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Adapting human resource management to social change: Enhancing employee innovation and sustainability outcomes

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how top management's environmentally oriented entrepreneurial approach shapes sustainability outcomes in the hospitality sector. Drawing on survey data collected from hotel employees in China, it shows that when senior leaders actively prioritize environmental initiatives, organizations are more likely to adopt human resources practices that encourage employees to contribute ideas and behavior aimed at reducing environmental impact. The findings further indicate that these practices are most effective when they are supported by a strong organizational culture that embeds environmental values into everyday work routines. In such contexts, employee-driven innovation and improvements in environmental performance are more likely to emerge. By highlighting the combined role of leadership orientation, human resource practices, and organizational culture, the study offers actionable insights for managers seeking to translate sustainability ambitions into concrete employee behavior and measurable environmental outcomes. It also contributes to ongoing debates on how firms in resource-intensive service industries can align strategic intent with day-to-day practices to address environmental challenges.

1. Introduction

The role of top management in attaining organizational sustainability has attracted heightened attention in recent work on entrepreneurial orientation (Ishaq et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Magni et al., 2024; Qalati, Siddiqui, & Magni, 2024). Researchers in this domain have examined top management green entrepreneurial orientation, which encompasses leaders' strategic focus on implementing eco-friendly practices in their entrepreneurial activities (Adiguzel & Sonmez Cakir, 2025; Graziano & Magni, 2022). Rooted in the attention-based view, green entrepreneurial orientation constitutes the persistent allocation of managerial attention and resources to environmental issues and opportunities (Zhang et al., 2024). At the firm level, this orientation motivates employees to see, pay attention to, and get involved in sustainability issues, thereby driving behavior that enhances both innovation and sustainability-related outcomes (Mukhiffun et al., 2024; Murtaza et al., 2024; Samal et al., 2025).

However, despite its promising effects, the pathways through which executive green entrepreneurial orientation is translated into individuals' eco-friendly innovation behavior and sustainability-related results of the firm, that is, the extent to which firms decrease ecological harm and improve resource efficiency, are still poorly investigated (Ahmed et al., 2024b; Zhou et al., 2023). To counteract this deficiency, researchers have highlighted the role of green human resource management (HRM) as a mediator of the relationship between executive green entrepreneurial orientation and employee green innovation behavior, as well as of the relationship between executive green entrepreneurial orientation and firm environmental performance (Hameed et al., 2024; Labella et al., 2022; Sánchez-García et al., 2025). Eco-friendly appraisals, recruitment, and training (all green HRM-related practices) inspire workers to exhibit green behavior, defined as employees' daily efforts to design products or deliver services while keeping in mind the firm's sustainability-oriented outcome (Jiang et al., 2025). Such behavior is essential in the service industry, where frontline workers have a direct impact on environmental results (Lu et al., 2025; Mittal & Kaur, 2022; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Although previous research presents promising findings on green HRM and environmentally driven sustainability indicators, the mediating role of

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green HRM as a mechanism translating executive green entrepreneurial orientation into employee green innovation behavior and organizational environmental performance remains insufficiently investigated (Awan et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2025; Labella et al., 2022), especially in the tourism sector (Zhou et al., 2023). Furthermore, the green culture of organizations has been found to be a significant contextual factor impacting the efficiency of green HRM practices (Aukhoon et al., 2024). Green culture includes shared values, norms, and practices that favor ecological sustainability, which facilitates the implementation of green HRM and fosters its influence on workers' innovation and firm performance (Umrani et al., 2022). The potency of a firm's sustainability culture ensures that, in addition to being encouraged, sustainability is integral to the organization, thus raising the effectiveness of HR activities (Saqlain et al., 2024). Nonetheless, empirical research on the role of firm green culture as a moderator in this area is limited as yet (Muisyo & Qin, 2021; Sheikh et al., 2024).

The hospitality sector offers a compelling setting for examining these links. Hospitality services such as accommodation (hotels), food and beverages (restaurants and bars), travel and tourism, and entertainment contribute substantially to global environmental issues (Dhar, 2025; Tiseo, 2025). It is essential to note that this sector consumes energy, water, and materials and has a significant environmental impact (Oliveira et al., 2024). Globally, it accounts for approximately 5 billion metric tons of CO_2 annually, representing over 9% of global emissions, and is forecast to be 25% by 2030 (Tiseo, 2025). In China alone, it is the second largest source of tourism-related CO_2 emissions (Zhang, 2024), contributing 2.5% of the country's total CO_2 emissions (Li et al., 2021). As guests increasingly prefer green certifications (i.e., China Green Hotel Standard) as a mark of environmental commitment, organizations are pushed to align their practices and strategies with environmentally friendly expectations (Gunduz Songur et al., 2022). Despite these improvements, a lack of knowledge remains regarding how organizational and leadership mechanisms, including green environmental orientation, green HRM, and firm green culture, motivate workers' efforts toward sustainability in the hospitality industry (Umrani et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2024).

In light of the above gaps, this research elucidates the mechanism by which top management's green entrepreneurial orientation influences employees' sustainable innovation behavior and firms' environmental performance in the hospitality industry. In particular, the present work aims to (1) investigate whether green entrepreneurial orientation influences green HRM practices, employee innovation behavior, and firm performance; (2) evaluate how green HRM shapes the relationship between green entrepreneurial orientation and organizational environmental outcomes; and (3) examine whether firm green culture strengthens the effectiveness of green HRM in producing employee and organizational sustainability outcomes. Accordingly, this work is guided by the following research questions:

(1) How does green entrepreneurial orientation influence green HRM practices, employee innovation behavior, and environmental performance?
(2) Through what mechanisms does green HRM translate top management green entrepreneurial orientation into employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance?
(3) Under what cultural conditions does green HRM become more effective in driving employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance?

By focusing on the hospitality industry, this work makes several contributions, both theoretical and practical. First, it extends the attention-based view by reflecting how top management entrepreneurial orientation forms employee-level results (Andersén, 2022). Although the attention-based view has primarily been applied to executive-level decisions (Liu et al., 2024), this study demonstrates that executives' attention to environmental opportunities has a trickle-down effect, shaping innovation behavior and ultimately environmental performance. Second, rooted in the ability–motivation–opportunity (AMO) theory, this research contributes to the literature on green HRM by demonstrating that green HRM acts as a key mechanism through which executive green orientation translates into individual sustainability-driven behavior (Awan et al., 2023). Third, by introducing the firm's green culture as a contextual indicator, this study shows how intrinsic culture values strengthen the impact of green HRM practices (Umrani et al., 2022), contributing to firm culture and strategic HRM literature.

