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Promoting Responsible Sustainable Consumer Behavior through Sustainability Marketing: The Boundary Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Image

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Abstract: Responsible sustainable consumer behavior might serve as a complex pattern of social and environmental issues, consistent with the perspective of sustainability as a construct with both social and environmental pillars. Anchored on signaling theory and attribution theory, this study seeks to unearth a hitherto unexplored mechanism that might translate sustainability marketing into elevated responsible sustainable consumer behavior through the mediating role of brand image. Besides, this study aims to examine the impact of corporate social responsibility, as an intervening variable, to underpin the association between sustainability marketing and brand image. This study analyzes data from five-star and four-star hotel customers using SmartPLS SEM (v 4.0). The findings support our hypotheses that a hotel's brand image mediates the relationship between sustainability marketing and responsible sustainable consumer behavior. In addition, hotels' engagement in corporate social responsibility activities moderates the link between sustainability marketing and brand image, such that the association is stronger (weaker) at higher (lower) levels of corporate social responsibility. This study explores the boundary conditions of the sustainability marketing–responsible sustainable consumer behavior link. Hotels can foster responsible sustainable consumer behavior by executing sustainability marketing and engaging in corporate social responsibility activities.

Keywords: sustainability marketing; corporate social responsibility; brand image; responsible sustainable consumer behavior; signaling theory; attribution theory; hotel industry

1. Introduction

Global development is now, more than ever, imperiled by unsustainable production and consumption patterns [1] (Hosseini 2020). Since the publication of the first report on "Environment and Development" by the World Commission in 1987, sustainable development refers to "development that is trying to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" ([2], p. 273). Thenceforth, sustainability has become a "hotspot" research arena and has attracted a burgeoning academic and practical interest [3–7]. Sustainability scholars have identified three building blocks of sustainability: "economic", "social", and "environmental" [6]. Besides, scholars have developed numerous distinct sustainability performance standards and measures to evaluate organizations' economic, social, and environmental performance [8].

According to Hosta and Zabkar [2], the pillars of sustainability fit into the scope of the organizational triple bottom-line view, which serves as a transparent and well-defined method of performance evaluations. However, existing research on sustainability "does not offer an examination of the notion that different dimensions of sustainability (e.g., economic,

social, environmental, and cultural) can exist in the minds of consumers" ([8], p. 270). Similarly, Hosta and Zabkar [2] noted a lack of consensus on the theoretical underpinning of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability and, hence, their "relative importance" is not profusely evaluated. As a result, researchers have shifted their focus to the multidimensionality of the sustainability construct in recent studies [9–11]. From the consumers' perspective, Catlin et al. [12] noted that sustainability's social and environmental dimensions echo distinct meanings and understanding in their perceptions. The social dimension reflects the short-term, local, and affective thoughts, while the environmental dimension represents the long-term, global, and cognitive reflections. Besides, many product-oriented researchers in recent years have contemplated that multidimensionality would be observed in comparing the substitute/competing products of local, organic, and fair trade ethical alternatives [13].

Despite the escalated gravity of interest in examining consumer behavior, a growing number of conceptual and empirical studies have cast sustainable consumer behavior [14–16], while omitting the outlook of responsible behavior [2]. Taken together, responsible sustainable consumer behavior (RSCB) might serve as a complex pattern of social and environmental issues, consistent with the perspective of sustainability as a construct with both social and environmental pillars. In compliance with consumers' sustainable needs and wants, there is a growing need to address the key question, "how do environmentally and socially responsible behaviors differ regarding their antecedents" ([2], p. 274). Similarly, existing research on the hospitality industry is dominated by an emphasis on the environmental dimension of hotels' green activities and sustainable consumer behaviors [9,15,17], with the valuable exception of Hosta and Zabkar [2]. Recent studies have highlighted the need to study responsible consumer behavior alongside sustainable behavior in the hospitality industry [18]. We contemplate that hotels' sustainable and responsible activities may be essentials precursors for eliciting RSCB.

