


## Circular intentions, minimal actions: The psychology of doing less in hospitality – An integrative review

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### ABSTRACT

Despite growing interest in sustainability, the adoption of circular economy (CE) practices in hospitality remains largely symbolic and limited to low-effort actions. This paper explores why hotels, despite expressing genuine interest and facing external pressures, often avoid deeper CE strategies. First, a systematic literature review and bibliometric mapping identify key behavioural, structural, social and market-related barriers that constrain CE action. These barriers shape managerial thinking and contribute to disengagement from ambitious practices. Building on this, an explanatory analysis draws on psychological mechanisms, particularly cognitive dissonance and moral licensing, to explain why external limitations become internally justified. This rationalisation process fosters a 'So What?' mindset, where minimal actions are viewed as sufficient in light of perceived barriers. As a result, the gap between sustainability intentions and behaviour and further action widens. The study helps us understand how hotel managers' beliefs and thinking patterns influence whether and how they apply CE principles.

### 1. Introduction

Circular economy (CE) and sustainability are interrelated concepts with similar goals that both operate on triple principle: economic, social and environmental harmony (Tognato de Oliveira & Groff Andrade Oliveira, 2023). The United Nations (2015) explicitly recognises CE as one of the most effective pathways for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because it keeps products and materials in circulation minimizing resource waste (Einarsson & Sorin, 2020; Skvarciany et al., 2021).

Yet progress in hospitality remains limited and mostly focuses on basic sustainability measures without fully applying CE principles. Despite 87 studies on CE in hospitality, no review to date integrates observed behavioural barriers (RQ1) with underlying psychological mechanisms that may explain minimal CE engagement of hotel managers (RQ2). This is important for researchers to consider because CE adoption is not driven by technology alone, but by a mix of external

constraints and internal thinking patterns that is an area still largely underexplored in CE hospitality studies. Although a few studies, such as dos Santos Ferreira et al. (2024) and Costa et al. (2022) report increased awareness of CE practices among hotel managers, mainly in newly constructed or renovated hotels, they do not examine why this awareness often fails to result in concrete action. This proclaimed awareness mostly translates into the application of basic 4R strategies (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) as noted by Bowen et al. (2024), while deeper or more systemic actions remain rare and underexplored. More recently, this 4R framework has evolved into the more comprehensive R9 model: R0 Refuse, R1 Rethink, R2 Reduce, R3 Reuse, R4 Repair, R5 Refurbish, R6 Remanufacture, R7 Repurpose, R8 Recycle and R9 Recover (Bittner et al., 2024; Kirchherr et al., 2017; Potting et al., 2017) and R10 Redesign, R11 Replace as suggested by Rodríguez et al. (2020).

While these small actions definitely contribute to improved environmental performance, they often fall short of achieving genuine CE transformation and may reflect a superficial commitment from time to

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time rather than a strategic shift. Hoteliers admit that their main motivation for CE adoption is cutting costs and optimizing resources (Bowen et al., 2024; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022; Kiausiene et al., 2024; dos Santos Ferreira et al., 2024). Although the CE is intended to balance environmental, social, and economic benefits (Hina et al., 2023), the prevailing focus on cost reduction, efficiency gains (Kiausiene et al., 2024), and brand value enhancement (Bordian et al., 2023; Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2016) in the for-profit tourism sector risks reducing circularity to a marketing tool. Thus, it can potentially increase scepticism about its genuine synchronized implementation. However, the role of managerial scepticism and the reasons for inner tendency to adopt minimal or low-effort CE measures have not yet been systematically addressed.

To further prove that the proclaimed efforts do not yet function as intended, empirical findings from projects such as CIRC-HOTEL reveal that hotels still often generate avoidable waste streams that significantly exceed the EU benchmark of <0.6 kg of waste per guest per night (Directorate-General for Environment, 2023a). This indicates that rising awareness of CE concept has not yet translated into a systemic shift, as many hotels continue to operate under traditional linear models of production and consumption (Costa et al., 2022; Manniche et al., 2021). Evidence of this is presented in Table 1, which summarizes the R-principles reported by authors in the context of hospitality.

One of the reasons behind this slow transition is that achieving true circularity demands not only technical innovations but also behavioural and organizational changes (Bertassini et al., 2021) as well as the removal of present structural, behavioural (Khan et al., 2022) and psychological barriers such as limited cognition or perceived sunk costs (Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al., 2024). This can be particularly challenging, as managers must understand that moving toward a CE model requires more than just developing strategies or setting performance indicators. It demands fundamental shifts in mindset, behaviour, and underlying business models (De Martino et al., 2024; Ramkissoon, 2023a, 2023b). It means changing how resources are valued, fostering collaboration with suppliers, and prioritizing material conservation (Cornejo-Ortega & Chávez Dagostino, 2020; Fonseca et al., 2018).

Even though there exist practical initiatives like the CIRC-HOTEL project that demonstrates how hotels can reduce material use and avoid waste through CE strategies (Directorate-General for Environment, 2023a), they have limited impact on broader adoption of CE practices (Aldana-Rodriguez et al., 2023). As a result, even with the availability of best practices such as reusing materials during renovations (Directorate-General for Environment, 2023b) or targeting avoidable waste streams, including excessive use of single-use plastics in laundry and kitchen operations (Directorate-General for Environment, 2023a), many hotels continue to exceed basic waste benchmarks.

The current study addresses this gap by synthesizing the current knowledge about CE in hospitality and then addresses psychological

mechanisms to explain why some hotel managers do not move forward. By integrating insights from cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), habit formation (Verplanken, 2018), and moral licensing (Miller & Effron, 2010), this paper offers a new perspective on how psychological mechanisms interact with present barriers to explain hotel managers' minimal engagement with CE practices. The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1: *What are the key barriers that influence hotel managers' behaviour in adopting CE practices?*

RQ2: *How do psychological mechanisms interact with these identified barriers to explain hotel managers' minimal engagement with CE practices?*

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology, Section 3 through systematic synthesis we review the theoretical knowledge and define key literature findings within the implementation of CE in hospitality, Section 4 presents the main findings of bibliometric analysis on CE and behaviour in hospitality, Section 5 examines the development of the 'So What?' attitude among hotel managers, using psychological theories to explain its origins, Section 6 discusses the implications of the findings, and the last section concludes the paper with recommendations for theory, management practice, and future research directions.

## 2. Methodology

This study employed an integrative review approach combining systematic, bibliometric and explanatory elements to build a comprehensive understanding of a new emerging concept of 'So What' attitude in CE. According to Torraco (2005), integrative literature reviews do not follow a fixed format like empirical studies. Instead of using a strict structure, authors should organize the review based on how ideas are connected.

The methodological approach follows a three-step process. First, a targeted systematic synthesis of existing literature is conducted to identify and categorize key factors (based on the theories by Ajzen, 1991 and Verplanken, 2018) that influence adoption of CE practices in hotel management. The initial synthesis provides a structured overview of the different types of barriers discussed in the literature, creating a necessary foundation for further analysis. To support the selection of relevant studies and to map the existing research landscape, a bibliometric analysis as a second step was carried out at the beginning of the synthesis process. In the third step, an explanatory analysis is developed by applying psychological concepts, specifically cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and moral licensing (Miller & Effron, 2010), to explain how these barriers contribute to the emergence of a new concept of 'So What?' attitude among hotel managers. The aim of the explanatory part is to move beyond description and offer a theoretical explanation for why many CE efforts in hospitality remain superficial. This cross-

**Table 1**  
Overview of R-principles reported in hospitality studies.

Author	R-principles used in hospitality studies											Research method used	
	R0	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10		R11
Bittner et al. (2024)	x	x	x	x				x	x				Interviews in the Netherlands and Indonesia
Bowen et al. (2024)			x	x					x				6 interviews with managers in the United Kingdom
Bux and Amicarelli (2022)			x	x					x	x			Literature review
Kiausiene et al. (2024)			x	x					x				Interviews in 12 hospitality and accommodation establishments in Lithuania
Da Silva et al. (2021)			x	x					x				Literature review of 18 articles
Rodríguez et al. (2020)		x	x	x					x		x	x	Business case analysis of British, French and 2 Spanish-owned hotel groups

Note: "R principles" refer to CE strategies such as R0 Refuse, R1 Rethink, R2 Reduce, R3 Reuse, R4 Repair, R5 Refurbish, R6 Remanufacture, R7 Repurpose, R8 Recycle and R9 Recover, R10 Redesign, R11 Replace.  
(Source: Authors' own work)

sectoral knowledge transfer approach is applied carefully to identify behavioural concepts that can enhance the understanding of scepticism and minimal engagement. This combination of methods (see Fig. 1) was chosen to ensure both a broad and a deep understanding of the topic.

2.1. Research design

The whole study applied an integrative review approach as outlined by Torraco (2005). This type of review usually begins by explaining why the topic matters and what is already known. Unlike a purely descriptive synthesis, the integrative review is aimed to critically assess, interpret, and combine findings from multiple disciplines (hospitality, sustainability, behavioural science, CE) to identify conceptual gaps and lay the foundation for theoretical development (Torraco, 2005). He emphasizes that integrative reviews are designed not just to summarize but to critically analyse literature and develop new frameworks. It fits the study’s goal of understanding underlying psychological mechanisms behind possible superficial CE engagement in hotels.

To investigate research questions 1 & 2 introduced at the outset of the paper, firstly the paper identifies current knowledge on CE with focus on hospitality through lens of Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and habits (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999) in Section 3, following the approach of Burgers et al. (2019), who demonstrated that systematic reviews are well-suited for interdisciplinary research. This method was used to map and critically assess the current state of knowledge (Burgers et al., 2019) on CE implementation in the hospitality sector along with the behaviour. Due to the limited number of CE studies in hospitality (19 academic articles as explained below), the analysis was expanded to include studies from (a) sustainability as CE closely aligns with the principles of sustainable development (Kaszás et al., 2022), (b) tourism and (c) general behavioural economy research. This is possible due to the interconnectedness of tourism with other fields, thanks to the sector’s multiplier effect (Manniche et al., 2017; Ramkissoon, Nekomahmud,

& Uysal, 2025).

Secondly, to support the results of the first phase of the review, bibliometric analysis (Section 4) is employed as a supportive technique to ensure systematic coverage and to map key thematic clusters in CE hospitality, hospitality and behaviour. For the bibliometric analysis, only English-language articles from WoS and Scopus were processed. To process the data, two specialised tools were employed. First, Bibliometrix, a comprehensive R package designed for bibliometric analysis, was utilized to perform statistical evaluations and generate descriptive insights from the dataset. Second, VOSviewer was used to construct and visualize bibliometric networks (Mishra et al., 2021), such as co-authorship and keyword co-occurrence maps, providing high-quality graphical representations that facilitate the interpretation of complex relationships within the data.

Lastly, an explanatory analysis (Section 5) is conducted to delve deeper into the findings similar to Jones and Wynn (2019). By interpreting the findings through the lens of psychological theories, such as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and moral licensing (Miller & Effron, 2010), the analysis try to explain how internal conflicts and justifications among hotel managers contribute to a ‘So What?’ attitude.

2.2. Search strategy & screening

A full Boolean search was conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases using the following title-specific queries: TI = (circular economy) AND (hotel) OR (hospitality), TI = (circular economy) AND (behaviour), TI = (circular economy) AND (tourism), and TI = (circular economy) AND (sustainability), all combined with AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”). The number of articles found under these keywords in both databases is presented in Table 2.

In conducting this bibliometric analysis, the decision was made to focus exclusively on articles where the keywords appeared in the title.

