher (2015) [64]
27	Understanding local people's perceptions of ethical performance in ecotourism	Human Organization	Local people around an eco-lodge in Nicaragua	Nicaragua	Ethnographic observation and interviews	Ethical performance perception, sustainability, environmental, and social context	The local community has raised various ethical concerns about the project; these perceptions increase the risk of it being perceived as greenwashing.	Hunt & Stronza (2011) [65]
28	Measuring the impact of green experiential values (altruistic and egoistic orientations) on the customer–hotel relationship	International Journal of Hospitality Management	A two-stage survey was conducted in 14 green hotels in India (208 and 315 people)	India	Mixed methods, structured questionnaire, and structural equation modeling	GEV, green trust (GRT), green brand equity (GBE), repurchase intention (RPI)	It has been observed that self-serving values such as utility and pleasure increase green trust among consumers; this increase contributes to brand value and strengthens the intention to repurchase.	Gupta et al., 2019 [66]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
29	Developing a framework to enhance the reliability of green hotel services	Tourism Management	500+ surveys from green hotel customers in India	India	Sequential mixed-method, quantitative analysis (SEM)	Green service encounter (GSE), trust, and intention to revisit	Aesthetic design, environmental ambiance, and social interaction elements support trust formation; the trust that is formed strengthens the consumer's tendency to make repeat purchases.	Gupta et al., 2019 [67]
30	Analyzing the effects of greenwashing on consumer reactions	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Employees of a university in the US (638 people, experimental design)	USA	Short experimental study (control vs. disclosure of intent)	Greenwashing, skepticism, intention to participate, intention to revisit, and environmental awareness	When hotels are perceived to have ulterior motives in their environmental initiatives, consumer skepticism increases, negatively affecting participation and the intention to revisit.	Rahman et al., 2015 [17]
31	Examining why restaurants in New Zealand do not promote their sustainability practices online	International Journal of Tourism Research	164 award-winning or nominated restaurants	New Zealand	Content analysis and interviews	Sustainability practices, promotional incentives	Restaurants often shy away from promoting their sustainability practices on online platforms. At the same time, seasonal and local products are frequently highlighted, while ethical animal welfare practices and fair trade are rarely mentioned.	Koupaei et al., 2025 [5]
32	Examining the potential of bicycle use in the Istria region for sustainable transportation and tourism	Sustainability	Secondary data from 2010 to 2023, interviews	Global/multiple countries	Econometric analysis, VAR model, interviews	Bicycle imports, tourist numbers, GDP, greenhouse gas emissions	In Slovenia, bicycle imports have had positive economic effects, increasing tourist numbers and gross domestic product (GDP), but they have also led to higher greenhouse gas emissions. In Croatia, on the other hand, although the direct economic contribution of bicycle tourism is limited, positive environmental effects have been observed.	Šobot et al., 2024 [68]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
33	Examining the impact of China's green credit policies on businesses' access to bank loans	Environmental Science and Pollution Research	1086 Chinese manufacturing companies between 2012 and 2017	China	Differences-in-differences (DID) model	Environmental transparency, green innovation, and access to credit	While companies' environmental transparency has a limited impact on credit access, genuine green innovation activities are viewed positively by financial institutions and facilitate credit access. On the other hand, greenwashing practices undermine financial credibility and lead to adverse outcomes.	Jia & Li, 2023 [69]
34	Analyzing the impact of environmental certifications on the market value of publicly traded hotels in the US	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Large hotel chains between 1996 and 2020	ABD	Event study	Environmental awards, market value	Hotels receiving environmental awards for the first time have seen their market value increase. However, when awards are received consecutively, the effect follows a U-shaped pattern. While the first awards create a positive perception, the effect diminishes over time and then increases again after a certain point. In general, environmental awards positively affect hotel brand perception.	Bernard & Nicolau (2022). [4]
35	Testing whether the quality of responsibility communication in volunteer tourism can be improved	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	Web pages of 8 volunteer tourism organizations	Global/multiple countries	Content analysis, longitudinal comparison	Responsibility criteria, communication strategies	Although general improvements in communication were observed after feedback, consistency across all criteria was not achieved. While some organizations were open to improvement in communication, others resisted change.	Smith & Font (2015) [70]
36	Investigating the gap between CSR statements and actual practices	Tourism Management	10 international hotel chains	Global/multiple countries	Content analysis, field visit	CSR policies, performance, and transparency	Policies are comprehensive in large chains, but implementation is lacking; small chains are more consistent.	Font et al., 2012 [71]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
37	Analyzing the sustainability practices of French event companies	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	6 senior managers + 1 consultant	France	Semi-structured interviews, content analysis	Motivation, obstacles, strategies	Although participants have a high level of personal motivation, weak consumer demand and poor material quality limit the adoption of sustainable practices; in addition, greenwashing is emerging as a significant problem.	Dornier (2021) [72]
38	Examining the accuracy of airlines' carbon offset communications	Tourism Management	37 airlines	Global/multiple countries	Content analysis, lexical analysis, coding matrix	Message type and nature, reliability, and misleading nature	According to research findings, 56% of sustainability-focused communications provide reliable information, while 44% contain deceptive or incomplete statements. This situation highlights the prevalence of conflicting messages in communications and the risk of greenwashing.	Guix, Olle & Font (2022) [73]
39	Examining whether Tukad Bindu is an example of ecotourism or greenwashing	International Journal of Tourism Cities	Meetings with local stakeholders	Indonesia (Bali)	Qualitative analysis, evaluation based on Honey's seven criteria	Nature-oriented, local benefit, environmental awareness	Tukad Bindu has strong potential for ecotourism, but it also has some shortcomings that need to be addressed in line with sustainability principles.	Antari & Connell (2021) [74]
40	Analyzing the claims of hotels and resorts regarding carbon offsetting and carbon neutrality to evaluate the functioning of this market	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Hotels and resorts claiming carbon neutrality	Global/multiple countries	Internet search + evaluation using a Likert scale	Project quality, carbon calculations, supplier information, and carbon offset price	Many hotels' claims to be carbon neutral are primarily for marketing purposes; their legitimacy varies and carries the risk of greenwashing.	Dhanda (2014) [75]
41	Systematically analyzing green HR practices in the accommodation and tourism sector and identify theoretical and empirical gaps	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	77 empirical studies (between 2013 and 2023)	Global/multiple countries	Systematic literature review (SLR) using the PRISMA protocol	Premises, decisions, conclusions (ADO) + theory, context, method (TCM)	While green HR practices contribute to sustainability goals, they also have adverse effects that can create pressure on employees and lead to burnout. In addition, the current literature highlights deficiencies in the theoretical framework and methodological limitations.	Suleman et al., 2025 [33]