From a contextual perspective, our study enriches the existing literature on sustainability in the Chinese hospitality sector, which operates in a rapidly growing yet environmentally damaging environment (Yan et al., 2024). Despite its worldwide importance, existing work has rarely examined the joint impact of leadership green entrepreneurial orientation, green HRM, and firm green culture on sustainability in the work of hotels. Finally, this research provides evidence-based knowledge for practitioners on synchronizing leadership green orientation, green HRM strategies, and firm culture to achieve innovation and environmentally responsible hotels, in line with China's double-carbon targets.

2. Literature review and hypothesis formulation

2.1. Theoretical support

The attention-based view posits that firms' performance is formed by what top managers emphasize, how they interpret issues, and the allocation of attention across the organization (Ocasio, 1997). Top managers play a critical role in distributing attention and determining priorities within organizational agendas (Shepherd et al., 2017). Considering the sustainability perspective, we defined green entrepreneurial orientation as executives' attention to environmental opportunities, their dedication to sustainability-oriented innovation, and their willingness to integrate an environmental perspective into strategic decisions (Andersén, 2022). By highlighting and prioritizing environmental problems at the strategic level, the distribution of resources shifts toward sustainability-driven HRM efforts and increases individuals' perceptions of ecological sustainability (Ren et al., 2023). The attention-based view provides theoretical support for connecting leaders' sustainability-driven orientation with green HRM, worker behavior, and firm outcome (environmental) as managerial attention to environmental opportunities lays the groundwork for institutionalizing sustainability-driven practices across the firm (Ahmed et al., 2024b; Andersén, 2022).

The AMO theory holds that green HRM practices shape worker sustainability-oriented behavior and the firm's sustainability performance by building worker capabilities, reinforcing motivation, and offering opportunities for participation (Anwar et al., 2018). Green HRM activities such as green appraisal and training equip individuals with sustainability-driven capabilities, encourage them through recognition and incentives, and offer opportunities to imagine and engage in sustainability efforts (Gomes et al., 2024; Renwick et al., 2013). In this view, green HRM serves as a process that translates top managers' entrepreneurial orientation into employee behavior and enhanced firm sustainability performance (Jiang et al., 2025). Therefore, the AMO theory supports the expectation that HRM practices act as a channel through which executives' strategic attention is translated into individuals' contributions to sustainable development (Anlesinya & Susomrith, 2020).

Organizational culture theory holds that shared values, beliefs, and norms shape individuals' responses to organizational practices (Hatch, 1993). A strong green culture of the firm fosters environmental values and signals that the sustainability practices are genuine and in line with the firm's identity (Hafeez et al., 2024; Yu & Li, 2025). When environmental values are integrated into culture, green HRM practices become

more credible and potent (Akuma et al., 2025; Iqbal et al., 2025). Therefore, firm green culture is argued to enhance the effect of green HRM on employee and firm sustainability outcomes (Iqbal et al., 2025; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Together, attention-based theory explains how leadership attention orients organizations toward sustainability, AMO theory explains how green HRM translates sustainability priorities into work behavior, and, finally, organizational culture theory explains how factors within the organization enhance this transition.

Building on these perspectives, this study adopts an integrative framework in which the three theories play complementary and non-overlapping roles. The attention-based view provides the upstream explanation of why sustainability-oriented HRM practices are adopted: when top managers systematically attend to environmental opportunities and challenges, sustainability becomes a salient strategic priority that shapes resource allocation and organizational agendas. AMO theory specifies the micro-level mechanism through which this strategic orientation is enacted, explaining how green HRM practices enhance employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities to engage in green innovation behavior, thereby translating leadership attention into concrete behavioral and performance outcomes. Organizational culture theory, in turn, specifies the boundary conditions under which this translation becomes more or less effective, as a strong green organizational culture amplifies the credibility and salience of HRM signals and strengthens their impact on employee behavior and firm environmental performance.

This integrated theoretical approach addresses important gaps in the existing literature. Prior research on green entrepreneurial orientation has largely focused on direct performance effects, offering limited insight into how leadership orientation is operationalized through HRM systems, particularly in service contexts. Similarly, green HRM research has often examined main effects without explaining when such practices are more likely to yield substantive behavioral and performance returns. By combining the attention-based view, AMO theory, and organizational culture theory, the present study provides a coherent explanation of why green HRM emerges, how it functions as a transmission mechanism, and under what organizational conditions it is most effective, thereby directly informing the analytical framework and hypothesis development.

2.2. Hypothesis formulation

2.2.1. Green entrepreneurial orientation relationship with green HRM, employee green innovation behavior, and firm environmental performance

Following the attention-based view, top managers' cognitive focus and prioritization of environmental issues shape how firms allocate resources and develop sustainable management systems such as green HRM (Liu et al., 2024). Executives with a robust sustainability orientation direct focused attention toward environmental opportunities and encourage the adoption of green HRM practices (Ahmed et al., 2024a; Liu et al., 2024). Empirical studies report the link between green entrepreneurial orientation and green HRM or vice versa in different contexts, such as Jiang et al. (2025) in China, Ahmed et al. (2022) in Pakistani manufacturing, and Al-Romeedy and Alharethi (2025) in the Saudi Arabian hospitality sector. In addition, in the hospitality context, concentrated attention is likely to be devoted to implementing green HRM practices (e.g., green recruitment), which align worker performance with sustainability objectives (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Tanveer et al., 2023). In this respect, we suggest that.

H1a. Top management green entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant influence on green HRM practices.

Furthermore, the attention-based view highlights how senior executives' focus extends across the organization, encompassing HRM systems and individual behavior (Liu et al., 2024). Leaders who consistently emphasize sustainability in their entrepreneurial orientation signal that they support and encourage employee green behavior—in other words, the generation and execution of sustainable ideas and solutions (Renaldo et al., 2024). Recent work argues and observes that when management stresses environmental goals, workers become more attentive and transform sustainability issues into innovative activities (Jibril et al., 2024; Qalati, Siddiqui, & Magni, 2024). Further, the recent work of Ahmed et al. (2025) reports a significant impact of GEO on EGIB in hospitality, and that of Jiang et al. (2025) in the manufacturing sector. Given this, we suggest that.

H1b. Top management green entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant influence on employee green innovation behavior.

Rooted in the attention-based view, Ordonez-Borrallo et al. (2024) argue that the top management environmental orientation also improves organizational environmental performance through strategic priorities and the allocation of assets. Tuncer and Korchagina (2024) report in their study that executives who adopt and favor green entrepreneurial orientation tend to implement sustainability efforts and policies that improve the organization's sustainability-driven outcomes, such as reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, and complying with eco-certifications. Further, Coelho et al. (2024) and Shafique et al. (2021) argue that organizations that are more focused on green entrepreneurial orientation adopt proactive sustainability efforts to reduce environmental issues while improving their competitiveness and organizational environmental performance (Tuncer & Korchagina, 2024). Recent studies also highlight the essential role of green orientation in improving the environmental performance of the organization (Qin et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2024). Given this, we suggest that.

H1c. Top management's green entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant influence on the organization's environmental performance.