The aims of this study are threefold. Firstly, we propose that sustainability marketing with a broader focus on "ethical", "social", "environmental", and "cultural" dimensions [18] has implications beyond ecological and green marketing [19] and might stimulate RSCB. However, no prior studies have examined the influence of sustainability marketing as an antecedent of RSCB. By examining the critical role of sustainability marketing, the study will provide a finer-grain understanding of the antecedents of RSCB. Moreover, hotels can align their sustainability programs with consumers' sustainability needs by leveraging distinct social and environmental appeals.

Secondly, in addition to examining the direct impact of sustainability marketing on RSCB, our study investigates a hitherto unexplored causal mechanism through which sustainability marketing might culminate in enhanced RSCB. Drawing on signaling theory [20], we propose that organizational sustainability marketing activities leverage a sustainable brand image, which in turn, fosters RSCB. According to signaling theory, hotels may transform a strong brand image by conveying information to customers with certain signals by emphasizing their marketing endeavors' environmental and social aspects. Ultimately, consumers may be influenced to exercise certain behaviors concerning those products/brands, which primarily focus on the social and ecological aspects of their sustainable initiatives. In addition to utilizing signaling theory, this study employs attribution theory [21] to guide and reinforce the theoretical underpinning of the hypothesized relationships. Coupled with signaling theory, we anticipate that attribution theory provides a more nuanced understanding of consumers' motive attributions and behavioral intentions that stimulate their behavioral tendencies towards more environmentally and socially responsible hotels.

Thirdly, we expand the boundary conditions of the sustainability marketing and RSCB nexus, i.e., under what conditions the associations are more or less likely to be pronounced. We hypothesize that corporate social responsibility (CSR) [22] intervenes in the association between sustainability marketing and brand image, and then, RSCB through the mediating role of the brand image, such that the relationships are more potent at higher levels of CSR than at low levels of CSR. More specifically, we propose that: (1) sustainability marketing promotes RSCB through the mediating role of brand image, and (2) CSR moderates the

direct relationship between sustainability marketing and brand image, and the indirect relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB through brand image.

Our study contributes to the existing academic discussion in numerous ways. Firstly, by flipping the perspective from environmental-only marketing activities to the broader implications of the social and environmental views, our research answers the call of Hosta and Zabkar [2] and advances the research on the RSCB continuum. Recently, there has been a burgeoning academic and practical interest in studying RSCB [2]. RSCB is hard to pin down when describing it. Nonetheless, the term is employed and utilized as an umbrella concept that emphasizes an individual's efforts in meeting environmental goals: the green needs of society, reducing environmental harms, saving natural resources, and improving their quality of life [15]. The term also encompasses societal goals: leveraging positive impacts on society by promoting societal benefits and mitigating issues impacting society [23]. As discussed above, the integration of the social and environmental aspects of hotels' marketing efforts is needed to draw consumers' attention towards the broader perspectives of environmentally and socially responsible behaviors. According to Hosta and Zabkar [2], small empirical studies cast these two distinct factors in a single piece of research and explore their antecedents. By encapsulating environmentally and socially responsible behavior and investigating its antecedents, our study furthers prior research that overlooked this crucial dilemma. In addition, given the significant role of corporate efforts in ameliorating the societal aspects of its marketing activities [24], organizations can respond to increasing environmental challenges and demands and act more responsibly towards society [2]. Secondly, by assessing the mediating role of brand image in the relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB, our study attempts to bridge the gap in the existing, yet disjointed, literature on sustainability marketing and RSCB. Last but not least, our study emphasizes the operational construct of CSR in a comprehensive manner by examining its impact in underpinning the underlying linkages. Most recent studies have viewed CSR from the perspective of the environment only [17,25,26], hence, limiting its scope and ability to leverage sustainable marketing practices.

Importance of Sustainability Marketing and CSR in the Hotel Industry

Preliminary studies have related sustainable marketing efforts and environmental CSR with increased brand image and sustainable consumer behavior [18]. According to Hosta and Zabkar [2], such marketing efforts have directed efforts to organizations' ecological initiatives at the cost of societal goals. Indeed, organizational environmental efforts are more likely to exacerbate consumers' sustainable behaviors in the hotel industry because hotel consumers receive sustainable signals, promoting their consumption tendencies to incline towards hotels exercising green practices. However, the social element, that received immense theoretical and practical attention in the past decades, now remains uncultivated due to the prioritization of environmental concerns only [2].