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Purpose	Journal	Sample	Country/Region	Method	Variables	Findings	References
42	Analyzing stakeholder reactions on social media in response to an airline's sustainability signal (e.g., announcement of electric aircraft)	Corporate Communications: An International Journal	7002 social media posts	Based in Finland (case study: Finnair)	Social media analytics (SMA), content, and sentiment analysis	Stakeholder group, response themes, sentiment trends	The majority of participants' responses were positive or balanced; their content was generally shaped by environmental awareness, level of knowledge, and connection to the sector. Notably, there were no direct references to accusations of greenwashing.	Setälä et al., 2025 [76]

4. Results

According to the thematic classification in Table 2 shows the theme with the highest density is "Consumer Perception and Behavioral Responses" (n = 11). The second most common theme is "Corporate Communication and Marketing Strategies" (n = 8), followed by "Strategic CSR and Organizational Structures" (n = 6) and "Critical Approaches" (n = 5). The themes of "Employee Behaviors and Internal Effects" (n = 4), "Greenhushing" (n = 4), and "Developing a Theoretical Framework through Literature Reviews" (n = 4) are among the least-studied, each with four articles. In particular, Greenhushing, as an emerging sub-theme, addresses companies' intentional concealment of their sustainability practices from the public [6] and is considered a new area in the tourism and hospitality literature in this regard.