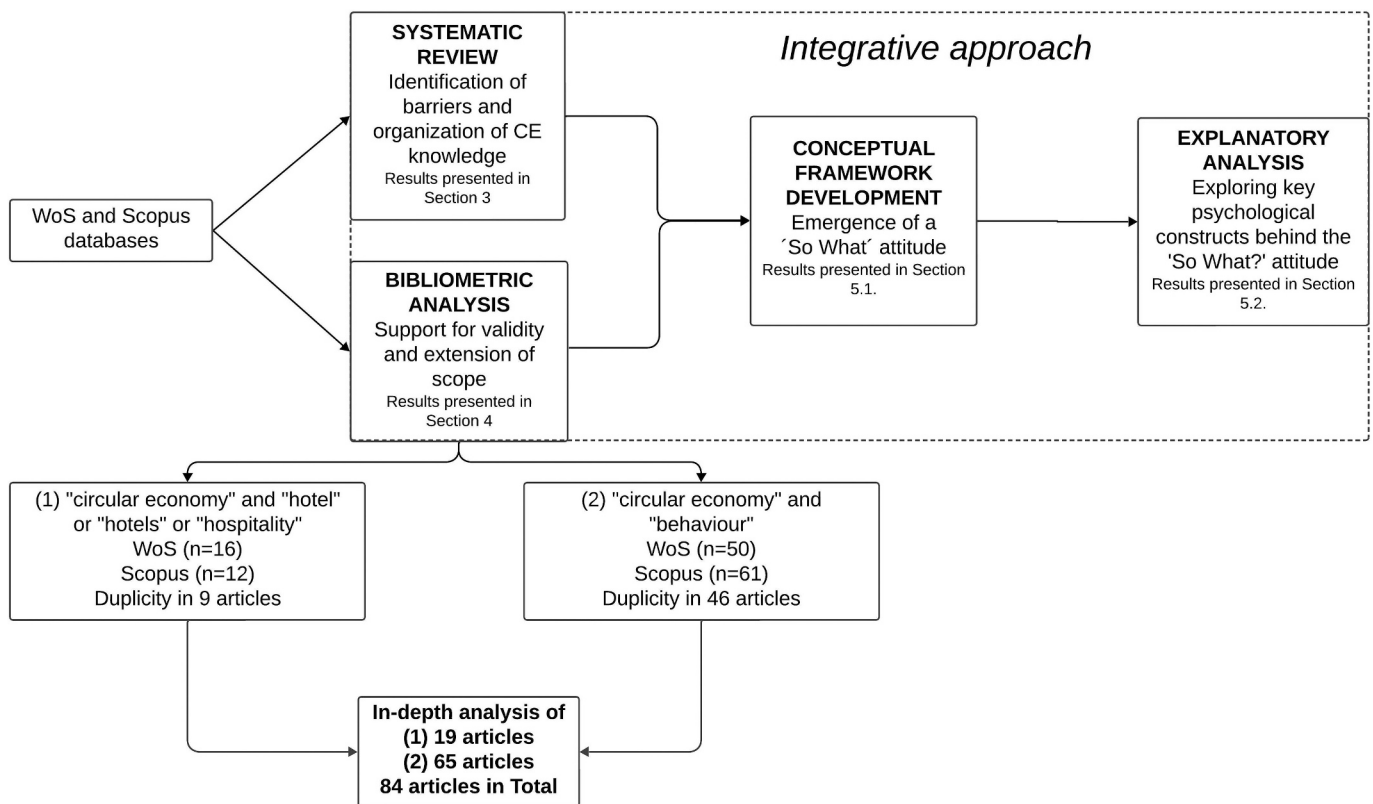


Fig. 1. Methodological literature approach. (Source: Authors’ own work)

Table 2

Number of articles identified by keyword searches in Scopus and web of science.

Key words in the title	Number of articles (WoS)	Number of articles (Scopus)
CE, Hotel or Hospitality	16	12
CE, Behaviour	50	61
CE, Tourism	31	35
CE, Sustainability	270	307

(Source: Authors' own work)

This approach was chosen to ensure the relevance and specificity of the literature analysed. Preliminary searches indicated that when the keywords were not present in the title, the articles often lacked substantial content related to the implementation of CE practices.

However, for the purpose of the bibliometric study, only articles related to keywords “circular economy AND hotel OR hospitality” and “circular economy AND behaviour” in title were selected for the final analysis, as they represent the most relevant and focused streams aligned with the research objectives. Using the R software, 55 duplicate records in both databases were identified and removed, resulting in a final dataset of 84 unique articles included in the analysis. Removing duplicates improved the precision and relevance of the bibliometric results. A search query in WoS using “TI= (circular economy or circular) and (hotel or hotels) and (behaviour or behaviour)” revealed only one relevant study (Rodríguez et al., 2020), which analysed tourists' attitudes toward CE in relation with age.

### 2.2.1. CE in hospitality

The analysis focuses specifically on the hotel sector, as the keywords “circular economy”, “hospitality” and/or “hotel” were chosen to capture research specifically addressing the implementation of CE in this context. A search using these keywords found 12 sources in Scopus and 16 in Web of Science (WoS). After removing 9 duplicates, 19 academic articles were analysed. These articles were published between 2009 and 2024, with the annual growth in CE and hospitality topics averaging 11.33 %. The research on this topic is still limited, with overall contributions from 52 authors, although annual scientific production has seen an upward trend since 2023. Although the current study did not include 2025 to ensure complete annual coverage, it is now clear that a total of 6 articles in English language on CE in hospitality were published in 2025 so far in both WoS and Scopus databases.

### 2.2.2. CE behaviour

In the Scopus database, the keyword “circular economy” and “behaviour” appeared in the titles of 61 scholarly articles, while in the Web of Science (WoS) database, it was found in 50 articles. After eliminating 46 duplicate articles, a total of 65 articles were analysed. The CE behaviour began to attract scholarly attention around 2014, when the first articles on the topic appeared. Between 2014 and 2024, a total of 258 authors published on this subject, with an impressive annual growth rate of 30.2 %. The first half of 2025 was not included in the main analysis to ensure full-year consistency. However, based on the most recent data, we can observe that the number of studies on CE and behaviour has already significantly increased in just the first six months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, indicating growing academic attention to this topic. In 2025, 15 articles on this topic have already appeared on WoS in just the first half of the year, representing 23.4 % of all publications from 2021 to mid-2025. This is nearly equal to the total count for all of 2024 (17 articles). In Scopus, 21 articles in English related to CE and hospitality have already been published in 2025, matching the total number for the entire year 2024. This reflects a clear upward trend and signals increasing academic interest in this emerging research area.

Fig. 1 presents the complete search process, including the final number of articles identified through the methodological literature review approach.

## 3. Systematic review on CE with focus on hospitality

According to some authors (Cornejo-Ortega & Chávez Dagostino, 2020; Fonseca et al., 2018), CE in hospitality is not merely about isolated activities or improving resource efficiency, such as recycling, but it represents a fundamentally different way of organizing the economy, focused on supplier collaboration and conserving raw materials. Although many current studies focus on CE principles such as reuse, repair, and refuse (Axhami et al., 2023; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022; De Martino et al., 2024; Kaszás et al., 2022; Kiausiene et al., 2024), they often overlook the underlying reasons why other strategies like replace or rethink remain largely unadopted (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

To better understand the slow adoption of CE practices, it is crucial to examine the underlying drivers of engagement. One useful perspective comes from the link between CE and sustainability, as CE is widely recognized as a practical pathway toward achieving sustainability goals (Einarsson & Sorin, 2020). A valuable framework for analysing different levels of sustainability engagement is offered by Carboni et al. (2018), providing deeper insights into why certain strategies are embraced while others are neglected. They distinguish five motivational levels (namely crisis management, regulatory compliance, resource optimization, market differentiation, and purpose-driven orientation) which guide how organizations approach sustainability. Based on their logic, when the main reason is to avoid risk or follow the law, companies often stop at basic actions. In hotels, this usually means simple steps like recycling or using less energy. With this in mind, the following subsections outline the current state of knowledge on CE practices in the hospitality sector. To describe current behaviour in the adoption of CE practices by hotel managers, authors of the current paper have used both the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the concept of habits as part of attitudes (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999). The first explains behaviour through attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control leading to intention for certain behaviour. The second shows how repeated actions can become automatic and connected to stable attitudes.

### 3.1. Behavioural barriers

#### 3.1.1. Efficacy and habits

Firstly, the persistence of habits influences the whole mindset (Ramkissoon, 2023a). A habit is linked to a stable cognitive pattern called a “habitual mind-set”. This mind-set makes people notice new information or choices less. As a result, they often repeat the same behaviour (Verplanken & Aarts, 1999); this helps explain why people keep doing what they are used to (Ramkissoon, 2020). For example, established habits among tourists, such as recycling and conserving water and energy at home, have been shown to influence their behaviour during vacations as well (Rodríguez et al., 2020). The comfort of maintaining the status quo can lead managers to be hesitant in adopting more complex CE strategies, as these approaches disrupt familiar routines and require significant changes to existing processes (Kaszás et al., 2022). This thinking may also lead managers to believe that adopting CE practices would disrupt operational efficiency or create discomfort for staff and guests (Baker et al., 2014).

This is likely because habit formation is best achieved through repetition (Ramkissoon, 2020; Sarmiento and Loureiro, 2021). Moreover, once a behaviour becomes habitual, it is more likely to be performed consistently, even with weak intention (Allom et al., 2013). This leads to automaticity in behaviour (Ramkissoon, 2021; Verplanken, 2018). Therefore, habits like finishing all the food on one's plate, limiting the use of heating or cooling systems, consuming leftovers from previous meals, reusing bath towels, and sorting waste into recycling and general bins illustrate how routine behaviours shape sustainable practices (MacInnes et al., 2022). It is important to add that attitudes cannot be changed in a short period of time, but require a longer-term effort, as stated by a hotel manager in Ally et al. (2024).

### 3.1.2. Management and staff understanding

The sense of efficacy is closely linked to management and staff understanding. This connection between understanding and efficacy was confirmed in a recent study by [Elshaer et al. \(2025\)](#), which showed that when employees feel capable and competent in implementing green strategies, leadership is more likely to translate into tangible changes toward regenerative and CE hotel operations. Acquiring new habits and shifting attitudes toward sustainability ([Ramkissoon, 2021, 2022a, 2022b](#)) within tourism businesses requires sufficient information and education ([De Martino et al., 2024; Karlovsek et al., 2023](#)). A lack of these factors deepens managerial resistance to change. Often, people do not feel the need to change their attitudes because they lack awareness of sustainability benefits ([Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al., 2024](#)). If they do not understand or do not want to understand the consequences of their actions on the environment, they tend to persist in unsustainable practices. Raising awareness is a key component for both higher adoption of these principles ([Einarsson & Sorin, 2020](#)) and operational sustainability ([Axhami et al., 2023](#)), as well as for habit formation. Furthermore, it needs to benefit decision-makers too. When they understand the benefits of CE practices and see how they support their business goals, they are more likely to adopt these strategies as a way to effectively achieve their objectives ([Khan et al., 2022](#)). People tend to act when they see the efficacy of their behaviours ([Ramkissoon, Nekmahmud, & Mavondo, 2025; Ramkissoon, Nekmahmud, & Uysal, 2025](#)). This highlights the importance of building green knowledge and confidence across all organizational levels to ensure the successful integration of CE principles into daily hotel practices.

### 3.1.3. Support daily awareness-building

Awareness can be strengthened in two ways, organized education trainings and engagement-based communication strategies. First, education, in the form of organized training sessions ([Axhami et al., 2023](#)) that develops green intellectual capital ([Appiah et al., 2023](#)) can help to reduce ignorance and prevent low awareness or ineffective implementation of CE practices in hotels ([Bittner et al., 2024; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022](#)). Second, engagement-based communication strategies such as creating experiences, sharing successful case studies, and storytelling through social media can help all stakeholders better understand its benefits and increase awareness ([Pongsakornrungrungsilp & Pongsakornrungrungsilp, 2023; Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021](#)). Awareness, education, and a clear understanding of the CE framework hence are crucial not only for decision-makers but also for other stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation ([Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021](#)). However, [Simane et al. \(2024\)](#) caution that higher managerial status and participation in environmental training may be linked to lower readiness to adopt CE practices.