There is wide agreement in the academic literature that has documented positive correlations between an organization's green initiatives, environmental CSR, brand image, and sustainable consumer behavior. Specifically, Yadav et al. [27] investigated the influence of green marketing on corporate image and found a positive nexus among them in the hospitality industry context. Besides, a host of researchers in recent years have examined the role of green message strategies on green brand image in a hotel context and reported significant interplay among them. In this milieu, Hosta and Zabkar [2] stress the importance of scrutinizing sustainability marketing in developing a superior brand image and RSCB. Similarly, several well-cited studies have linked the role of CSR to building a positive brand image. For instance, Muhammad and Rashid [28] carried out a study in the Malaysian hotel industry and found significant positive associations between CSR, brand image, and customer satisfaction. In a related stream, Latif et al. [29] conducted a cross-sectional study on the hotel industry in China, Pakistan, and Italy. They found significant impacts of CSR in elevating customer loyalty. Likewise, longitudinal research conducted by Serra-Cantallops et al. [30] corroborated the implications of CSR for the hotel industry. The

authors highlighted the need for future research to address CSR from the perspectives of social and environmental concerns and endorsed existing research in the context of the local community, i.e., that the societal aspect of CSR is under researched [30]. Our study explores the boundary effects of sustainability and CSR on BI and RSCB. Despite a wide array of research emphasizing the meaningfulness of green practices and CSR in building a superior brand image, there is still a need to investigate the understudied, integrated role of responsible marketing coupled with sustainable practices to cultivate an enhanced brand image and environmentally and socially RSCB.

The subsequent section presents the theoretical underpinning of the hypothesized relationships, the research methodology, empirical analysis, and a discussion on the study's findings, followed by deliberation on the theoretical and practical implications.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

2.1. Theoretical Underpinning

The study employed signaling theory and attribution theory to guide the theoretical underpinning of the conceptual framework. The subsequent section explains these theories.

2.1.1. Signaling Theory

The study is anchored on signaling theory to predict the associations between the underlying linkages. Over the years, there has been a surge in the utilization of signaling theory in the literature on green marketing [31]. Signaling theory presents insights into understanding sustainable consumer behavior [32], by ascertaining its antecedents and precursors. The theory purports that hotels can use certain signals to disseminate adequate information to consumers. This means that hotels become the senders and consumers become the receivers of these signals. Consequently, with the aid of these signals, hotels can stimulate the behaviors of consumers [20]. That is to say, positive signals may influence positive behaviors and vice versa. Specifically, in the current study's context, sustainability marketing emphasizing environmental and social paradigms are major signals consumers receive, and they regulate their behaviors based on the perceptions formed by such signals.

2.1.2. Attribution Theory

In addition, the study draws on attribution theory to complement and reinforce the role of signaling theory in inferring the theorized deductions. Attribution theory refers to "the degree to which an individual's behavior occurs across different occasions and/or modalities" [21]. A hotel's sustainability marketing efforts and CSR initiatives portray the hotel's history of involvement in the particular domain, *such as* environmentally and socially responsible activities. Consumers view companies based on their history of engaging in such activities [33]. For instance, consumers prefer hotels with a consistent history of involvement in environmentally and socially responsible activities compared to those that perform these activities sporadically. More specifically, individuals ascribe attributes to events and perceive them in relation to their understanding of such causes, as internal or external [34]. That is to say, consumers perceive a congruence between external CSR claims and a firm's internal actions, i.e., sustainability marketing activities [34]. According to Kelley and Michela [35], individuals associate causal explanations to their own or others' behaviors, "they care less about what others do than about why they do it, even if they do not realize it". Hence, favorable attributes are relied upon as to how consumers attribute the hotel's motives behind the environmentally and socially responsible activities. Prior research has characterized an organization's motives to engage in CSR programs as: "*intrinsic or altruism motives*" for "societal well-being", and "*extrinsic or egoism motives*" for "self-interest" [36,37]. We suggest that signaling theory conveys messages about the hotel's involvement in environmentally and socially responsible activities. Attribution theory more clearly ascribes attributions, i.e., the hotel's motives behind exercising these activities. Therefore, sustainability marketing and CSR serve as crucial factors that foster a sustainable brand image, which in turn, cultivates superior RSCB.