Table 2. Thematic classification of greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Axial Coding Theme	Open Code/Scope	Related Article Numbers
Consumer Perception and Behavioral Responses	The effects of greenwashing on individual attitudes and behaviors, such as consumer confidence, brand perception, purchase intent, and word-of-mouth communication (WOM), are discussed.	2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 28, 29, 30, 22
Employee Behavior and Internal Effects	The impact of greenwashing perception on employee motivation, job satisfaction, job alienation, and environmental behavior is investigated. Green human resource management (Green HRM) and organizational commitment are evaluated within this theme.	9, 19, 41, 37
Corporate Communication and Marketing Strategies	This heading discusses how organizations construct their sustainability narratives, the credibility of environmental claims, marketing messages, and social media responses.	10, 16, 21, 35, 36, 38, 42, 18
Strategic CSR and Corporate Structures	CSR practices, GRI standards, external audit mechanisms, and the effects of green innovation on performance are analyzed. This theme is more concerned with corporate-level structures.	1, 3, 4, 33, 34, 32
Critical Approaches	The ideological, political, and ethical aspects of greenwashing are discussed. This heading covers the role of sustainability discourse in the production of social legitimacy, ethical tourism, social license, and social acceptance.	25, 26, 27, 39, 40
Greenhushing	The companies' reluctance to publicly promote their sustainability practices is examined. Fear of being accused of greenwashing, ethical concerns, and image risk are among the main reasons.	20, 23, 24, 31
Literature Reviews and Conceptual Framework Development	Systematic literature reviews, bibliometric analyses, and conceptual models of greenwashing are included under this heading. The stages of development and the research gaps are highlighted.	6, 7, 12, 17

The Consumer Perception and Behavioral Responses theme focuses on the perceptual and behavioral effects of greenwashing on consumers. The Employee Behavior and Internal Effects theme addresses the organizational impacts of greenwashing on employees. The Corporate Communication and Marketing Strategies theme examines how companies construct their sustainability messages and the accuracy and perception of this communication. The theme of Strategic CSR and Organizational Structures discusses the preventive or masking function of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies in relation to greenwashing. Critical Approaches focuses on the ideological, political, and ethical dimensions of greenwashing. The theme of Greenhushing examines the reasons for and consequences of silence strategies. Finally, the Literature Reviews and Conceptual Framework Development theme includes systematic literature reviews and bibliometric analyses on greenwashing (Table 2).

5. Discussion

To facilitate the analysis and discussion of the results, it is helpful to create a working definition for each framework/level [77]. While grounded in the theoretical model, the definitions are particular to this case study. The conceptual framework developed in this context addresses the effects of greenwashing at the micro (consumer), meso (internal), and macro (corporate/legal) levels, evaluating reduction strategies specific to each level in a holistic structure.

According to Figure 5, previous studies addressing greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality sectors [9,10,14,17] have mostly treated the consumer, employee, and legal dimensions separately, while this study demonstrates how these dimensions are interconnected. To explain this connection, at the micro level, consumers expect environmentally conscious practices from businesses, and businesses develop discourses that present themselves as "green." However, when these discourses are not adopted by employees at the meso level and reflected in daily practice, they remain only on paper and have no real impact. In situations where employee participation and organizational commitment are weak, environmental discourses fail to translate into practice and remain at a symbolic level. Previous research has also shown that when employee participation is weak, environmental discourses remain symbolic and can trigger alienation or non-environmental behaviors among employees [12,19].