2.2.2. Green HRM relationship with employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance

The AMO theory argues that HRM practice affects employee green innovation behavior by improving employees' skills, boosting motivation, and creating opportunities for their involvement (Alkhalaf & Al-Tabbaa, 2024; AlMunthiri et al., 2023; Liehr & Hauff, 2025). Considering the sustainability perspective, Ahmad (2023) and Su et al. (2024) argue that green HRM offers training and facilities for employees with the aim of developing employees' sustainability-driven competencies, introduce reward and appreciation frameworks for the sake of boosting motivation, and offer channels for participatory suggestions of environment-friendly initiatives. Accordingly, recent studies observe a positive effect of green HRM on employee sustainability behavior (Hosain et al., 2025; Jiang et al., 2025) in the context of manufacturing. Furthermore, it is argued that green HRM fosters employee environmental behavior, allowing employees to suggest and execute innovative initiatives that enhance the overall sustainability performance of a firm (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). However, empirical support is necessary in the hospitality sector, especially in China. Following this, we suggest that.

H2a. Green HRM has a positive and significant influence on employee green innovation behavior.

Extending the AMO theory at the firm level, green HRM aligns workers' abilities, motives, and opportunities with the firm's broader environmental objectives (Adu Sarfo et al., 2024). It is argued that firms that instill green HRM practices benefit not only from behavioral shifts among individuals but also from organizational-level advantages, such as increased environmental performance (Nisar et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). When ecological values are integrated into recruitment, training, and appraisals, organizations are confident that employees' contributions lead to tangible environmental benefits, such as reduced energy use, less waste, and increased eco-certifications (Adu Sarfo et al., 2024; Sheikh et al., 2024). Given this, we suggest that.

H2b. Green HRM has a positive and significant influence on firm environmental performance.

2.2.3. Green HRM as a mediator between green entrepreneurial orientation, employee green innovation behavior, and firm environmental performance

Although leaders with a sustainability-driven orientation emphasize the necessity of sustainability, its influence on employee outcomes often operates indirectly through green HRM practices (Yadav et al., 2023). Rooted in the AMO theory, Yu et al. (2020) argued that green HRM translates the top management sustainability vision into HRM practices to build workers' abilities, inspire them to act, and offer opportunities for green innovation. Furthermore, limited studies reported the mediation of green HRM between factors such as Zhou et al. (2023) between CSR and firm performance, Jiang et al. (2025) between green entrepreneurial orientation and employee behavior, and Qalati, Siddiqui, and Magni (2024) between senior management sustainability-driven commitment and performance. Following this, we suggest that.

H3a. Green HRM significantly mediates the relationship of top management's green entrepreneurial orientation to employees' green innovation behavior.

Furthermore, while earlier scholars have reported the direct effect of managers' sustainability-driven orientation (Qin et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2024), the mediation effect of green HRM requires empirical support (Jiang et al., 2025). The AMO theory proposes that the HRM system offers the concrete tools by which senior strategic attention is translated into a firm's environmental result (Qalati, Siddiqui, & Wu, 2024). Accordingly, recent studies emphasize green HRM's mediating effect on firm sustainability-related performance (Qalati, Siddiqui, & Magni, 2024; Umrani et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). Further, the mediation effect is limited to the hospitality sector. Following this, we suggest that.

H3b. Green HRM significantly mediates the relationship of top management's green entrepreneurial orientation to firm environmental performance.

2.2.4. Firm green culture as a moderator

Organizational culture theory posits that individuals' norms and values form their perceptions of and responses to firm practices (Hatch, 1993). It is argued that in a firm with a strong green culture, workers consider green HRM practices as genuine and aligned with the organization's identity, thereby strengthening their impact on employees' behavior. Conversely, in firms where the firm's sustainable culture is weak, green HRM practices are seen as shallow symbolism and hence their impact is reduced (Umrani et al., 2022). Recently, Aukhoon et al. (2024) observed a significant moderation effect on corporate social responsibility and employee green behavior. Likewise, Wang et al. (2022) discuss sustainable knowledge management and innovation. Therefore, we suggest that.

H4a. Firm green culture positively and significantly moderates the impact of green HRM on employees' green innovation behavior.

Furthermore, firm culture theory posits that culture serves as a boundary condition for the success of HRM practices at the organizational level (Hatch, 1993). Recently, studies have also reported the significant interaction impact of a firm's green culture on the different links. For example, Tahir et al. (2024) observe links between green innovation and firm sustainability-related outcome, Saqlain et al. (2024) and Qalati, Siddiqui, and Wu (2024) between green HRM and organizational ecological outcomes. However, most of them tested the interaction effect in the industrial sector. Therefore, we suggest that.

H4b. Firm green culture positively and significantly moderates the impact of green HRM on firm environmental performance.

Fig. 1 demonstrates the proposed links between the constructs used in this research. Typically, an unbroken line shows direct effects, dashed blue mediation effects, and orange moderation effects.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Research design and context

We used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey method in exploring how executives' green entrepreneurial orientations impact employees' sustainability-related performances in the hospitality industry. A survey approach is reasonable to adopt because earlier HRM and sustainability studies have drawn on employees' views to understand behavioral and organizational phenomena, which are not directly observable in real time (Renwick et al., 2013; Van Waeyenberg & Semeijn, 2025).

The study was conducted in the Chinese hotel sector, an industry playing ever-greater economic and social roles. It contributed over 9.2 trillion RMB to GDP and produced millions of jobs (Blazyte, 2024). In 2024, the country's domestic trips exceeded 6 billion (Keyue, 2024) and are expected to grow 12% annually, overtaking the United States by 2030 (Roper, 2025). At the same time, the hotel sector is ranked second among emitters, accounting for nearly 30% of global emissions (Li et al., 2021) and consuming approximately 6000 billion cubic meters in 2022 (Cai et al., 2024). Further, China's "dual-carbon" policy, launched by the government to peak emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, highlights the urgent need for hotels to adopt sustainability-oriented practices (Sun & Liu, 2023; Zhang, 2024). Considering these perspectives, the hotel sector is a relevant setting for examining the impact of executives' green orientations, HRM practices, and organizational cultures on employees' and organizational environmental outcomes.