2.2. Hypotheses

2.2.1. Sustainability Marketing and Brand Image

Sustainability marketing has its roots in the earlier discussions of Belz and Peattie [38]; Peattie and Belz [39] set out that it comprised of three factors: "economic", "social", and "environmental" [40]. Sustainability marketing refers to "the decision-making process and business activities by the local community and consumers, such as production and sales, and their social environment and environmental-friendly ethics" ([18], p. 295). In addition, sustainability scholars advocate the inclusion of culture as another key factor of sustainability marketing [41]. By integrating culture as the fourth dimension of sustainability marketing, the chief focus of sustainability marketing turned out to be the harmony and mutual growth of the economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects of business activities [42].

Economic marketing activities refer to "sharing economic benefits through economic support within a region" ([18], p. 295). According to Choi and Park [43], the company's economic activity should benefit its key stakeholders, including its partners, employees, and customers, with implications extending beyond company growth and profits to the community. In this milieu, Amalrick and Hauser [44] have identified efficient management, the creation of value, and innovation as the key stimulators for generating economic benefits for stakeholders. Moreover, economic accountability also significantly yields superior revenue growth [45].

Social marketing activities represent "social contribution activities that achieve other objectives of a company, besides business tasks aimed at pursuing profits" ([18], p. 295). Besides, the consumers' beliefs about a company are steered by its social activities [18]. Several other scholars have associated a company's social activities as a strong predictor of consumers' behavioral intentions towards consuming a company's products [46]. Organizations can manifest an enhanced brand image by actively partaking in social activities, such as community volunteering activities, free health examinations for residents and food sharing with community members, etc.

Environmental marketing activities are "all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" ([18], p. 295). Several eco-friendly activities include safeguarding nature for green growth, the reuse of recycled banners, and the recycling of shopping bags. According to Jung et al. [18], involvement in environmentally friendly products and processes has become imperative as customers have become more interested in eco-friendly consumption. Customers' perceptions of organizations engaged in addressing environmentalism are positively linked with a superior brand image [47].

Cultural marketing activities involve "the consideration, preservation, and presentation of tangible and intangible heritage, artistic production, as well as the knowledge and skills of various social groups, communities, and nations" ([18], p. 295). According to Ko et al. [48], sustainability marketing activities should extend beyond the core exploitation of the organization's triple bottom-line to community welfare and progress. Therefore, it is essential to include culture as an important dimension of sustainability marketing [18]. In this regard, Stylianou-Lambert et al. [49] deliberated cultural activities as "the consideration, preservation, and presentation of tangible and intangible heritage, artistic production, as well as the knowledge and skills of various social groups, communities, and nations". Scholars have identified culture as a central element of sustainable development [50]. Further, these activities are directed to emphasize the company's role in society by fostering cultural characteristics applicable to society [51]. Hence, a strong association between an organization's cultural tendency and brand image has been reported in previous studies [18].

Brand image involves "the symbolic meaning associated with specific attributes of a brand" ([18], p. 295). According to Cretu and Rodie [52], an individual's sum of impressions, thoughts, and beliefs about a particular object gives meaning to a consumer's cognitive picture. An image can be formed for companies or government agencies [53]. For

example, an organization's brand image is shaped by the information (i.e., belief, reasoning, and perception) concerning an organization or product reminisced by people. Thus, based on signaling and attribution theories, the corporate brand image is influenced by its sustainability marketing activities. For instance, Maignan [54] have linked a positive brand image and enhanced organizational profit and growth with economic sustainability marketing activities. Similarly, Jung et al. [18] stated that an organization's brand image formed on the basis of its socially responsible activities is more favorably viewed by consumers than any other company that does not. As a result, a favorable consumer brand attitude may be shaped by exercising sustainability marketing. In a similar thread, Fuxman et al. [55] endorsed that an organization that successfully incorporates sustainability activities into its traditional business operations may provoke the consumers' awareness who benefit from such activities, ultimately raising their appreciation. In the related streams of thought, Jun et al. [51] stated that cultural sustainability marketing activities to achieve harmony between diverse cultures have been shown to have high correlations with increased brand image. Thus,