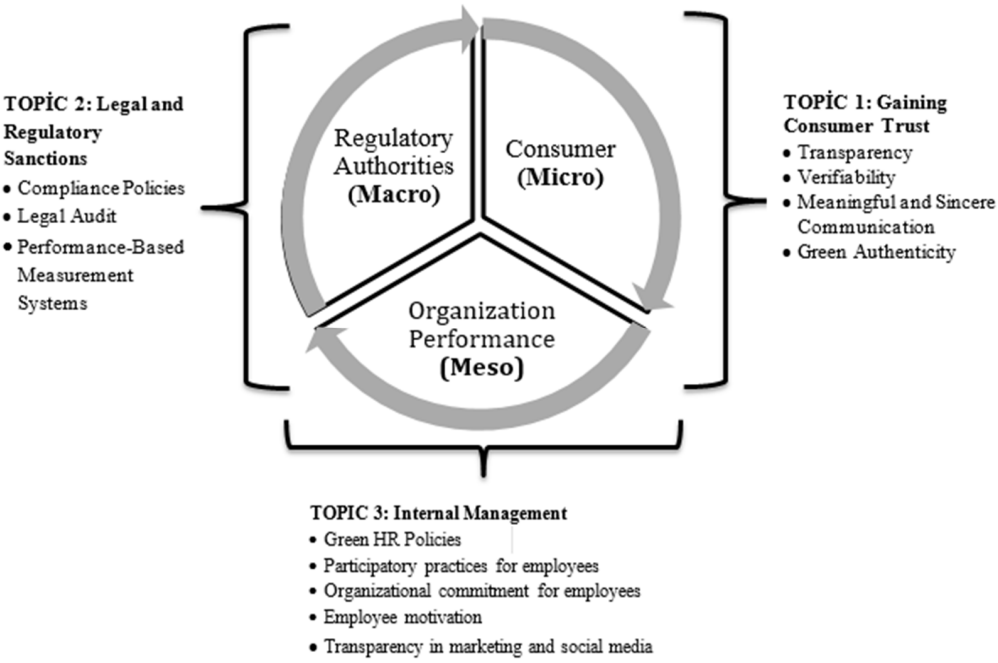

Figure 5. Strategies for mitigating the negative consequences of greenwashing.

The extent to which companies engage in greenwashing is basically a measure of the strength of the overall legal framework. In situations where the law is weak, the use of green speak often ends up just being one of the ways in which companies attempt to hide the fact that their activities are far from being environmentally friendly. So, considering greenwashing from this perspective, it is not merely a matter of incorrect communication, but one of 'misalignment' on several fronts: the consumer demands at the micro level, the internal corporate commitments at the meso level, and the government policy/business enforcement at the macro level.

5.1. Consumer Perceptions and Behavioral Responses

As the world has become more and more committed to sustainability, the tourism and hospitality sectors have responded by incorporating green practices at the very heart of their operations. In addition, the rapid development of sustainability initiatives has made consumers even more attentive to the issue. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of the pertinent literature shows that greenwashing significantly influences consumer behavior in the tourism and hospitality sectors [13].

Empirical data reveal the damaging effects of the misleading green claims on a number of important behavioral outcomes, such as consumer trust and positive word of mouth. These unethical activities not only disrupt the acceleration of purchasing but also hamper the chances of encouraging customers to come back again in the hospitality industry. Against this backdrop, the research of Pham et al. (2024) found that greenwashing negatively affects visitors' green trust and green WOM behavior [14]. Specifically, when customers think that the sustainability efforts reported by lodging companies differ from the real situation, they form doubt, which is linked to the diminished willingness to take certain actions. In the same way, Zhang et al. (2022) revealed that consumers who are confronted with greenwashing suffer negative impacts on their green product experiences, which in turn erodes their intention to buy again [15].

Distrust of greenwashing in tourism and hospitality businesses can vary depending on individual perceptions, as well as on environmental knowledge and identification with nature. For example, Font et al. (2025) report that individuals exposed to excessive information overload perceive sustainability-related communication as manipulative, resulting in heightened perceptions of greenwashing [54]. A study by Olk (2021) [56] found that consumers' level of identification with a brand increases their perception of the brand's sustainability claims, thereby reducing greenwashing skepticism. Factors such as "green transparency" and "green authenticity" also play a critical role in lowering skepticism toward greenwashing [56]. Alyahia et al. (2024) state that these two factors significantly reduce the adverse effects of greenwashing and strengthen consumers' loyalty to green hotels [13]. Rahman et al. (2015) state that suspicions of "hidden motives" in hotels' environmental practices increase consumers' perceptions of greenwashing, which, in turn, reduces both participation in environmentally friendly programs and the intention to revisit [17].

Moreover, it has been found that the use of insincere or exaggerated language in sustainability communication has a negative impact on the intentions of green consumers [59]. In line with this, choosing simple, truthful, and heartfelt communication styles instead of exaggerated ones will facilitate a reduction in green skepticism through an increase in the credibility of the language of sustainability communication. On the other hand, businesses should ensure that not only their external image but also their internal practices are consistent.