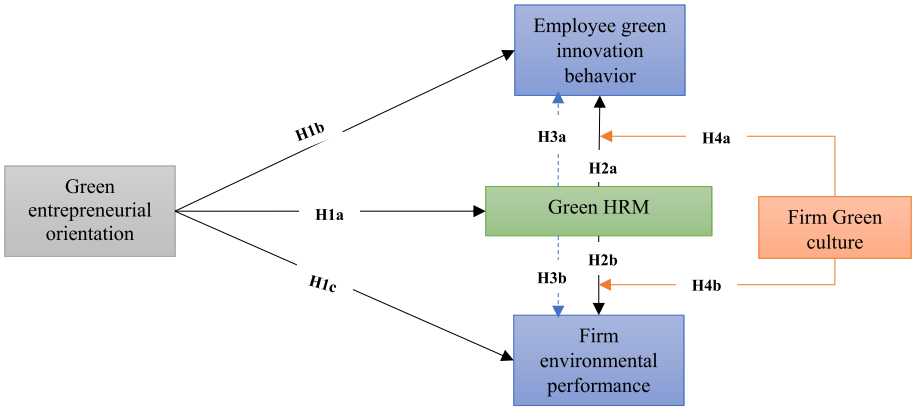

Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

To acquire distinct perspectives, we gathered responses from 428 employees working in hotels across many Chinese provinces. A purposive sampling technique was used, as our work required participants with in-depth knowledge of green HRM, culture, and sustainability-driven initiatives (Qalati, Siddiqui, & Wu, 2024). Random sampling of all hotel workers was not practical due to access limitations and a necessity for response relevance. Hotels were selected purposively to represent diversity, such as ownership (privately owned, state-owned, and international chains), hotel location (Beijing, Shanghai, Zhangjiajie, Xian, and Chengdu, as these are the most visited places in 2025 [Quan, 2025]), and star ratings (3–5 stars).

A structured survey was administered to workers in various functional areas, including food and beverages, front-line staff, housekeeping, and managerial staff. The target participants were selected from employees who had been working on a full-time basis for a minimum of 6 months at their current hotels, ensuring that they were well acquainted with the organizational culture and practices. Questionnaires were distributed among employees through on-site visits and online survey websites, with the assistance of HR managers from the hotels.

Of the 600 distributed questionnaires, 428 were returned (71.3%). To maintain anonymity and minimize social desirability bias, respondents were assured that their answers would remain confidential and be used exclusively for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary and no monetary incentives were offered.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power to assess the adequacy of the sample size (see Table 1 and Fig. 2). Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, and a desired statistical power of 0.95, the minimum required sample size was 138 observations (Faul et al., 2009). The final sample of 428 valid responses substantially exceeded this threshold, indicating sufficient statistical power for the subsequent analyses.

3.3. Instruments

We measure the variables in this work using established multi-item scales drawn from previous literature. A five-point Likert scale (1 = definitely disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was employed for all the items. In order to make the items clear and culturally sensitive, the original scale developed in an English questionnaire was first translated into Chinese and subsequently back-translated into English through a process suggested by Brislin (1980). A pilot study involving 65 hotel employees assessed the items for clarity and face validity. It is important to note that the wording of the scale items was modified slightly to align with the objectives and context of the study, while preserving the original meaning of the items. For this reason, the scale is reported as adapted.

The 6-item scale used to measure the executives' green entrepreneurial orientation was adapted from the recent work of Liu et al. (2024). A sample includes "Our management focuses on the development and improvement of eco-friendly services and operations; Our management emphasizes investment in new green technologies, methods, and procedures to reduce environmental impact."

The 5-item scale for the green HRM was adapted from Tang et al. (2018). A sample includes "Our hotels recruit employees who show awareness and commitment to environmental sustainability. Our hotels provide training programs that enhance employees' environmental knowledge and skills".

The 5-item scale for employee behavior was adapted from Luu (2021). A sample item includes "I suggest new ways to achieve environmental goals in my hotel. I develop plans to put new green ideas into practice at work."

The 5-item scale for environmental performance of the firm was adapted from Afum et al. (2021) and Umrani et al. (2022). A sample item includes "Our hotels have reduced the environmental impact of their services and operations. Our hotels have reduced waste and emissions in daily activities."

Last, the 4-item scale for the firm's green culture was adapted from Wang (2019). A sample item includes "Preserving the environment is a central value in our hotel's culture. Our hotels integrate environmental objectives and overall business goals." Appendix A lists the scale items.

Table 1
A priori power analysis (G*Power).

Parameter	Specification
Test family	F tests
Statistical test	Linear multiple regression (fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero)
Type of power analysis	A priori
Effect size (f^2)	0.15
Significance level (α)	0.05
Statistical power ($1 - \beta$)	0.95
Number of predictors	5
Critical *F* value	2.28
Noncentrality parameter (λ)	20.70
Numerator degrees of freedom	5
Denominator degrees of freedom	132
Minimum required sample size	138
Actual power	0.951

3.4. Common method bias

To reduce bias issues, several remedies were employed. First, a *t*-test was carried out to determine if there were any significant differences between early and late responders, and no such differences were observed, confirming that no such timing bias exists in our study. Second, data were collected in three phases, each lasting one month, with a one-month time lag introduced between consecutive phases to reduce the likelihood of common method bias. Third, items of antecedent (green entrepreneurial orientation) recorded in phases one and two (employee green behavior and firm performance) were recorded in the second phase, and mediator and moderator (green HRM and firm green culture) in the third phase, to avoid priming impacts. Further, Harman's single-factor and full collinearity approach variance inflation factors were also used, resulting in 31.9% single-factor variance, below the cutoff of 50.0% (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and constructs' VIF values below the cutoff of 3.33 (Hair et al., 2019), confirming that bias is not a major issue in our study (see Table 2).

3.5. Data analytical strategy

After collecting data using the above scale items, for the analysis of data, we used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.2. Instead of selecting covariance-based SEM, we opted for PLS-SEM because it is suited for higher-order models with mediation and moderation connections, is robust for non-normal data distributions, and is suited for predictive-oriented research designs (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, prior to estimating the framework, we conducted normality tests using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, which revealed significant deviations from normality for the majority of variables ($p < 0.05$). The skewness and kurtosis test results also exceeded the cutoff of (± 2 and ± 7, respectively) for a normal distribution, further validating the use of PLS-SEM.

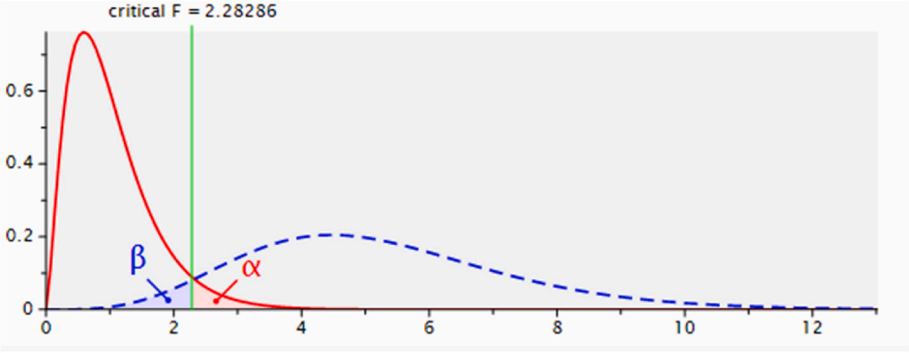

Fig. 2. G*Power test. *Source:* Authors' calculations.