## 3.2. Structural and resource barriers

### 3.2.1. Finance and technology

In hospitality, resource limitations, particularly financial and technological, can influence how easily new sustainable habits are formed and maintained as mentioned by [Ajzen \(1991\)](#). If a manager wants to implement more complex CE strategies, it frequently requires substantial upfront costs, such as investments in solar panels ([Kiausiene et al., 2024](#)). The implementation of technological innovations can streamline CE adoption but often remains financially demanding as mentioned in the studies of hospitality ([Bittner et al., 2024; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022](#)). Therefore, many managers lean toward cost-effective and easily implemented CE measures ([dos Santos Ferreira et al., 2024; Souza-Neto et al., 2023](#)).

### 3.2.2. Environmental management systems

Moreover, resource limitations vary across different ownership structures and are also linked to the presence or absence of environmental management systems. For example, [Radwan et al. \(2011\)](#) found

that small hotels without environmental management system mostly used landfills to get rid of waste and were less open to trying better waste solutions. On the other hand, small hotels with environmental management used landfill only when no other option was available and tried to reduce, reuse, or recycle their waste more actively. This was recently confirmed by [Jacob et al. \(2025\)](#), who attribute this to the fact that independent hotels, unlike chain-affiliated ones, are not bound by centralized corporate strategies and thus tend to focus on pragmatic, cost-saving measures, such as energy efficiency and waste reduction that require fewer financial resources and offer immediate operational benefits. In contrast, larger chains with better access to resources and sustainable expertise may have a competitive advantage in implementing these practices ([Chen, 2019](#)).

### 3.2.3. Dynamic capabilities

This is why relatively more recently some authors on CE ([Castillo-Ospina et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2022](#)) emphasize the role of dynamic capabilities in the adoption of CE practices. According to [Khan et al. \(2020\)](#), dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to effectively respond to rapidly changing environmental conditions. Based on the theory originally developed by [Teece et al. \(1997\)](#), organizations that build routines for adaptation and innovation are better prepared to integrate CE principles. Underexploring of these in hospitality offers new approach for research.

## 3.3. Social pressure

Environmental psychology studies (e.g., [Ferguson & Branscombe, 2010; Ramkissoon & Smith, 2014](#)), have demonstrated that society and its collective guilt can be an effective tool for motivating people to take actions that contribute to the fight against global warming. The idea that social pressure influences behaviour comes originally from [Ajzen \(1991\)](#). Later studies confirmed its role in the context of the CE and sustainability. For example, [Singh et al. \(2018\)](#) identified social pressure as an important external factor that affects CE behaviour.

### 3.3.1. Environmental regulations and local policy

This pressure is shaped by significant documents and institutions like the European Union, the United Nations, and various national and political entities, as well as competitive businesses. The establishment and adherence to guidelines, such as ESG reporting, are seen as crucial drivers for sustainable and ecological innovation in businesses. These regulations create a favourable "green" environment among stakeholders and employees, leading to more sustainable and productive operations ([Ahmad et al., 2024; Wu, Wang, et al., 2024](#)).

In the literature on CE implementation, two contrasting perspectives have emerged regarding the influence of political pressure. One perspective argues that social pressure has a limited effect on the adoption of CE strategies in tourism businesses ([Khan et al., 2022](#)) and that pressure toward CE is primarily internally oriented from salient stakeholders ([Jabbour et al., 2020](#)). On the other hand, another viewpoint suggests that management decisions are still shaped by government, investors, or NGOs influence ([Moreno-Miranda & Dries, 2024](#)). These conflicting views may result from differences in organizational context (e.g., chain vs. independent hotels), varying regulatory environments across regions, and diverse methodological approaches such as measuring declared attitudes versus actual behaviour which can affect how political influence is perceived and reported.

At the same time, vague CE guidelines ([dos Santos Ferreira et al., 2024](#)) such as unclear measurement metrics or waste management rules ([Kiausiene et al., 2024; Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021](#)) can discourage hotels from fully committing to CE practices. According to [Khan et al. \(2022\)](#), many environmental aspects such as waste management regulations, urban or landscape permits are governed locally. This localized approach to regulation can either facilitate or impede the adoption of CE

practices, depending on how supportive or restrictive local policies are. However, if previously mentioned political and local guidelines are limited, hotels have no choice but to implement the necessary low-cost strategies to fulfil the pressure, if existing.

### 3.3.2. Customer pressure

Besides political pressure, also family, friends, colleagues, and society significantly shape managerial decisions on CE (Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al., 2024). The level and type of social pressure from customers hotels experience can vary depending on specific conditions. For instance, facilities with high water use may attract more attention from local authorities, while those near environmentally sensitive areas might feel greater expectations from local residents or ecological organizations (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

### 3.4. Demand scepticism

Other potential factors influencing behaviour of managers is consumers' interest. There are only a few studies on customer orientation in connection with circularity. For instance, Sorin and Sivarajah (2021) mention business customers' and end consumers' demand as the key drivers for CE application in hotels. However, there is an opportunity for further research to explore how business-to-business (B2B) customers such as corporate clients, event organizers, or travel agencies shape CE strategies through their procurement preferences and sustainability requirements. To date, no study has specifically focused on how customer (tourist) behaviour is perceived by hotel managers in terms of its potential contribution to CE adoption. Therefore, this chapter primarily describes the tourist perspective on CE adoption, as a foundation for understanding how demand-side factors may (or may not) influence managerial decision-making.

#### 3.4.1. Socio-demographic differences in perception of CE

Rodríguez et al. (2020) reveal that tourists' engagement with CE practices in hotels is significantly influenced by socio-demographic factors. Older tourists tend to exhibit more pro-environmental attitudes compared to younger ones, and women report higher levels of CE behaviour than men. A majority of tourists express willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly accommodations, especially those with visible energy-saving policies. Common sustainable practices adopted by hotel guests include using recycling bins and participating in towel and linen reuse programs. Interestingly, 86.5% of tourists claim to maintain the same CE habits while on vacation as they do at home, suggesting a strong potential for habit transfer if the hotel environment supports such behaviour. These findings confirm that, as shown in managerial studies, hotel managers mostly implement simple and low-cost CE practices like recycling bins and towel and linen reuse programs, which are also the practices most commonly used by tourists.

#### 3.4.2. Paradoxes in CE tourist behaviour

Despite growing awareness of sustainability, there is increasing scepticism regarding the depth and consistency of tourists' engagement with CE practices. While they include both simple actions such as recycling or reusing towels and more integrated approaches like combining eco-friendly transport with shared accommodation platforms (Rodríguez et al., 2020; Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020), their real-world application remains limited and fragmented. Current trends such as staycations, cycling holidays, or the use of platforms like Airbnb are often perceived as aligned with circularity, yet paradoxically, they may contribute to increased air travel and emissions (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). Avoiding overcrowded tourist destinations can similarly lead to unintended increases in CO<sub>2</sub> output due to longer travel distances (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). This highlights the ambiguity and complexity of actual tourist behaviour, which frequently contradicts declared environmental intentions. As tourism is inherently hedonistic, travellers often prioritise comfort and experience over sustainable

choices (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). Moreover, research on CE practices of tourists in the accommodation sector remains underdeveloped, predominantly theoretical, and lacks robust empirical evidence (Santos et al., 2023; Minh et al., 2025). Experts are not aligned on whether the focus should be on mitigating the impacts of mass tourism or fostering niche, low-impact alternatives (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020). Additionally, the affordability and convenience of air travel continue to impede the development of sustainable mobility (Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020), while hotels largely remain in a linear economic model, adopting mostly cost-saving measures rather than transformative CE strategies (Santos et al., 2023). These inconsistencies may fuel demand-side scepticism in managerial decision-making, raising doubt on whether tourists are genuinely willing or able to shift from intention to impactful CE behaviour, as confirmed by Ally et al. (2024), who found that guest attitudes were a major reason why hotels were unable to reduce food waste to satisfactory levels in five-star hotels.

#### 3.4.3. Tourist trust gap

While previous research has highlighted tourists as essential creators of CE tourism experiences and as active drivers of sustainable transformation (Rodríguez et al., 2020; Sørensen & Bærenholdt, 2020), other studies focusing more broadly on sustainability provide a more nuanced and often sceptical picture. These findings suggest that tourists may not always act as enablers of circularity. For instance, many consumers are reluctant to pay more for sustainable services, prioritizing price, convenience, and comfort over environmental concerns (Julião et al., 2020). Sustainability measures are sometimes perceived as cost-cutting or leading to reduced luxury, which discourages pro-environmental behaviour (Baker et al., 2014). Moreover, while some customers remain loyal even in the face of greenwashing (Rahman et al., 2015), others become sceptical, viewing such initiatives as disingenuous marketing tools rather than genuine efforts (Nazish et al., 2024; Szabo & Webster, 2021; Zhang & Lucey, 2022). This scepticism can undermine consumer trust and loyalty, further deepening the gap between communicated values and actual practices (Leonidou et al., 2017).

#### 3.4.4. Customer-value creation

Therefore, Godinho Filho et al. (2024) emphasize that the success of CE strategies depends on effectively linking economic value with perceived customer value, while companies must actively manage how customers understand and appreciate environmental benefits. Thus, Ally et al. (2024) recommend raising customer awareness through education as a key strategy to prevent food waste and foster more responsible consumption behaviour. In their interviews with managers, in such as hotels in Zanzibar, customer expectations and local culture lead to a demand for a wide variety of local dishes on buffet tables. As a result, hotels prepare many meals to satisfy guests, which directly contributes to significant food waste. However, it must be emphasized that in the reviewed studies, customer value appears primarily in connection with customer satisfaction, preferences, and willingness to pay, rather than as an independent construct influencing CE (Bowen et al., 2024).

#### 3.4.5. Prioritizing service quality and economic viability

This tendency is reinforced when managers perceive limited customer support or insufficient return on investment in terms of trust and demand. For instance, findings from the Netherlands indicate that managerial decision-making tends to favour economic viability and maintaining high service quality, often linked to customer expectations, over the adoption of CE practices (Bittner et al., 2024). These opposing insights suggest that the role of tourists is not universally positive and highlight the need for more empirical research to better understand how consumer perceptions and expectations influence the adoption of CE in hospitality.