5.2. Employee Behavior and Internal Effects

In the tourism and hospitality industry, greenwashing affects internal dynamics and customer perceptions. In this context, the literature on employee behavior and internal effects sheds light on how greenwashing is perceived at the organizational level and how this perception affects workforce productivity and corporate culture. When employees observe a mismatch between corporate rhetoric and actual practices, they may experience decreased organizational commitment, job alienation, and reduced motivation [19,78]. Similarly, a systematic review conducted by Suleman et al. (2025) indicates that Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) practices in the tourism and hospitality sector increase employees' levels of green creativity, environmental responsibility, and organizational com-

mitment [33]. However, when doubts arise about these practices, employees' perceptions of greenwashing and feelings of burnout increase. Similarly, in a study by Dornier (2021), the sustainability approach of senior managers in French event companies was evaluated [72]. According to the research findings, managers' individual ethical understanding and personal environmental awareness are key factors in motivating employees. However, it was stated that the lack of systematic corporate-level policies to support this motivation leads to employee disengagement and a loss of trust in the company.

5.3. Corporate Communication and Marketing Strategies

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability rhetoric have become central to the marketing and communication strategies of companies operating in the tourism and hospitality sector, particularly. However, the practical implications of this rhetoric often spark controversy. In this context, Font et al. (2012) [71] stated that there is a "disclosure–performance" gap between the CSR policies and operational practices of large hotel chains. In this regard, corporate communication is leveraged as a mechanism to attain and maintain external legitimacy among stakeholders [71]. It is noted that a performance-based responsibility approach is often secondary. Similarly, an analysis by Guix et al. (2022) in the airline industry found that voluntary carbon offset (VCO) practices contain significant misrepresentations in their communications [73]. Research findings indicate that 44% of environmental claims used in communication are deceptive and fall into subcategories such as "no evidence," "uncertainty," and "insignificant information." These examples reveal that green and sustainability rhetoric without practical application increases the risk of greenwashing. On the other hand, greenwashing practices also pose serious risks to the reputation in the age of social media. Misleading environmental claims spread quickly and diminish businesses' brand value [49,76]. To prevent reputation loss, companies must adopt crisis communication strategies and prioritize transparency in green communication [3,54].

5.4. Critical Approach

Statements made about sustainability are open to criticism when they are not reciprocated within the industry. In this context, the concept of greenwashing risks becoming an artificial representation rather than a genuine change in the tourism and hospitality industry. Antari and Connell's (2021) study of the Tukad Bindu project in Bali provides insight into how environmentally friendly practices, such as ecotourism, are strategically employed [74]. The study notes that both local governments and media outlets present ecotourism in different ways, including environmental education and youth projects, which creates ambiguity around the concept of sustainability. This discursive difference is said to lead to less emphasis on concrete ecological impacts and ethical responsibilities. Indeed, Gössling and Higham's (2021) [1] study states that low-carbon destination management discourses contradict the "green growth" paradigm. Current tourism policies are built on the assumption that economic growth can be sustained while simultaneously reducing environmental impacts [1]. However, as the literature emphasizes, this assumption does not align with ecological realities. At this point, suspicions are growing that sustainability policies have a structure that fosters greenwashing.

5.5. Greenhushing

Greenhushing is defined as businesses deliberately avoiding publicizing their environmentally conscious practices [6]. It is stated that this phenomenon is rapidly becoming visible, particularly in the tourism, hospitality, and gastronomy sectors. Studies have shown that one of the main reasons for greenhushing is companies' fear of being accused of greenwashing. For example, a survey by Koupaei et al. (2025) found that restaurants in New Zealand share their sustainability practices only to a limited extent on online platforms [5].

The factors contributing to this situation were identified as fear of public misinterpretation, loss of reputation, and harsh criticism. However, this strategy may increase the risk of losing customer trust, as it contradicts the principle of transparency. Some studies claim the exact opposite. In a study by Seyfi et al. (2025) specifically on accommodation businesses, the concept of green coherence is emphasized, and green practices that customers are aware of but the business does not announce emerge as the empirical counterpart of greenhushing [62]. It is noted that such silences prevent positive environmental impacts from being converted into marketing advantages due to communication gaps and hinder the establishment of emotional connections with the target audience. Based on the research findings, it is said that silent brands may be associated with "inauthentic" perceptions in the public mind. On the other hand, greenhushing is not always seen as a passive or fear-based strategy. Some companies that choose not to announce their sustainability practices may also adopt this as a value-driven stance. For example, in a study by Koupaei et al. (2024), some restaurants describe their environmental practices as usual [79]. Thus, they indicate that restaurants use greenhushing to build better connections with customers.