Table 2
Reliability and validity assessment.

Construct	Item	Kurtosis	Skewness	Loadings	α	CR	AVE	VIF
Green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO)	GEO1	−0.754	−0.017	0.898	0.927	0.930	0.774	1.617
	GEO2	−0.594	−0.189	0.902				
	GEO3	−0.263	−0.423	0.820				
	GEO4	−0.738	−0.011	0.877				
	GEO5	−0.747	−0.167	0.898				
Green human resource management (Green HRM)	Green HRM1	−1.238	0.161	0.884	0.893	0.899	0.702	1.675
	Green HRM2	−1.110	0.285	0.872				
	Green HRM3	−1.070	0.075	0.786				
	Green HRM4	−0.862	0.240	0.840				
	Green HRM5	−1.133	0.164	0.801				
Firm green culture (FGC)	FGC1	−0.417	−0.564	0.938	0.879	0.906	0.807	1.015
	FGC2	−0.558	−0.500	0.946				
	FGC3	0.236	−0.657	0.804				
Employee green innovation behavior (EGIB)	EGIB1	−0.222	−0.329	0.838	0.866	0.867	0.714	
	EGIB2	0.109	−0.372	0.830				
	EGIB3	−0.354	0.221	0.861				
	EGIB4	0.013	0.501	0.851				
Firm environmental performance (FEP)	FEP1	−0.607	0.435	0.832	0.858	0.860	0.640	
	FEP2	−0.666	0.375	0.819				
	FEP3	−0.739	0.341	0.843				
	FEP4	−0.463	0.189	0.785				
	FEP5	−0.718	0.366	0.713				

Source: Authors' calculation

4. Analysis of results

4.1. Assessment of measurement model

The results reported in Table 2 indicate satisfactory reliability and validity of the measurement model. During the assessment, items GEO6 and EGIB5 were removed because their factor loadings fell below the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). After their removal, all remaining items exhibited factor loadings ranging from 0.713 to 0.946, exceeding the suggested cutoff and supporting the adequacy of the measurement model. Additionally, Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.858 to 0.927, and composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.860 to 0.930, both exceeding the cutoff of 0.70, confirming internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, the value of the average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.640 to 0.807, exceeded the cutoff of 0.50, and validated the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Moreover, we validated discriminant validity among the constructs using the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell–Larcker criterion as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). Table 3 shows that the square roots of AVE (bold values) are greater than the inter-construct correlations, indicating adequate discriminant validity. For example, the square root of AVE for employee green innovation behavior (0.845) exceeds all other values in the corresponding row and column. Further, the HTMT values in italic font were also below the 0.85 cutoff (Hair et al., 2019). These results support the finding that the constructs are empirically distinct.

Table 3
Evaluation results for discriminant validity.

Construct	EGIB	FEP	Green HRM	GEO	FGC
EGIB	**0.845**				
FEP	0.653 (*0.757*)	**0.800**			
Green HRM	0.416 (*0.471*)	0.549 (*0.622*)	**0.838**		
GEO	0.356 (*0.396*)	0.439 (*0.492*)	0.615 (*0.670*)	**0.880**	
FGC	0.487 (*0.551*)	0.417 (*0.477*)	0.109 (*0.122*)	0.032 (*0.065*)	**0.898**

Notes: EGIB = employee green innovation behavior; FEP = firm environmental performance; green HRM; GEO = green entrepreneurial orientation; FGC = firm green culture. Source: Authors' calculations.

4.2. Structural model

Fig. 3 and Table 4 present the results of the structural model. The findings indicate significant relationships among the constructs ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, executives' green entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on green HRM (β = 0.615), employee green innovation behavior (β = 0.198), and firm environmental performance (β = 0.207),

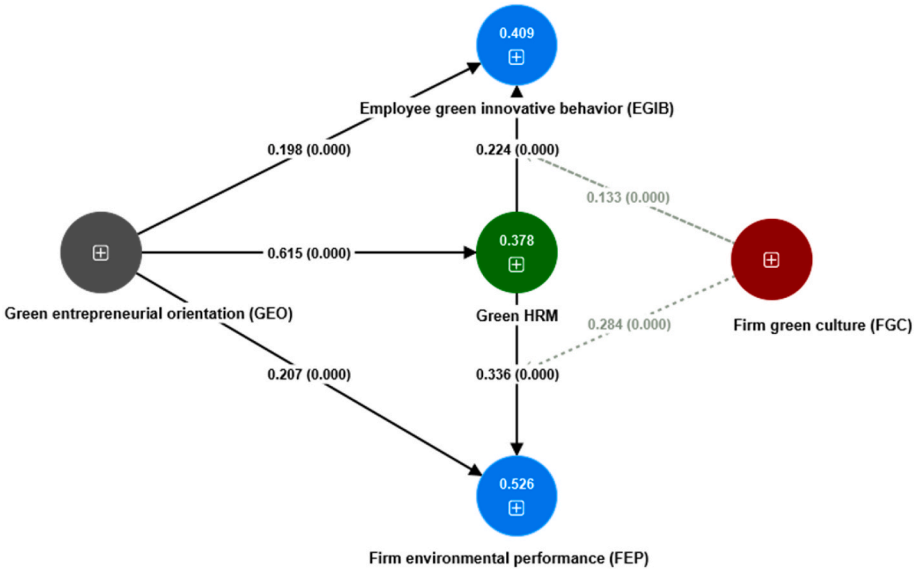

Fig. 3. Bootstrapping results.

Table 4
Hypothesis testing and model fit.

Hypothesis	Relationship	*Beta (β)*	*S.D.*	*t*-value	Confidence interval		f^2	Decision
Direct effect					**5%**	**95%**		
H1a	Green entrepreneurial orientation → Green HRM	0.615***	0.031	19.701			0.607	Supported
H1b	Green entrepreneurial orientation → Employee green innovation behavior	0.198***	0.046	4.259			0.041	Supported
H1c	Green entrepreneurial orientation → Firm environmental performance	0.207***	0.047	4.443			0.056	Supported
H2a	Green HRM → Employee green innovation behavior	0.224***	0.047	4.775			0.051	Supported
H2b	Green HRM → Firm environmental performance	0.336***	0.048	6.945			0.142	Supported
Indirect effect								
H3a	Green entrepreneurial orientation → Green HRM → Firm environmental performance	0.138***	0.019	4.667	0.089	0.187		Supported
H3b	Green entrepreneurial orientation → Green HRM → Firm environmental performance	0.206***	0.030	6.828	0.157	0.256		Supported
Moderation effect								
H4a	Firm green culture x Green HRM → Employee green innovation behavior	0.133***	0.038	3.504	0.071	0.195	0.028	Supported
H4b	Firm green culture x Green HRM → Firm environmental performance	0.284***	0.035	8.007	0.226	0.343	0.158	Supported
Construct		R^2	Q^2			SRMR = 0.055		
Green HRM		0.378	0.260					
Employee green innovation behavior		0.409	0.286					
Firm environmental performance		0.526	0.331					

Source: Authors' calculations.
*** Significant at 0.05.

supporting H1a–H1c. In addition, green HRM influences employee green innovation behavior (β = 0.224) and firm environmental performance ($\beta = 0.336$) positively, supporting H2a and H2b.