Table 3 presents a detailed overview of individual behavioural, structural, resource-related, and social factors influencing the adoption of CE practices in hospitality, identified through the systematic

**Table 3**  
Overview of barriers/drivers to CE adoption in tourism.

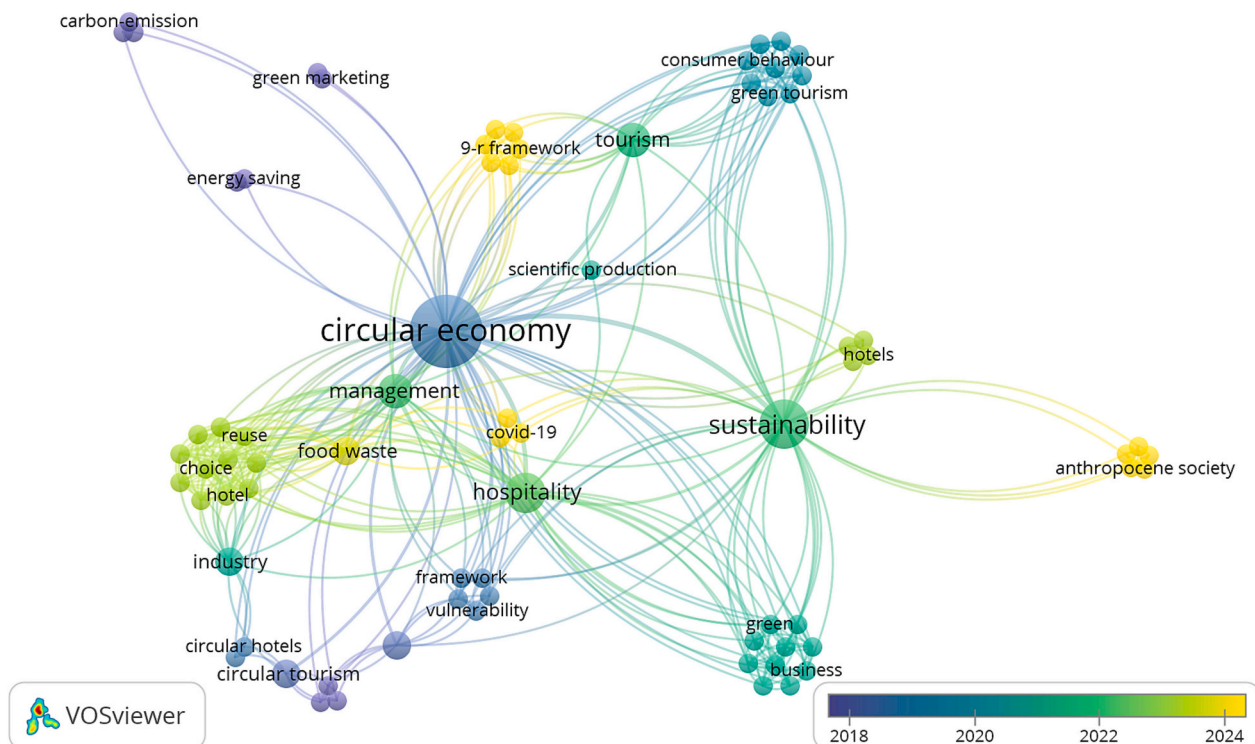
Barrier/driver	CE in Tourism		CE in general	
	Specific aspect	Author	Specific aspect	Author
Behavioural factors	Efficacy	Bittner et al. (2024)	Awareness	Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al. (2024)
	Management and Staff Understanding	Sorin and Sivarajah (2021)	Attitude	Moreno-Miranda and Dries (2024)
	Daily awareness building	Pongsakornrunsilp and Pongsakornrunsilp (2023)	Education and knowledge	Karlovsek et al. (2023)
Structural factors	Environmental Management System	Radwan et al. (2011)	Organizational culture	Appiah et al. (2023); Bertassini et al. (2021)
	Organizational Competence (Dynamic Capabilities)	Khan et al. (2022)	Dynamic Capabilities	Castillo-Ospina et al. (2025)
Resource factors	Finance and Technology	Kiausiene et al. (2024); Gabarda-Mallorquí et al., 2024	Materials and Technology	Angrisano et al. (2023)
	Finance	Bux and Amicarelli (2022); Bittner et al. (2024)	Technology	Bertassini et al. (2021)
Social pressure	Environmental Regulations	Sorin and Sivarajah (2021)	Social Pressure and Green Economic Incentives	Singh et al. (2018)
	Local Policy	Khan et al. (2022)	Influence of Family and Friends	Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al. (2024)
	Customer Pressure	Khan et al. (2022)	Pressure from Salient Stakeholders and Trade Partners	Jabbour et al. (2020); Moreno-Miranda and Dries (2024)
Demand	Business Customers' and End Consumers' Demand	Sorin and Sivarajah (2021)	Paradox in CE Tourist Behaviour	Ally et al. (2024); Minh et al. (2025); Rodríguez et al. (2020); Santos et al. (2023); Sørensen and Bærenholdt (2020)
	Socio-demographic differences in perception of CE	Rodríguez et al. (2020),	Tourist Trust Gap	Gomes et al. (2022) Leonidou et al. (2017), Nazish et al. (2024); Szabo and Webster (2021); Zhang and Lucey (2022)
	Prioritizing service quality and economic viability	Bittner et al. (2024)	Encourages alignment of CE strategies with customer-centric value creation	Godinho Filho et al. (2024)

(Source: Authors' own work)

literature review and drawn exclusively from previously published studies.

Table 3 also serves as an overview of both the research gaps in the

hospitality sector and the mechanisms that may explain minimal engagement with CE practices. In existing CE literature, there is little evidence on the cognitive mechanisms behind managerial inaction in



**Fig. 2.** Bibliometric map of keywords “CE” and “hospitality”, “hotel” in scientific publications on WoS and Scopus. Note: Yellow nodes = most recent research topics (2022–2024), Blue nodes = earlier focus (2018–2020), Node size = frequency of keyword, Line thickness = co-occurrence strength. Colour clusters = thematic groupings. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

(Source: Authors' own work based on WoS and Scopus data with VOSviewer software)

the context of CE practices.

In addition to identifying prevailing barriers, Section 3 synthesizes key literature gaps in CE hospitality research, including the lack of studies on managerial habits and behaviour, the role of customer demand in CE adoption (as perceived by managers), and the influence of organizational culture and deeper managerial insights. To address these gaps, the following section conducts a more detailed analysis of 19 hospitality-focused CE articles and 65 behavioural CE articles to trace existing trends and assess whether further behavioural research in the context of CE in hospitality is justified.

#### 4. Bibliometric analysis

##### 4.1. CE in hospitality ( $n = 19$ articles)

In the context of hospitality, it is important to identify which aspects of CE are being addressed in current scientific research. Da Silva et al. (2021) highlights the lack of studies addressing CE practices in hospitality and tourism. Reasons for this gap often include the scarcity of relevant data and concerns about its reliability and validity (Hens et al., 2018).

The map in Fig. 2 presents a keyword co-occurrence map generated using VOSviewer that highlights the importance of relationships and the relevance of individual topics in relation to the CE. The size of each node reflects the frequency of the keyword's appearance, while the proximity

**Table 4**  
Overview of articles with the key words CE and hospitality in the title (2013–2024).

Author	Title	Method	Research sample	Key Theme
Bittner et al. (2024)	CE and the hospitality industry: A comparison of the Netherlands and Indonesia	Qualitative Interviews	10 accommodation facilities	CE strategies in hospitality (regional focus).
Bowen et al. (2024)	Hospitality SMEs and the CE: Strategies and practice post-COVID	Two-phase study: 1st phase - quantitative data; 2nd phase - qualitative interviews with SME managers in UK hospitality	6 interviews with managers	COVID-19's impact on CE in hospitality SMEs.
Amicarelli et al. (2024)	Guest editorial: CE in the agri-food, tourism and hospitality industries in the post-pandemic era	Literature review	26 articles on circularity and sustainability strategies in agri-food, hospitality, and tourism sectors	Implementing CE for SDGs and consumer behaviour.
De Martino et al. (2024)	Sustainable hospitality and tourism in the Anthropocene era: the need for a more radical shift of the current CE models	Literature review, thematic analysis	151 articles to create a conceptual map of the literature structure (22 articles selected for final review).	CE approaches models for sustainability in tourism.
Tomassini et al. (2024)	CE in tourism and hospitality: A micro-meso-macro framework for inter-disciplinary research	Literature review, Inter-disciplinary approach	N/A	Challenges in CE regenerative tourism processes.
Muthuswamy and Sharma (2023)	Focusing on the Role of the CE in the Supply Chain to Reduce Waste: Evidence from Hotel Supply Chains	Quantitative research	197 employees working in various restaurants and hotels in Saudi Arabia	Big data's role in hotel waste reduction.
Bux and Amicarelli (2022)	CE and sustainable strategies in the hospitality industry: Current trends and empirical implications	Literature review, a systematic and critical review	62 articles	"Farm to fork" and sustainable management in hospitality.
Da Silva et al. (2021)	CE in Tourism and Hospitality: Analysis of Scientific Production on the Theme	Literature review, bibliographic research	18 articles from databases Spell, CAPES Portal, SciELO, and Web of Science	CE understanding and implementation in tourism/hospitality sectors
Sorin and Sivarajah (2021)	Exploring CE in the hospitality industry: empirical evidence from Scandinavian hotel operators.	Qualitative interviews, Scandinavia	Telephone interviews with 10 representatives from 6 hotels and 7 informal interviews	Barriers and value drivers for CE in hotel supply chains.
Perez et al. (2023)	CE practices in the hotel sector: a change of paradigm	Literature review	N/A	Current CE practices in hotels.
Núñez (2020)	The energy use of used vegetable oil waste in the hotel, restaurant and catering sector in the field of circular bio-economy	N/A	N/A	N/A
Julião et al. (2020)	Consumers' perceptions of CE in the hotel industry: evidence from Portugal	Quantitative research - survey	167 consumers from 3 major Portuguese destinations, Porto, Lisbon, Algarve	Consumer views on CE in hospitality.
Jones and Wynn (2019)	The CE, natural capital and resilience in tourism and hospitality	Literature review, an exploratory review	N/A	The concepts of the CE, natural capital and resilience and its integration into wider theories of sustainability and a developing role for information systems
Rodríguez and Alonso-Almeida (2019)	The CE Strategy in Hospitality: A Multicase Approach	Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and qualitative interviews	4 large international chains	CE strategies by major European hotel chains.
Pamfilie et al. (2018)	CE: A New Direction for the Sustainability of the Hotel Industry in Romania	Quantitative research - survey	100 hotels and their managers, 74 responses received	Impact of integrated quality, environmental, and safety systems on hotel economic performance.
Li and Li (2013)	Research on Building Low-Carbon Hotels from the Perspective of CE	N/A	N/A	Issues and strategies for low-carbon hotels.
Song (2013)	Analysis on Green Hotel Marketing Management under the Background of CE	N/A	N/A	Green marketing models and their implementation in hotels.

Note: N/A – not available information.

(Source: Authors' own work based on WoS and Scopus)

and thickness of the lines indicate the strength of co-occurrence between terms. The closer the words are to the central theme of the cluster, the more closely connected the concepts are. The most recent research, highlighted in yellow in Fig. 2, focuses on the extended 9-R framework, the impact of COVID-19 on CE practices in hospitality, and broader discussions related to the Anthropocene society.

As shown in Fig. 2, CE and sustainability form the central axis of the visualization, indicating their crucial role in research. CE is closely linked to key terms like “management” and “food waste” in the hospitality sector, highlighting the focus on these two core areas. Additionally, a node with the keywords “choice” and “consumer behaviour” stands out, although the distance of this node indicates that research on consumer behaviour in the context of CE remains limited. This suggests that consumer behaviour plays a significant role in implementing CE in the hospitality industry, often depending on management’s decision to adopt these principles. Keywords such as “management” and “framework” highlight the necessity for the development of effective strategies and frameworks for implementation. Additionally, Fig. 2 reveals that topics like “economic performance” and “cost management” are underrepresented, indicating that while economic aspects are crucial in implementing CE principles, they are insufficiently addressed in the literature. As a result, current researchers are often forced to draw conclusions about CE in hospitality from studies in other sectors, as existing research does not provide a sufficient overview of managerial behaviour in this specific context.

This reliance on broader CE literature outside the hospitality sector is also reflected in the limited number of studies directly focused on CE in hospitality, with only 19 relevant articles identified. The focus and research questions of these 19 analysed studies are summarized in Table 4. Current research on behaviour in tourism and CE is addressed primarily by Khan et al. (2022) in relation to SMEs in tourism and consumer and Rodríguez et al. (2020) regarding tourist attitudes toward CE. However, none of the studies specifically focus on the behaviour of managers concerning CE adoption in the hospitality industry (the closest being Khan et al., 2022, which examines SMEs in tourism).

The CE studies primarily mention factors supporting sustainable development, with an emphasis on skill development, critical thinking, education, awareness-raising, and understanding the overall mindset (De Martino et al., 2024). Addressing barriers that appear and are discussed in Section 3 requires accepting change, with training and raising sustainability awareness, frequently cited as key solutions (Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021).