5.6. Literature Reviews and Conceptual Framework Development

When examining the historical development of the literature, Montero-Navarro et al. (2021) analyzed 351 articles obtained from the WoS database and divided greenwashing research into three main periods [23]. This periodization shows that the phenomenon of greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality sector has shifted toward a more technical, managerial, and interdisciplinary structure. Similarly, Vieira Salazar and Echeverri Rubio (2024) identified three main research clusters in their bibliometric analysis: sustainability, green marketing, and corporate responsibility [25]. On the other hand, the definition of the concept has been expanded in light of the works of Chen and Chang (2013) [16] and Lyon and Maxwell (2011) [7]. This situation has paved the way for the emergence of concepts such as "greenhushing." This conceptual diversity in the literature has been emphasized by Montero-Navarro et al. (2021), particularly in the food, agriculture, and retail sectors [23].

5.7. Research Gaps and Potential Research Areas

The concept of greenwashing has gained significant ground in various disciplines. Most studies focus on consumer-related outcomes such as green trust, purchase intention, and perceived brand credibility [16,17]. While these studies address some points, research on the extent to which greenwashing affects the internal dynamics and immediate surroundings of businesses operating in the sector has been relatively limited [18,78]. Furthermore, critical studies of greenwashing remain relatively scarce. In other words, the number of studies examining the effects of greenwashing at the corporate level or providing systemic criticisms of its use as a whitewashing tool is limited [6]. Furthermore, previous studies have focused on the causes and consequences of greenwashing [3,10], whereas research on mitigation strategies to address adverse outcomes remains limited [13].

Most greenwashing studies in the tourism and hospitality sector focus on developed or developing countries. Previous studies [29,80,81] have reported that most research on greenwashing has focused on Western culture and that the situation in developing countries has not been sufficiently illuminated. For example, there is limited information available from regions such as Africa, Southeast Asia, or Latin America. This situation prevents the identification of variables that may influence perceptions and practices of greenwashing [82]. Additionally, there is a need to increase the number of cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal studies in the relevant literature. Finally, although the concept of greenhushing has attracted attention in sustainability circles, there are relatively few studies that systematically examine this issue in the tourism and hospitality sector. In

studies conducted on the subject, greenhushing is defined as a newly emerging strategic behavior; however, the lack of conceptual and empirical studies is a notable shortcoming.

6. Conclusions

Most empirical studies on greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality industry indicate that greenwashing practices negatively affect consumer trust, brand loyalty, and behavioral intentions [13,14,16]. In addition, studies indicate that greenwashing affects not only consumers (micro) but also the internal dynamics of businesses (meso) and legal regulations (macro). For example, Ahmad et al. (2025) state that greenwashing within a company can erode employee trust, raise ethical concerns, and weaken loyalty [18]. Similarly, Mu and Lee (2023) note that greenwashing negatively affects internal company dynamics, thereby reducing loyalty to the company and damaging its reputation [78]. The literature on greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality sector highlights the gap between sustainability-related rhetoric and practice. This gap raises suspicions that companies may be manipulating their sustainability practices [6]. In this context, Gössling and Buckley (2016) state that voluntary sustainability initiatives may remain ineffective and superficial without adequate oversight and standard frameworks [83].

A unique feature of this study is that it does not merely compile previous results, but rather it deals with the phenomenon of greenwashing in tourism sustainability from multi-level perspectives. In this research, the closure of the gap between sustainability communication and practice is explored not only as an isolated issue but as a whole theoretical field, which has implications for the organization of the structure, governance mechanisms, and policymakers.

Moreover, the results show that greenwashing in the tourism industry is not merely a problem of communication strategy, but a structural issue directly linked to sustainability management, corporate ethics, and employee trust.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research paper attempts to address an important unexplored theoretical area by carrying out a systematic analysis of greenwashing in the tourism and hospitality industries with a view to clarifying the present literature and offering a cross-disciplinary framework.