Mediation analysis further shows that the indirect effects of executives' green entrepreneurial orientation on employee green innovation behavior (β = 0.138) and firm environmental performance (β = 0.206) are partially transmitted through green HRM, supporting H3a and H3b (see Table 4). Moreover, the results indicate a positive moderating effect of firm green culture on the relationship between green HRM and employee green innovation behavior (β = 0.133), as well as firm environmental performance ($\beta = 0.284$), supporting H4a and H4b.

The model explains 37.8% of the variance in green HRM, 40.9% of the variance in employee green innovation behavior, and 52.6% of the variance in firm environmental performance, exceeding the recommended threshold and indicating satisfactory explanatory power (Hair et al., 2019). Effect sizes (f^2) further indicate the substantive relevance of the estimated relationships. In line with Hair et al. (2019), the effect of green entrepreneurial orientation on green HRM is large ($f^2 = 0.607$), highlighting its substantial contribution to explaining the adoption of green HRM practices.

The effects of green HRM on employee green innovation behavior ($f^2 = 0.051$) and firm environmental performance ($f^2 = 0.142$) are of medium magnitude, suggesting that green HRM represents an important, though not exclusive, driver of sustainability-related outcomes. Regarding the moderating effects, the interaction between firm green culture and green HRM exhibits a small to medium effect on employee green innovation behavior ($f^2 = 0.028$) and a medium effect on firm environmental performance ($f^2 = 0.158$). Substantively, this indicates that green HRM practices are more impactful in organizations characterized by higher levels of green organizational culture than in those where such cultural values are less strongly embedded.

Finally, predictive relevance is supported by Q^2 values ranging from 0.260 to 0.331, which exceed zero (see Table 4). Model fit was further assessed using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which yielded a value of 0.055, well below the recommended cutoff of 0.08 (Hair et al., 2019).

4.3. Mediation effect test

We tested the mediation role of green HRM using bootstrapping, which produced path coefficients for the total, direct, and specific indirect effects, as well as bias-corrected confidence intervals. Table 5 demonstrates that executives' green entrepreneurial orientation–employee green innovation behavior (C.I. = [0.089, 0.187], VAF = 41.2%) and executives' green entrepreneurial orientation–firm environmental performance (C.I. = [0.157, 0.256], VAF = 49.8%) are partially mediated by green HRM. The mediation is considered partial since the VAF value observed is between 20% and 80% (Nitzl et al., 2016). The indirect effect was further confirmed by the bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals, which did not include zero, indicating the robustness of the mediation effects (see Table 5).

4.4. Moderation effect test

Our research firm's green culture interaction results demonstrated that it strengthens the impact of green HRM on workers' sustainability-driven behavior (β = 0.133, 95% CI [0.071, 0.195]) and firm environmental performance (β = 0.284, 95% CI [0.226, 0.343]), supporting H4a and H4b. Figs. 4 and 5 demonstrate that at the higher levels of firm green culture, green HRM has a significantly stronger effect on employee green behavior and firm environmental performance, thereby ensuring the moderating effect of firm green culture. Further, Figs. 4 and 5 given below indicate that the slopes for high green organization culture (+1 SD) are relatively steeper than those for mean and low (−1 SD) green organization culture. This, therefore, means that organizations operating in environments where environmental values and practices are deeply rooted can achieve greater success in employee innovation behavior and environmental firm outcomes through green HRM practices. Additionally, for environments with low firm green culture, the impact of green HRM becomes less significant.

4.5. Robustness test

To enhance the robustness of the measurement model, predictive validity was tested through PLS-predict (Shmueli et al., 2019). Table 6 shows that the Q^2_predict values are positive, indicating the study model's substantial predictive relevance. In addition, MAE and RMSE values were below the values of the linear regression benchmark. For instance, the PLS-SEM results, with an RMSE of EGB1 = 0.885 and a MAE of 0.704, are lower than the LM results, which have an RMSE of 0.899 and a MAE of 0.716. This indicates that the study model exhibits greater predictive accuracy than a simple linear model.

5. Discussion

The current research aimed to investigate the effect of executives' green entrepreneurial orientation on employee green behavior and firm environmental performance in the Chinese hospitality sector, primarily through the lens of the attention-based view and with the boundary condition of firm green culture. While the empirical analysis is conducted in the Chinese hospitality sector, the findings speak to broader theoretical mechanisms linking leadership orientation, human resource practices, and sustainability outcomes. The hospitality context represents a high-impact service setting in which environmental pressures are particularly salient, making it a revealing context for examining these relationships. The results validate that the sustainability-related entrepreneurial orientation of executives has both direct and indirect effects on employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance. This addresses the study's first research question by showing that top management's attention to ecological opportunities not only remains at the strategic level but also translates systematically into employee and firm environmental practices through green HRM. In addition, considering the attention-based view, what emerges is that concern for environmental matters by executives does not diminish solely at higher echelons, but indeed permeates down into employee green innovation behavior and operational systems (Andersén, 2022; Liu et al., 2024). In the hospitality context, where service quality and resource intensity intersect, aligning attention in this manner becomes crucial for integrating sustainability into day-to-day practices (Đurić et al., 2025). These results show that top management's sustainability-oriented attention is an essential firm strategic resource that mobilizes the HRM system and employee green innovative behavior. A contribution that advances understanding beyond earlier research that treats executive green orientation as a high-level construct (Ahmed et al., 2025; Wang & Wu, 2024).

Green HRM's mediating role offers strong support for the AMO theory (Anwar et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020). As traditional practices, HRM includes environmental factors, such as green appraisal, recruitment, training, and rewards; the intentions of executives are effectively converted into employee green innovation behavior (Jiang et al., 2025). This addresses the second query of the study by displaying how executives' green orientation is converted into individual-level results, further validating the mechanism that prior research has only focused on but rarely validated empirically. In addition, this link demonstrates how intangible strategic orientation of management, such as green entrepreneurial orientation, is operationalized into concrete, micro-level behavior and firm environmental performance (Qalati, Siddiqui, & Magni, 2024). However, mediation was partial, which means that while HRM systems play a role, there might also be involvement of factors such as technological investments, external norms, or stakeholder pressures in connecting executive orientation to firm performance (Guerci et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2022). This notion aligns with mixed results of earlier studies (e.g., Liu et al. (2024) that suggest leadership orientation alone might not entirely explain sustainability performance.