The most citations in the articles come from journals like “International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management” (53×), “Amfiteatru Economic” (35×), “Sustainability” (33×), and “Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism” (19×). The most cited authors on CE in hospitality include Jones and Wynn (2019) with 53 citations, Pamfilie et al. (2018) with 35, highlighting key contributions to sustainability and CE practices in the industry.

#### 4.2. CE behaviour (n = 65 articles)

A central theme that emerges in the organizational literature on CE behaviour is that transitioning to circularity is not merely a question of adopting new technologies or complying with regulatory frameworks. It is, at its core, a profound process of behavioural transformation as seen in the overview of selected articles in Table 5. This behavioural shift is shaped by internal organizational values, awareness, knowledge and the structural conditions under which decisions are made.

However, upon reviewing these articles, those listed in Table 5 were found to be primarily related to managerial implications, while the majority of the others focused on consumer behaviour. This bibliometric study includes both customer and managerial perspectives, as these are strongly interrelated, as demonstrated in Section 3.4. Understanding customer behaviour is essential for hotel management to adapt their strategic decisions accordingly and to meet evolving guest expectations.

**Table 5**  
Overview of Selected articles with the key words CE and behaviour in the title.

Author	Title of the paper	Behavioural theme	Key findings
Alnoor et al. (2024)	Benchmarking of circular economy behaviours for Iraqi energy companies based on engagement modes with green technology and environmental, social, and governance rating.	Decision-making of companies	Comparing the behaviour of energy companies in Iraq in relation to the CE based on their engagement in green technologies and ESG performance evaluation.
Appiah et al. (2023)	Green culture, environmental innovativeness, green intellectual capital and circular economy implementation behaviour: A sequential mediation model.	Green Culture, Green Innovativeness and Green Intellectual Capital and its Effect on CE behaviour	The mediating role of environmental innovativeness and green intellectual capital in the relationship between corporate green culture and CE implementation behaviour.
Aryee et al. (2024)	Circular economy, customer citizenship behaviour and firm performance: Some empirical evidence	Customer Citizenship Behaviour	Motivations and impacts of adopting CE practices on firm performance, with customer citizenship behaviour mediating and moderating the relationship between CE practices and firm performance
Bertassini et al. (2021)	Circular economy and sustainability: The role of organizational behaviour in the transition journey	Organizational and Social Influences	Corporate green culture is crucial for successful organizational transition toward CE principles.
Gitelman et al. (2019)	Rational Behaviour of an Enterprise in the Energy Market in a Circular Economy	Rational behaviour of company	To create a methodology for rational behaviour, it is defined as the intention to maximise the benefits and potential of energy markets in order to reduce energy supply costs and increase the electrification of industrial production.
Godinho Filho et al. (2024)	Awareness as a catalyst for sustainable behaviours: A theoretical exploration of planned behaviour and value-belief-norms in the circular economy	Awareness and Knowledge	Importance of personal values, beliefs, and positive evaluations of sustainability outcomes over external pressures
Gonella, Godinho Filho, Campos, and	People’s awareness and behaviours of circular economy around the world: literature review	Awareness and Knowledge	Gaps in awareness and behaviour stem from insufficient conceptual understanding and

(continued on next page)

Table 5 (continued)

Author	Title of the paper	Behavioural theme	Key findings
Ganga (2024)	and research agenda		educational disparities.
Guo et al. (2024)	Research on regulatory strategies of green finance and optimization of corporate green behaviour under the framework of circular economy	Behavioural Barriers (greenwashing, regulatory response)	Stronger regulatory and incentive frameworks are essential to combat corporate greenwashing and promote genuine CE participation. Although organizations report positive intentions, critical barriers prevent them from implementing best practices in plastic recycling.
Khan et al. (2020)	Assessing the determinants of intentions and behaviours of organizations toward a circular economy for plastics	Attitudes and Intentions (intention-behaviour gap)	There is a significant gap between firms' awareness and their actual CE-related behaviour.
Liu and Bai (2014)	An exploration of firms' awareness and behaviour of developing circular economy: An empirical research in China	Attitudes and Intentions (intention-behaviour gap)	Persuasive communication can positively influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions for remanufactured products
Muranko et al. (2019)	Circular economy and behaviour change: Using persuasive communication to encourage pro-circular behaviours toward remanufactured refrigeration equipment	Attitudes and Intentions	Attitude, social pressure, environmental commitment, and green economic incentives have a positive and significant impact on CE readiness. The inclusion of factors such as environmental commitment and green economic incentives into the Extended Theory of Planned Behaviour model significantly enhances its explanatory power for CE readiness.
Singh et al. (2018)	Developing an extended theory of planned behaviour model to explore circular economy readiness in manufacturing MSMEs, India.	Theory of Planned Behaviour (attitude, social norms, environmental commitment)	A fair and empowering environment increases OCB, job satisfaction, and support for CE within organizations.
Singh and Singh (2019)	Interplay of organizational justice, psychological empowerment, organizational citizenship behaviour, and job satisfaction in the context of circular economy	Organizational and Social Influences (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour – OCB)	The strategic integration of pro-environmental behaviour, digital transformation
Tosa et al. (2024)	Digital transformation, incentives, and pro-environmental behaviour:	Pro-environmental behaviour and digital transformation	

Table 5 (continued)

Author	Title of the paper	Behavioural theme	Key findings
	Assessing the uptake of sustainability in companies' transition toward circular economy.		and incentives is essential for advancing toward a CE.

(Source: Authors own work based on WoS and Scopus)

To illustrate the relevance and maturity of key concepts within the literature on CE and behaviour, Fig. 3 presents a thematic map that positions core terms based on their centrality (relevance to the field) and density (degree of conceptual development). The x-axis indicates how central or relevant the given topic is in the overall context of CE and behaviour, while the y-axis emphasizes the extent to which the topic is developed or researched, reflecting the density and interest in scientific research and discussion (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

The map in Fig. 3 is divided into four quadrants, each representing a different type of thematic role:

1. **Upper-right quadrant (Motor Themes):**

This area includes topics that are both central and moderately developed in the literature. Terms such as *reuse*, *waste management*, and *pro-environmental behaviour* appear here, indicating they are actively discussed and linked to broader conceptual structures. However, their position near the midline on the development axis suggests there is still room for deeper theoretical and empirical elaboration.

Notably, the keywords *management*, *planned behaviour*, and *attitude* appear in the bottom-right area of the map. Their high centrality indicates strong relevance to the field, but their low density suggests these concepts have not yet been fully developed or systematically examined in the context of CE. This gap highlights an opportunity for future research to explore how these psychological and managerial factors influence CE practices in real decision-making.

2. **Lower-right quadrant (Basic Themes):**

Terms such as *business models*, *framework*, and *products* are located in the lower-central area of the map, below the horizontal axis and near the vertical midline. This positioning indicates that these topics have moderate relevance (centrality) but low internal development (density), suggesting that although they are conceptually present in the literature, they are not yet strongly integrated or elaborated within the broader research field on CE.

3. **Upper-left quadrant (Niche Themes):**

Concepts such as *climate change*, *commitment*, and *green* appear in this area. These are specialised themes that may reflect focused but less broadly connected streams of research. Their position suggests these topics are internally well-developed but not yet central to the overall discourse.

4. **Lower-left quadrant (Emerging or Declining Themes):**

Terms such as *reverse logistics*, *technology*, *curing*, *industry*, and *mechanical behaviour* are located in this area, indicating that these are either emerging fields in need of development, or areas that are declining in research attention. Their low centrality and density suggest limited integration into the main body of CE literature.

Fig. 4 reinforces this observation by visually presenting a conceptual structure map generated through Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), which clusters keywords based on their semantic proximity and co-occurrence in the reviewed literature.

On the left side of the map in Fig. 4, we find concepts such as *literature reviews*, *production and consumption*, *electronic waste*, and *recycling*, which suggest a more general and systemic framing of CE, often associated with descriptive or overview-based studies. This area also

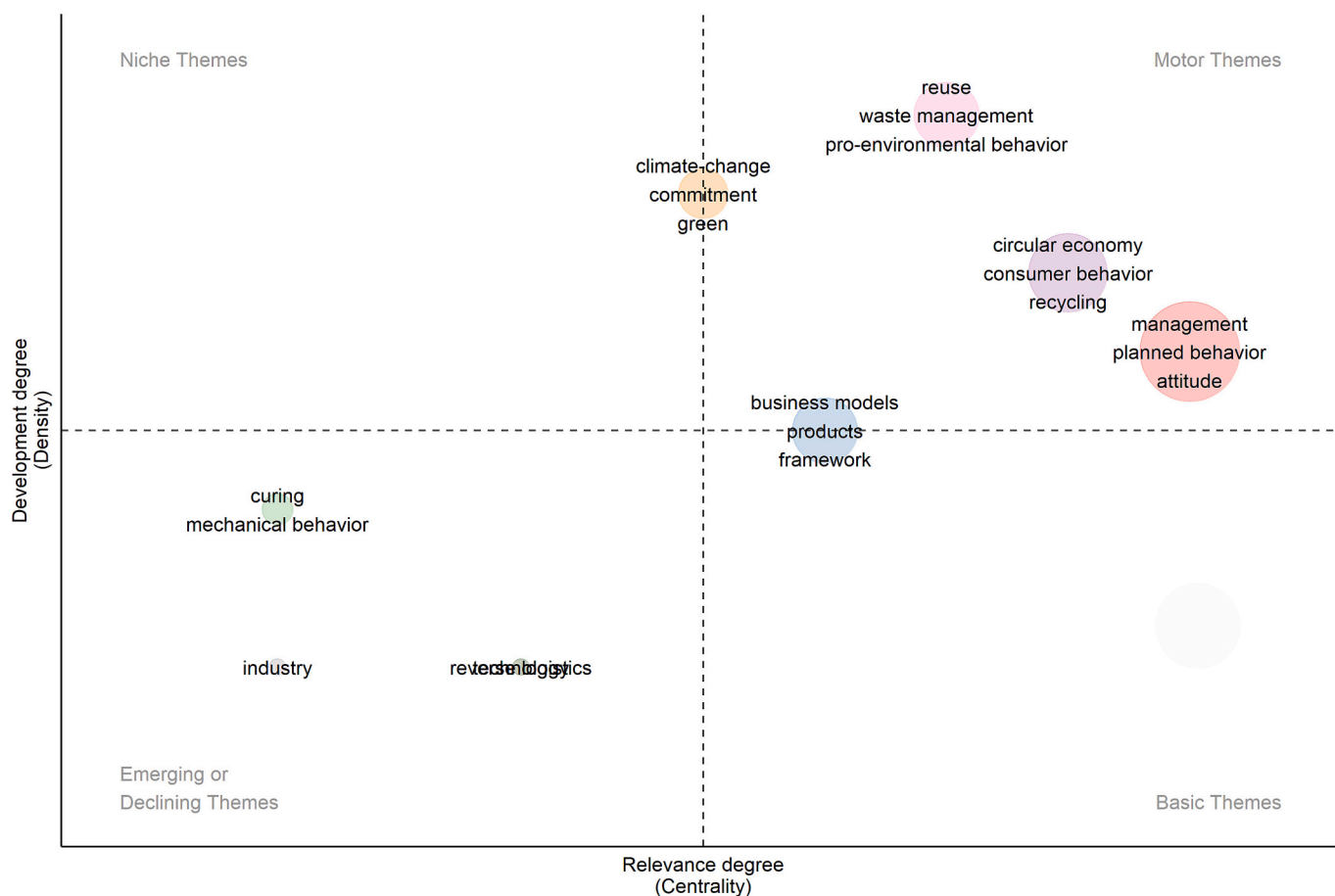


Fig. 3. Thematic Map of the visualization of the development and relevance of CE and behaviour.