On the one hand, a systematic review of the relevant literature organized around the PRISMA guidelines has allowed the issue to be analyzed from different angles, first of all, consumer perspectives, and later on, employee behavior, corporate communication strategies, strategic corporate structure, greenhushing, and critical approaches. In that regard, this study distinguishes itself from existing single approaches in the literature and develops a comprehensive theoretical framework for greenwashing. Moreover, this study distinguishes itself from approaches that discuss greenwashing solely in terms of its consequences, explaining the theoretical mechanisms underlying the phenomenon and its reproduction in sustainable tourism systems. Thus, the "discourse–practice mismatch," which is often implicit in the tourism sustainability literature, is made more visible theoretically.

Secondly, this study presents a thematic map of the greenwashing literature, dividing the existing literature into seven thematic categories (e.g., consumer behavior, corporate communication, employee effects), and clearly reveals the accumulation of the literature for each theme. Thus, it has made it possible to see concretely where the theoretical accumulation in the field is concentrated and where it is insufficient. This structure serves as an essential resource for identifying research gaps for future empirical and theoretical studies. This thematic organizing serves several purposes: it first maps the literature as it stands, and secondly, it points out conceptual discontinuities and theoretical overlaps

between studies that are potentially leading to the development of new syntheses. In that respect, this study gives a framework that goes beyond the empirical findings and connects them with theoretical explanations at a higher level.

Moreover, the conceptual model released in this paper, which includes different levels, micro (consumer), meso (internal), and macro (political/legal), does not only classify the existing literature but also describes the interactions across levels and the greenwashing reduction strategies that are specific to these levels in a theoretical context. The authors of this result propose a multi-level conceptual model that understands greenwashing not as a stable phenomenon but as a process that is constantly changing and influenced by the interaction between different levels. This work is a theoretical contribution to the tourism sustainability literature, which advocates for an integrated understanding of the issues, the impact, and the solutions to greenwashing.

6.2. Practical Contributions

In this study, some suggestions are posed for industry stakeholders, policymakers, and managers. One of the foremost actions that businesses need to take is to make sure that their sustainability claims are verifiable, measurable, and in agreement with the practices that have been third-party audited. Research has proven that the more ungrounded a company's sustainable claims, the more skeptical consumers become. Therefore, words like environmentally friendly or sustainable that have no definite foundation are usually looked upon with suspicion [14,16]. And to add to this, going through the motions of obtaining internationally recognized certification programs such as ISO 14001 [84] and EMAS can significantly raise one's standing

Secondly, findings in the literature reveal that the commitment of employees to the values of sustainability has a great impact on both the experience of the guests and the consistency of the brand [18,78]. However, organizational dimension of greenwashing can have a detrimental effect on industry employees. This case is highlighted as a reason for a decline in the quality of a service. Hence, it is advised that ethical performance standards should be a part of the employee evaluation system in tourism and hospitality enterprises.

The third recommendation is the assessment of sustainability discourse in the tourism and hospitality sector in partnership with stakeholders. Partnership with civil society organizations, local governments, and independent auditors will help to increase transparency. Such an evaluation will provide stakeholders with the means to authenticate, debate, or co-create sustainability discourses, thus placing participatory sustainability governance models at the center. Bernard and Nicolau (2022) further argue that hotels need to consider having their environmental sustainability efforts verified by a third party to lessen the impact of inevitable negative publicity arising from environmental issues, and at the same time, steer clear of potential accusations of 'greenwashing' practices [4].

At the policy level, governments need to go further to voluntary measures and introduce concrete and binding regulations on environmental disclosure. The lack of clear definitions and a central monitoring system is cited as a key reason for skepticism about greenwashing in many studies [6,83]. The implementation of deterrent sanctions against misleading statements and measures such as mandatory ESG reporting is critical to ensuring accountability across the sector.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

UNSDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
SLR	Systematic Literature Review
RQ	Research Question
WOS	Web of Science
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
WOM	Word-of-Mouth Communication
HR	Human Relations
DID	Differences-in-Differences
GSE	Green Service Encounter
VSO	Voluntary Carbon Offset
GHRM	Green Human Resource Management
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRT	Green Trust
GBE	Green Brand Equity
RPI	Repurchase Intention
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
OSF	Open Science Framework

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