A firm green culture as a moderating influence introduces further sophistication. In sync with organizational culture theory, it is shown that HRM practices become more effective by being embedded in a culture that emphasizes sustainability (Saqlain et al., 2024). In other words, practices in themselves are insufficient if employees perceive them as nothing more than symbolic or compliance-driven initiatives (Muisyo & Qin, 2021; Shah et al., 2021). A positive cultural climate complements legitimacy in green initiatives and encourages employees to see such initiatives as aligned with organizational identity (Zafar et al., 2023). These results addressed the third query of the study by demonstrating that firm green culture is not merely a backdrop but also a force multiplier, defining an arguably underexplored boundary condition in the link between green HRM and the firm's sustainability-driven outcomes. In addition, the insight gains added relevance in the hospitality industry, where frontline staff play a leading role in implementing sustainability initiatives (e.g., waste management and environmentally oriented guest services; Umrani et al., 2022). It is fascinating that firm green culture has such a strong impact, as this suggests that cultural influences act as a hidden accelerator of firm

Table 5
Evaluation results of GHRM practice as a mediator.

Independent	Mediator	Dependent	*Indirect effect*	*Total effect*	VAF = indirect/total	Type of mediation
Green entrepreneurial orientation	Green HRM	Employee green innovation behavior	0.138	0.335	41.2	Partial mediation
Green entrepreneurial orientation		Firm environmental performance	0.206	0.413	49.8	Partial mediation

Source: Authors' calculations

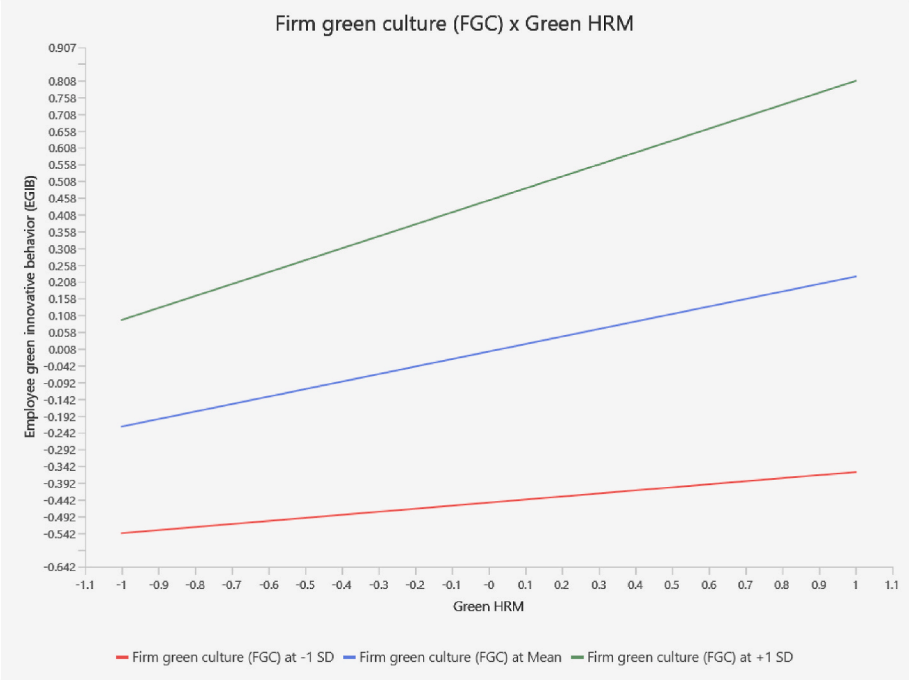

Fig. 4. The interaction impact of firm green culture on green HRM and employee green innovation behavior. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

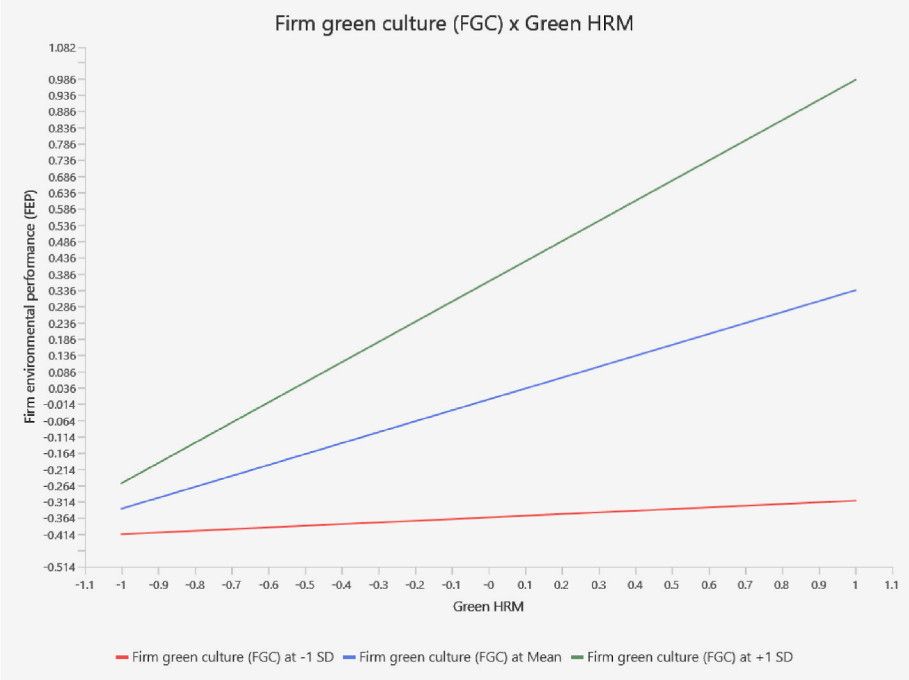

Fig. 5. The interaction impact of firm green culture on green HRM and firm environmental performance. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

environmental performance. Notably, it is interesting to see how firm green culture has such a significant influence, indicating that cultural factors function as an invisible accelerator of firm environmental performance. The research, therefore, adds to the existing literature by showing how leadership orientation, HRM practices, and firm culture together contribute to sustainability in high-impact sectors.

6. Conclusions, implications, and limitations

6.1. Main findings

This research examined how leaders' green entrepreneurial orientation affects employees' green innovation behavior and environmental firm outcomes. The findings reveal that environmental orientation affects employee innovation and environmental outcomes directly and

Table 6
Measurement of predictive validity.