Note: X-axis (centrality) = topic relevance to the overall field. Y-axis (density) = level of development of the theme. Top-right = well-developed and central topics (motor themes). Bottom-right = relevant but underdeveloped (basic themes). Top-left = niche and specialised. Bottom-left = emerging or declining. Circle size = number of items in the cluster.

(Source: Authors own work based on WoS, Scopus and Biblioshiny)

includes foundational concepts like *reuse*, *disposal*, and *consumer behaviour*.

The upper part of the map brings together terms such as *employee*, *pro-environmental behaviour*, and *waste management*, indicating a strand of research focused on behavioural and workplace dynamics.

The right side of the map is densely populated with keywords like *climate change*, *commitment*, *indicators*, *quality*, and *intention*, which reflect more applied and evaluative aspects of CE, often linked to performance assessment, innovation, and goal-oriented behaviour. They are distinctly distant from core action-oriented terms like *CE*, *recycling*, *reuse*, and *repair*. This separation indicates a disconnect between stated behavioural intentions and the implementation of concrete CE practices. This observation reflects what several studies have identified as the intention–action gap in organizational circularity. Liu and Bai (2014) explain that even when firms are aware of and committed to sustainability, they often fail to act due to structural barriers such as bureaucratic inertia and inflexible internal processes. Similarly, Wastling et al. (2018) argue that firms delay adopting CE innovations due to uncertainty about market acceptance, further weakening the link between intention and behaviour. Wu, Yi, and Hu (2024) confirm that regulatory clarity and external incentives are needed to help organizations move from intention to action by lowering perceived risk and supporting systemic change.

Interestingly, key theoretical terms like *planned behaviour* and *attitude* are absent or peripheral in this conceptual space, which reinforces the earlier observation (see Fig. 3) that behavioural mechanisms are still

underrepresented in this research field.

Although CE and behaviour have gained prominence recently, they remain underexplored, especially in sector-specific and managerial contexts. As a proof, none of the existing studies examining CE and behaviour have systematically analysed the behavioural mechanisms of CE adoption in hotels. Since 2021, there has been a significant increase in the number of published articles related to CE behaviour, reaching a peak of over 20 articles in 2023. This upward trend suggests a growing interest in the research area in recent years. The focus on behaviour within the context of CE is primarily directed toward consumer behaviour, as illustrated in the three-field plot. This three-field plot (Fig. 5) visually connects key terms (left), abstract focuses (middle), and leading scholars (right), offering a comprehensive overview of the current research landscape on behavioural aspects of CE.

As shown in Fig. 5, the most frequent research themes such as CE, sustainability, and consumer behaviour are strongly linked with practical terms like *waste*, *products*, and *recycling*. However, behavioural topics such as *behaviour change* or *pro-environmental behaviour* are only weakly connected to the main body of literature and are addressed by relatively few authors. This suggests that psychological and behavioural aspects of CE still require a peripheral focus, despite their theoretical relevance.

Based on the bibliometric analysis, three recurring behavioural barriers can be identified in the literature on CE in the hospitality sector:

First, as shown in Table 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, both research and practice tend to focus on basic actions like waste, recycling or energy-

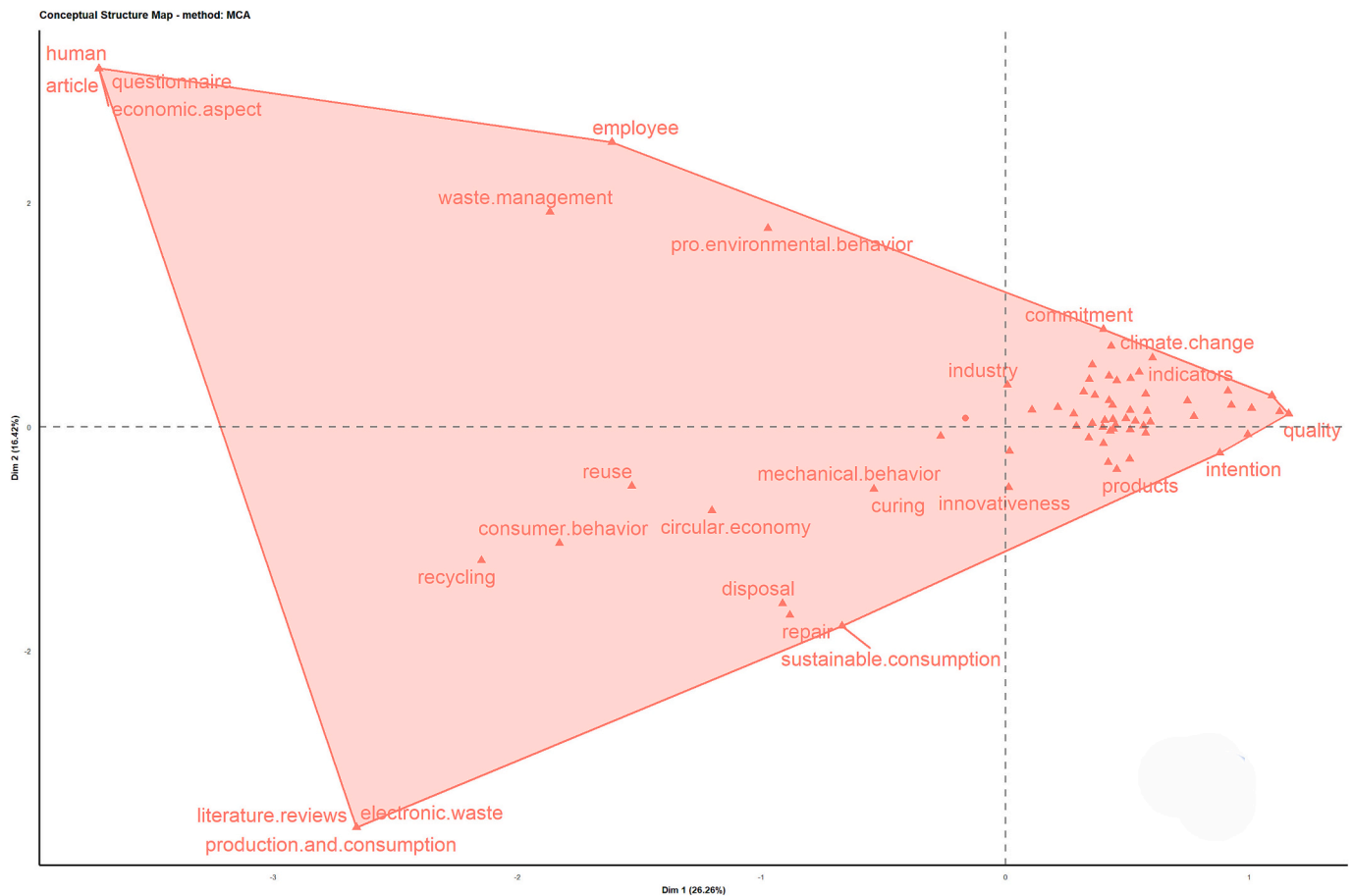


Fig. 4. Factor map of keyword frequency for CE and behaviour.

Note: X and Y axes = semantic similarity dimensions. Proximity = conceptual closeness. Triangles = frequently co-occurring terms. Shaded area = main conceptual space of the field.

(Source: Authors' own work based on WoS, Scopus and Biblioshiny)

saving. This suggests a pattern of selective adoption, where only the easiest and most visible measures are implemented, while more demanding changes in processes or management structures are often avoided.

**Second**, a disconnect between stated intentions and actual behaviour appears repeatedly. Terms such as *intention*, *commitment*, *climate change*, *indicators*, *quality*, and *products* cluster in the right section of the conceptual map (Fig. 4), indicating that they are frequently mentioned but remain conceptually detached from the core terms of CE, *reuse*, *recycling*, and *consumer behaviour*. In contrast, terms like CE, *consumer behaviour*, *recycling*, and *reuse* are located closer to the centre of the map, suggesting that they form a foundational but loosely connected framework. Psychological concepts such as *intention*, *commitment*, *pro-environmental behaviour*, or *attitude* appear both visually and thematically separated from the concrete practices of CE, highlighting a disconnect between mindset and implementation.

**Third**, Fig. 3 also shows that key managerial and behavioural concepts such as *attitude*, *planned behaviour* and *management* are highly relevant (high centrality) but underdeveloped (low density), indicating a lack of deeper investigation into decision-making mechanisms.

These barriers do not appear to be purely technical in nature. Instead, their persistence points to underlying psychological mechanisms that will be further analysed in Section 5.

## 5. Psychological effects of barriers

Previous Sections 3 and 4 has shown that despite a growing presence

of CE-related terms such as *reuse*, *waste management*, and *sustainable consumption*, many actions adopted in practice remain basic and often limited to low-effort strategies (Bowen et al., 2024; Da Silva et al., 2021). These behavioural patterns appear repeatedly across the reviewed literature. However, the reasons behind these patterns remain insufficiently explored. Rather than being purely technical or economic as stated by some authors (Bittner et al., 2024; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022), these barriers may also influence the internal psychological processes of managers.

To address this gap, Section 5 builds on the identified behavioural barriers and examines them through selected psychological mechanisms. This step is necessary to understand not just what is missing in CE implementation, but why, even when knowledge and intention are present, many hotel managers fail to move beyond symbolic action.

Through psychological theories, this chapter explains how psychological mechanisms interact with identified barriers to explain hotel managers' minimal engagement with CE practices (RQ2). It shows that barriers not only delay the adoption of CE practices, but also lead to psychological responses like inner conflict (cognitive dissonance) and a false sense of doing enough (moral licensing).

### 5.1. Evolution of the 'so what?' attitude

Even though the potential benefits of CE are well recognized (Cornejo-Ortega & Chávez Dagostino, 2020) in reduction of costs, improving efficiency, and opening new growth opportunities for companies (Kiausiene et al., 2024), the discussion on gaps between

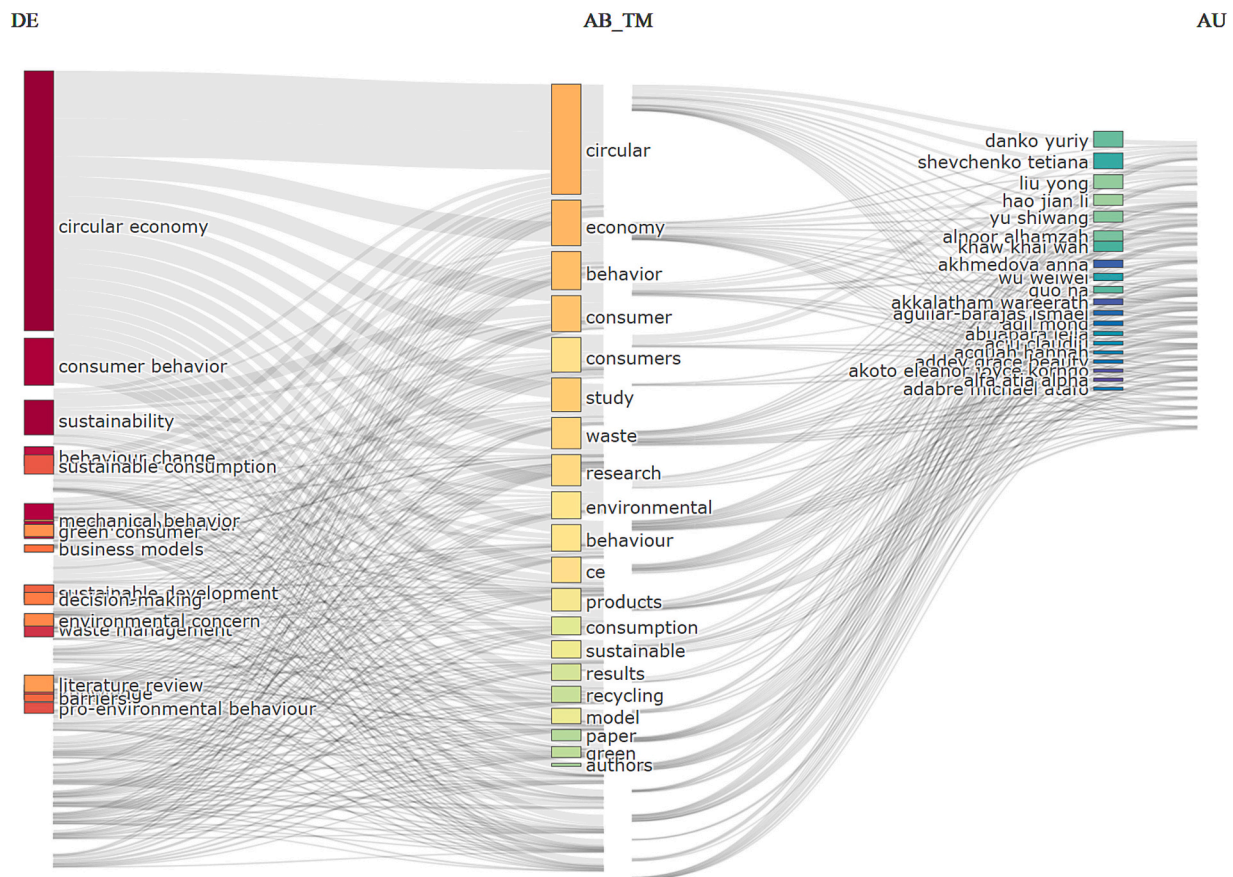


Fig. 5. Three-field plot on CE and behaviour.

Note: Left = author keywords (DE), Middle = terms from abstracts (AB\_TM), Right = authors (AU). Line thickness = strength of association. Colour = keyword clusters. Connections show which authors write about which topics and terms. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

(Source: Authors' own work based on WoS, Scopus and Biblioshiny)

intentions and actual behaviour continues (see Khan et al., 2022; Maddock et al., 2022; Ramkissoon et al., 2013). Resource and structural barriers (Cornejo-Ortega & Chávez Dagostino, 2020), limited technological and dynamic capabilities (Bux & Amicarelli, 2022) and behavioural constraints (Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021) along with established habits were identified as often widening the intention-behaviour gap (Ramkissoon, 2020). Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al. (2024) refer to these barriers as psychological. Some managers refuse to dig deeper into these practices due to perceived difficulty of integrating CE practices into established business models (Rodríguez & Alonso-Almeida, 2019) and compounded by financial constraints and a lack of understanding of the long-term benefits (Kiausiene et al., 2024). Managers may then tend to favour simpler, low-cost solutions like recycling, avoiding more complex CE practices, such as composting, which requires deeper integration and operational changes (Kiausiene et al., 2024). The motivation to go further is very low and their sustainability action often comes from the pressure leading to false commitments (Opferkuch et al., 2021). The aforementioned barriers contribute to these false commitments (Bittner et al., 2024; Cornejo-Ortega & Chávez Dagostino, 2020; Sorin & Sivarajah, 2021,) and the 'So What' attitude is developed. The 'So What?' attitude describes a psychological reaction that acts as a barrier, where managers recognize the value of CE practices but convince themselves that small steps are enough. This reaction is shaped by two psychological mechanisms (cognitive dissonance and moral licensing) being closest. For example, as Ribeiro and Souza (2025) point out, hotel managers are more familiar with the concept of a "sustainable hotel" than with the systemic principles of CE, which may lead to a "So What?" attitude where existing basic sustainability efforts

are perceived as sufficient, thus discouraging deeper engagement in the form of CE.

## 5.2. Linking psychological mechanisms to the 'so what?' attitude

Although current sources do not explicitly refer to psychological concepts such as moral licensing or cognitive dissonance, they describe situations that show typical signs of these mechanisms. These concepts were not added arbitrarily but were selected as useful theoretical lenses to better understand recurring patterns in managerial decision-making and the gap between intentions and actions.

### 5.2.1. Cognitive dissonance theory

According to Festinger (1957), cognitive dissonance arises when individuals experience psychological discomfort caused by a conflict between their beliefs and actions. Limited cognition is understood by Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al. (2024) as a lack of technical or personal skills, insufficient information, or a lack of educational training.

In hospitality, cognitive dissonance often manifests when managers publicly commit to sustainability and CE principles but in reality, rely on linear practices or practices that may seem circular but are not. At the same time, existing barriers not only hinder progress but might be also used by managers to rationalize this inconsistency reinforcing the dissonance in both directions.

To further support this, cognitive dissonance may lead managers to acknowledge the importance of CE models for long-term sustainability (Einarsson & Sorin, 2020) while continuing to follow traditional linear

models in practice (Costa et al., 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2020). This gap between intention and action is a common challenge observed in sustainable development within the tourism industry (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014; Nieto-García et al., 2024). Psychological barriers like feeling tied to past investments (sunk costs) or lacking mental space to deal with new sustainability strategies can deepen the internal conflict and make meaningful change harder (Gonella, Godinho Filho, Ganga, et al., 2024).

As cognitive dissonance deepens, several defensive mechanisms arise. Studies indicate that unresolved dissonance can result in green-washing or SDG-washing (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al., 2022; Opeferkuch et al., 2021), where sustainability and CE claims are made without substantial behavioural change.

When managers are sceptical about the true business or environmental benefits of CE (De Martino et al., 2024; Fauzi et al., 2024), they tend to limit their participation in sustainability initiatives to the bare minimum necessary to avoid reputational risks or regulatory penalties. This minimal engagement, rooted in dissonance reduction, excludes deeper CE practices and leads to rationalizations that support the ‘So What’ attitude. Overtime, this insincere approach not only contributes to environmental degradation (Mrabet et al., 2017) but also risks reinforcing environmental burdens by focusing narrowly on efficiency improvements rather than achieving systemic change (Kirchherr et al., 2023). According to Festinger’s (1957) dissonance theory, managers should either actively change their behaviour such as by implementing CE models or adjust their perceptions through education or a shift in organizational culture that promotes green innovations (Appiah et al., 2023; Cherian et al., 2021). Table 6 shows how cognitive dissonance indirectly manifest in the existing CE-related hospitality literature. It offers a suitable explanation for the observed phenomena such as the rationalisation of minimal actions as the tension between sustainability values and practical decisions.

### 5.2.2. Moral licensing

In this study, as discussed above cognitive dissonance is understood as a psychological effect that arises when managers are aware of the importance of CE practices but fail to act accordingly due to barriers mentioned in Section 3. However, Miller and Effron (2010) argue that such differences in people’s actions or opinions are not always caused by differences in their true attitudes or motivations as proved by some authors (Bonilla-Priego et al., 2022; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014; Sharma & Foropon, 2019). Instead, these differences often depend on whether individuals feel psychologically licensed (have permission to act without harming their self-image). If they feel licensed, they are more willing to behave in ways they might normally avoid. If they do not feel licensed,

**Table 6**  
Manifestations of cognitive dissonance in hospitality-related CE literature (own processing).

Author	Problem	Explanation in connection to cognitive dissonance
Ally et al. (2024)	Avoiding effort and cost	Hotels rationalize focusing only on basic waste practices by perceiving broader CE strategies as too costly and time-consuming.
Bittner et al. (2024)	Managerial thinking and staff mindset limit CE adoption, habitual use of plastic packaging	Due to lack of education, Indonesians dispose of plastic packaging as they would biodegradable materials, without recognizing the environmental consequences. The cognitive bias in this case manifests as the transfer of past habits to new contexts.
De Martino et al. (2024)	Carbon neutrality illusion	Many offsetting initiatives create a false sense of climate action by promoting carbon neutrality without changing core practices.

they may even hold back from doing things that would normally be acceptable. This is known as moral licensing (Miller & Effron, 2010).

In the current literature on CE, the psychological mechanism of moral licensing is occasionally acknowledged, particularly in relation to consumer behaviour. For instance, Maione et al. (2025) highlight how tourists who engage in one sustainable action such as reusing towels or buying eco-labelled products may feel morally “entitled” to neglect other, more impactful behaviours. This reflects a broader tendency where individuals or organizations use small pro-environmental efforts as justification for avoiding more demanding sustainable practices. This mechanism has been empirically supported by a meta-analysis conducted by Blanken et al. (2015), who found a statistically significant small-to-medium effect size, suggesting that initial pro-environmental actions such as basic recycling or energy-saving may psychologically “license” individuals or organizations to justify inaction on more demanding or systemic sustainability efforts. In the context of hospitality, this helps to explain patterns observed in studies such as Bux and Amicarelli (2022), where hotels often implement low-effort sustainability measures while deprioritising deeper systemic CE integration. In hotel management, this can clarify why managers who genuinely care about sustainability may still fall short of pursuing more ambitious actions. In this sense, moral licensing is not a separate barrier but a coping mechanism triggered by dissonance. This further supports the ‘So What?’ attitude, where managers believe their minimal efforts are enough and see no reason to take on more difficult CE changes. Similarly, Gholamzadehmir et al. (2019) confirm this and suggest that once certain “green” actions are taken, they are sometimes used to rationalize reduced commitment in the future. These findings suggest that moral licensing may be one of the psychological barriers indirectly hindering the adoption of more transformative circular strategies in the hospitality sector.

As proven, psychological mechanisms like cognitive dissonance and moral licensing do not arise in isolation. They are often strengthened by real-world barriers that managers face when trying to implement CE principles. These barriers do not only slow down CE adoption; they also reinforce the psychological justification for minimal efforts that have been proven in many studies on CE in tourism. The interconnection between barriers, cognitive dissonance, moral licensing and emergence of ‘So What’ attitude is explained in Fig. 6.

## 6. Discussion

Most existing CE frameworks such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation ReSOLVE model (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2014) or 10R framework provide guidance on *what* companies should do to achieve circularity, often emphasizing technical and structural dimensions such as reuse, remanufacturing, and material innovation. However, they offer limited insight into *why* these strategies often remain underimplemented in practice. This is particularly true in service-dominant sectors like hospitality, where managerial discretion and psychological factors play a far greater role than in manufacturing contexts.

This study fills this gap by offering the first integrated review of CE research in hospitality, combining a literature review and bibliometric analysis to show what is already known and what remains underexplored in managerial behaviour. Consistent with prior studies (e.g., Bittner et al., 2024; Bux & Amicarelli, 2022), we can argue that overall hospitality sector struggles with the structural and resource-based barriers in CE implementation. The barriers include weak environmental management systems, limited dynamic capabilities, and finance/technology constraints reinforced by external pressures such as regulation, local policy, and sceptical customer demand (RQ1). These findings align with existing literature but also confirm that such explanations are dominant and repeated. However, the novelty of this study lies in revealing an additional psychological dimension that has been largely overlooked. Thus, the aim of this study is also to offer a forward-looking perspective by conceptually linking psychological and behavioural

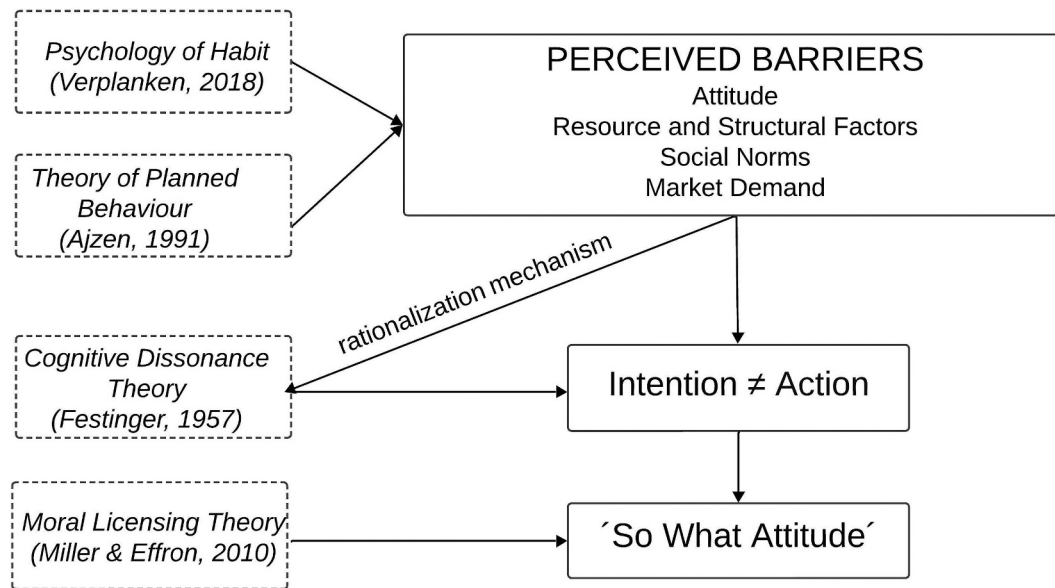


Fig. 6. Mechanisms leading to minimal CE action in hospitality.  
(Source: Authors' own work)

insights with CE adoption in hospitality. While recent papers have only started to suggest this connection for future research (Musova et al., 2025), this study anticipates this emerging trend and lays the groundwork for more interdisciplinary investigations.