Path	Q^2 predict	PLS-SEM-RMSE	PLS-SEM-MAE	LM-RMSE	LM-MAE
EGIB1	0.270	0.885	0.704	0.899	0.716
EGIB2	0.237	0.782	0.645	0.788	0.646
EGIB3	0.265	0.886	0.710	0.888	0.715
EGIB4	0.242	0.845	0.667	0.853	0.677
FEP1	0.229	0.912	0.761	0.948	0.796
FEP2	0.250	0.965	0.788	1.001	0.807
FEP3	0.282	0.994	0.823	1.035	0.852
FEP4	0.249	0.887	0.729	0.907	0.729

Notes: EGIB = employee green innovation behavior; FEP = firm environmental performance; PLS–SEM = partial least squares structural equation modeling; RMSE = root mean square error; mean absolute error; LM = linear model.
Source: Authors' calculations.

indirectly. Green HRM plays a pivotal mediating role, illustrating how leaders' focus on environmental opportunities affects employees at the micro-level. Furthermore, the research reveals that culture has the ability to improve green HRM practices, confirming its boundary condition status. It appears that sustainability leaders, practices within HRM, and environmental culture form a dynamic circular or cyclical support mechanism. This mechanism enables employee innovation and environmental protection within organizations operating within the hotel industry. This article focuses on how research addresses various sustainability initiatives, including HRM practices, to improve employee productivity in organizations operating in the hotel industry.

6.2. Theoretical implications

First, this work enriches the attention-based view by illustrating that executives' sustainability-driven attention not only impacts strategic decision-making but also improves employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance through green HRM (Liu et al., 2024; Wang & Wu, 2024). This advances the traditional focus of the attention-based view on organizational strategy to encompass the micro-foundations of sustainability (Yu et al., 2024).

Second, it contributes to the theory of AMO by positioning green HRM as a strategic lever that enhances employees' ability, motivation, and opportunities to act sustainably (Ahmad, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). Unlike earlier work, which treated HRM in a vacuum, this work illustrates how green HRM operates as a mediator channel connecting both executive orientation and organizational-level performance with employee green innovation behavior (Jiang et al., 2025; Labella et al., 2022). This contributes a nuance to the AMO by connecting it with orientations of strategic leadership (Anwar et al., 2018).

Third, this work contributes by integrating organizational culture theory (Hatch, 1993), illustrating that culture does not sit idly beside HRM practices but actively improves the effectiveness of green HRM. The paper highlights the mutually reinforcing interplay between informal cultural norms and formal HRM systems, a theme that has been underdeveloped in environment-based studies (Umrani et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Yu & Li, 2025).

Last, our research contributes by integrating the attention-based view, AMO theory, and organizational culture theory to drive a unified model. This multi-perspective method provides a comprehensive and holistic understanding of how executive orientation, green HRM, and culture interact to influence employee green innovation behavior and firm environmental performance in the hospitality sector.

6.3. Practical or managerial implications

The findings suggest that proactive executive effort toward sustainability is valuable. However, to acknowledge sustainability within the firm, the leaders are advised to establish more than simply strategic priorities; they need to define environmental values and lead them by example, so that ecological sustainability itself becomes recognized as a firm priority. Additionally, findings highlight the role of HR managers in instilling environmental objectives in all fundamental HR functions, such as recruitment, training, appraisal, and remuneration schemes. Through effective integration of HR structures with sustainability objectives, hospitality firms develop employees' competencies, drive, and potential to contribute to green innovation.

Furthermore, the findings of cultural moderation suggest that creating a firm green culture is as critical as designing HR systems. There is a need to invest in building shared value and storytelling around sustainability, such as green champions, group-level environmental success recognition, and internal communication campaigns. Moreover, results suggest that meeting China's dual-carbon targets is about more than regulatory coercion; it is conditional on how organizations convert sustainability imperatives into HRM systems and cultural compatibility. Policy interventions, such as industry-wide incentives in market segments adopting green HRM or certifications of rewarding green culture, could drive sectoral change more quickly.

6.4. Limitations and future research

This study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships. Future studies could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to capture the temporal dynamics of executives' green entrepreneurial orientations, green HRM practices, and firm green culture.

Second, the use of self-reported data may raise concerns related to social desirability bias. Future research could address this limitation by incorporating objective environmental performance indicators, such as energy consumption, waste reduction measures, or environmental certification data. In addition, the present study does not include control variables such as hotel size, ownership structure, or employee tenure and position. While the analytical focus was placed on leadership orientation, HRM practices, and organizational culture, future research could incorporate these factors to test the robustness of the observed relationships further.

Finally, although the study is empirically situated in China's hospitality sector, cross-country comparisons would help assess the extent to which the findings hold under different institutional conditions. In particular, comparing China's highly regulated environment with Western economies may offer additional insights into how institutional forces shape the relationships between executives' green entrepreneurial orientation, green HRM, and firm green culture. Future research may also extend the framework by examining additional mediating mechanisms (e.g., employee sustainability-oriented commitment, well-being, and knowledge sharing) and moderating factors (e.g., environmental uncertainty, institutional support, and stakeholder pressures) to capture the complexity of sustainability transitions in service organizations more fully.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sikandar Ali Qalati: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Domitilla Magni:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript preparation process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used the premium version of Grammarly to improve coherence and logic among paragraphs and sentences. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the

content of the published article.

Appendix A

Top management green entrepreneurial orientation (GEO)

Our management.

1. … . "focus on the development and improvement of eco-friendly services and operations."
2. …. "emphasize investments in new green technologies, methods, and procedures to reduce environmental impact."
3. … . "emphasize the proactive introduction of eco-friendly products, services, and operational practices."
4. … . "emphasize active identification and exploitation of new green opportunities to enhance sustainability."
5. … . "are willing to take risks in pursuing environmentally sustainable practices, even if financial returns are uncertain."
6. … . "have a high tolerance for environmental uncertainty and are not afraid to invest in green initiatives."

Green human resource management (green HRM)

Our hotels.

1. … . "recruits employees who show awareness and commitment to environmental sustainability."
2. … . "provides training programs that enhance employees' environmental knowledge and skills."
3. "Employees' performance evaluations include objectives related to achieving green outcomes."
4. …. "recognizes and rewards employees who actively contribute to environmental improvement."
5. "Employees are encouraged to participate in decision-making related to green initiatives and practices."

Employee green innovative behavior

1. "I suggest new ways to achieve environmental goals in my hotel."
2. "I propose new green ideas to improve our hotel's environmental performance."
3. "I promote and encourage colleagues to adopt eco-friendly practices."
4. "I develop plans to put new green ideas into practice at work."
5. "I find creative solutions to reduce the environmental impact of hotel operations."

Firm environmental performance (FEP)

Our hotels.

1. … . "has reduced the environmental impact of its services and operations."
2. … . "has reduced waste and emissions in daily activities."
3. … . "has reduced the risk of environmental accidents or hazards."
4. … . "regularly conducts activities (e.g., audits or checks) to ensure compliance with environmental standards."
5. … . "has increased the use of renewable energy and other sustainable resources."

Firm Green Culture (FGC)

1. "Our hotel makes a strong effort to ensure every employee understands the importance of environmental preservation."
2. "Preserving the environment is a central value in our hotel's culture."
3. "Our hotel integrates environmental objectives with overall business goals."
4. "Employees are encouraged to follow policies and practices that minimize environmental impact."

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