This additional psychological layer emerged from the bibliometric mapping analysis:

- Research and practice tend to focus on low-effort CE activities, such as recycling and energy-saving, often justified by technical or resource limitations.
- Psychological constructs like intention, commitment, and attitude are conceptually central but remain undertheorized and poorly connected to practical CE outcomes.
- Managerial constructs (attitude, planned behaviour, management) are central in CE behaviour but theoretically and empirically underdeveloped in current hospitality studies.

This reflects a fragmentation in the research field and highlights the persistent intention–behaviour gap noted but not deeply explained in earlier research. To address this, the study introduces the ‘So What?’ mindset – a conceptual tool grounded in cognitive dissonance and moral licensing theories, which helps explain why even motivated and well-informed managers may settle for symbolic or minimal actions. This directly builds on previous insights by authors such as Dütschke et al. (2018), who describe moral licensing as a rebound effect, where initial sustainable actions serve as justification for inaction. Eickhoff (2024) adds that such mechanisms are often more prevalent among actors with economic privilege, making these justifications even more entrenched. The “So What?” mindset is a theoretical explanation that helps us understand why some hotel managers stop at basic sustainability actions and do not move toward deeper circular changes. It does not suggest bad intentions, instead it suggests a psychological response to limitations and internal conflict. Managers may value sustainability, but face real barriers as suggested in Section 3. This creates tension between what they want to do and what they can do. The “So What?” attitude helps ease this tension by mentally ‘closing the case’ on sustainability efforts.

**Minimizing the need for further action:** Managers may feel that simple actions like switching off lights or recycling are enough. From their point of view, going further like redesigning operations or making long-term investments seems unnecessary or too demanding.

**Justifying the status quo:** Instead of questioning whether more could

be done, managers tell themselves, “We’ve already taken steps toward sustainability, and that’s sufficient.” This helps them feel their job is done.

**Coping with internal tension:** Managers may value sustainability, but face real barriers—limited time, money, or support. This creates tension between what they want to do and what they can do. The “So What?” attitude helps ease this tension by mentally ‘closing the case’ on sustainability efforts.

These psychological mechanisms complement, rather than contradict, earlier structural explanations. They offer a missing layer of understanding, helping to explain *why* barriers persist even when technical solutions are available and managerial awareness is high. In doing so, this study extends the work of prior scholars (Bittner et al., 2024; De Martino et al., 2024; Tomassini et al., 2024) by moving from surface-level descriptions of hesitation or resistance toward a more nuanced, behaviourally informed explanation. Zaki (2025) emphasize that although the implementation of CE principles in the hotel sector is still in its early stages, Industry 4.0 technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and big data analytics represent promising tools to overcome existing barriers and improve both sustainability and operational performance. However, the mere availability of these technologies does not guarantee their effective adoption. Therefore, addressing technological and behavioural dimensions in tandem is crucial for advancing genuine CE integration in hospitality.

The originality of this study lies in its contribution to the current knowledge on CE in hospitality by:

- Presenting the first integrated review of CE and behaviour in hospitality through a psychological lens.
- Visually mapping CE research in hospitality through bibliographic analysis, helping researchers navigate the field and emphasizing the role of behaviour in CE transitions.
- Revealing unexplored behavioural dimensions related to CE adoption, encouraging future research to focus on specific psychological, social, or managerial factors that have been overlooked in the current literature.
- Proposing the ‘So What?’ mindset as a novel conceptual explanation for selective CE adoption and symbolic compliance.
- Demonstrating how moral licensing and cognitive dissonance help explain the mismatch between stated intentions and actual managerial CE practice.

For practitioners, this paper highlights that psychological barriers are not permanent obstacles. They can be reduced or overcome by looking at problems differently. Simplifying choices and creating environments where CE practices feel more natural can also help. Rather than falling into a ‘So What’ mindset trap, this insight encourages creativity, experimentation, and the use of well-studied case examples to implement meaningful change, rather than waiting for perfect conditions. [Gusmerotti et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight that innovation is necessary to move beyond routine actions, and [Sarmiento and Loureiro \(2021\)](#) caution that established habits can become stagnant without it. Without ongoing innovation and adaptation ([Karlovsek et al., 2023](#)), hotels risk falling into cycles of minimal compliance, reinforcing the ‘So What’ attitude where social pressure exists but meaningful change is absent.

## 7. Conclusion

This review set out to understand why hotel managers often express support for CE principles but take only limited action. By combining findings from CE literature in hospitality, behavioural studies, and psychological theory, we offer a clearer and more comprehensive explanation of the factors influencing managerial decision-making and shaping CE behaviour in this sector. First, we identified a range of external barriers that hinder the deeper implementation of CE practices in the tourism and hospitality sector. These barriers were grouped into five main categories: behavioural factors, structural factors, resource-based factors, social pressure, and demand scepticism. Behavioural factors relate to internal efficacy, understanding among managers and staff, and the need for daily awareness building. In the general CE context, they correspond to awareness, environmental attitudes, and knowledge. Structural factors include the existence of environmental management systems and organizational competence, particularly the ability to adapt and innovate. These are often influenced by the prevailing organizational culture. Resource-based factors concern access to finance, materials, and technology. Financial limitations and lack of technological infrastructure are frequently cited as major barriers to CE adoption. Social pressure refers to the influence of environmental regulations, local policy settings, and customer expectations. In a broader sense, it also includes pressure from stakeholders, trade partners, and incentives embedded in green economic frameworks. Demand scepticism captures inconsistencies between pro-environmental attitudes and actual behaviour among tourists, as well as varying demand patterns among business and end consumers. It also includes socio-demographic differences in CE perceptions and the prioritization of service quality and economic viability over circularity. In general CE literature, this category highlights the need to align CE strategies with customer-centric value creation and to overcome trust gaps. (RQ1). These systemic constraints often discourage hotel managers from going beyond simple measures like recycling, yet they are rarely examined in depth by researchers in hospitality or connected to behavioural explanations. This represents the first original contribution for those seeking to understand the factors influencing hotel managers’ behaviour in relation to CE, as no previous systematic study has addressed this topic comprehensively. In addition, what further sets this study apart is its novel psychological perspective. Unlike most existing CE research, which focuses on structural or technical barriers, this study establishes a connection with psychological mechanisms as a key to understanding inaction. Concepts such as moral licensing and cognitive dissonance explain why hotel managers, despite good intentions, may settle for minimal action and feel justified in doing so. We define this as the ‘So What?’ attitude, a mindset where symbolic gestures are perceived as sufficient, even if they lack real impact (RQ2).

This is, to our knowledge, the first study that systematically integrates psychological theory to explain CE behaviour in hospitality. While the literature frequently refers to terms like attitudes, intentions, or planned behaviour, our bibliometric analysis shows these concepts remain disconnected from concrete CE practices like reuse or

remanufacturing. This confirms the presence of an intention–behaviour gap, which is often mentioned but rarely interpreted through a psychological lens. To address this, we propose two main directions. First, external barriers must be reduced through better funding, clearer regulations, and stronger institutional support. Second, and more importantly, internal justifications must be challenged. This means fostering a mindset that values simplicity, reuse, and creative low-tech solutions. These internal shifts, grounded in psychology, are within the control of hotel managers and offer a realistic path toward meaningful CE transformation.

To reduce cognitive dissonance, short training modules ([Ramkissoon, 2022b](#)) can help managers understand how small CE actions may conflict with broader sustainability goals. Introducing practical incentives, such as recognition for implementing deeper CE changes, can counter moral licensing. Simple, low-cost examples (e.g., repurposing furniture, local material sharing) should be shared across hotel networks to demonstrate that meaningful CE actions are possible even without large budgets. For example, while basic strategies like recycling are often legally required and considered circular, hotels can still adopt more thoughtful low-cost practices that go beyond legal compliance.

This study demonstrates that there is a clear theoretical connection between psychological mechanisms and CE implementation. Future research should follow three proposed tracks. First, it should not only explore behavioural intentions, as proposed by [Ajzen’s \(1991\)](#) Theory of Planned Behaviour, but also delve deeper into underlying psychological principles and test them empirically. One example might be *temporal discounting*, which refers to the tendency to devalue future outcomes in favour of immediate ones. In the context of CE, this can mean that long-term environmental benefits are perceived as less relevant compared to short-term operational demands. As noted by [Hendrickx and Nicolaj \(2004\)](#), temporal discounting may significantly reduce motivation for sustainable action, particularly when ecological outcomes are perceived as distant or intangible. Another psychological mechanism include examining implicit norms, cognitive biases, organizational identity or emotional resistance of managers. Second, future research could also examine how specific internal justifications such as moral licensing and cognitive dissonance influence the actual adoption of CE practices by hotel managers. One possible approach is to apply targeted approach that evoke and measure dissonance, for example using the Dissonance Thermometer developed by [Elliot and Devine \(1994\)](#), to assess the psychological gap between sustainability ideals and real actions. Future research could pilot case studies on low-cost, creative CE solutions such as furniture repurposing or material-sharing platforms to show that meaningful CE actions are feasible even without major investment, helping hotels avoid falling into the trap of moral licensing. Third, in parallel, empirical studies (e.g., surveys or experiments) should test the proposed framework by examining whether and how the ‘So What?’ attitude among managers arises from psychological mechanisms like cognitive dissonance and moral licensing, and how this influences CE practices.

The current study also has a few limitations. First, it is based on a literature review without primary empirical validation, and therefore the proposed model remains conceptual. A major gap in current research lies in the limited attention given to the managerial behaviour (particularly that of top managers) on CE in hospitality. As previously noted, this opens up important directions for further investigation. Second, the review primarily focused on studies from hospitality and tourism, supplemented by broader CE and behavioural literature, which may limit the direct applicability of findings to other sectors. Third, while this study focused on psychological mechanisms and managerial behaviour in hotels, it did not consider other contextual factors that may influence cognitive dissonance, partly due to limited existing research in hospitality. Aspects such as leadership style, organizational culture, employee engagement, or pressure from external stakeholders were beyond the scope of this review but could play a key role in how managers perceive

and address internal tensions. Fourth limitation lies in restricting the keyword search to article titles. Even though this approach ensured the inclusion of studies with a clear and direct focus on CE, it may have led to the exclusion of relevant research that discusses CE practices in depth but does not explicitly mention the term in the title.

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Zuzana Vaculčíková:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Haywantee Ramkissoon:** Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Sandeep Kumar Dey:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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### Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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