H1. *Sustainability marketing: (a) economic, (b) social, (c) environmental, and (d) cultural, relate positively to brand image.*

2.2.2. Brand Image and RSCB

A review of the literature on responsible consumer behavior reveals that the majority of the preliminary conceptualizations and operationalizations of the construct have favored the environmental dimension [56]. For instance, socially responsible consumption has quite commonly witnessed *'green consumerism'* as the chief responsible behavior [57], with the predominant emphasis on ecological rather than social issues [2]. This has resulted in the shaping of a narrow view of consumer behavior, due to the imbalanced representation of social and environmental issues [2]. Although some prior efforts to assess environmental and social consumption have been made [58], nevertheless, the terms have been used interchangeably or merged under one construct [59]. In this regard, Webb et al. [60] made a clearer distinction between responsible behaviors' environmental and social dimensions. The authors demonstrated that "none is an up-to-date measure of consumer behaviors in response to a full range of social issues" (p. 2). Based on the definition of Mohr et al. ([61], p. 47), the authors developed a new measure called "Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal", referred to as "a person basing his or her acquisition, usage, and disposition of products on a desire to minimize or eliminate any harmful effects and maximize the long-run beneficial impact on society". Likewise, another conceptualization concerning consumers' sustainable consumption and awareness was developed by Balderjahn et al. [62], involving three dimensions, namely, economic, social, and environmental. In addition, Jung et al. [18] proposed the conceptualization of RSCB by integrating the literature on sustainable behavior as "behavior based on awareness of the long-term consequences of an individual behavior for the natural or social environment" [63], with responsible behavior as "an intention to act based on the acknowledgement of one's duties toward self or others" [64].

According to Jung et al. [18], a responsible sustainable consumer carefully assigns weights to their choices and, ultimately, the impact of such decisions on society and nature. Thus, the present study focuses on the responsible sustainable consumer with the intent of their behavior imposing an effect on nature and society. We propose that corporate brand image provoked due to its sustainability marketing activities may result in shaping RSCB. Dobni and Zinkhan [65] argued that image is an intangible aspect of a company/product that represents consumers' self-esteem, self-expression, or social approval of a brand. The relationship between brand image and consumer patronage has been widely researched and established in the extant literature [66]. Organizations that practice socially and environmental-friendly activities may provoke consumers' perceptions, which help to boost a sustainable brand image [67]. Li et al. [68] researched the impact of green marketing

strategies on customers' intentions. They found that the customer's identity, formed from the socially responsible perspective, is linked with their intentions to use sustainable products. Similarly, Chen [69] argued that a green brand image significantly influences consumers' attitudes and behaviors concerning environmentally friendly products. Thus,

H2. *Brand image relates positively to RSCB.*

2.2.3. Mediating Role of Brand Image

Conclusively, we suggest a mediating role of brand image, such that consumers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about a specific company/product, formed due to the organizations' efforts in addressing social and environmental issues embedded in their marketing strategies, elevates RSCB. According to signaling theory, a gap exists between the consumer and the products, which is filled with certain signals. For instance, socially and environmentally responsible activities provide signals to consumers about organizational efforts to mitigate societal and ecological issues, thereby shaping consumers' attitudes towards more socially and ecologically responsible choices. Further, according to attribution theory, consumers' perceptions of a sustainable brand image elicited due to sustainable marketing activities might, in turn, exaggerate their responsible and sustainable consumption behaviors. Thus,

H3. *Brand image mediates the relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB.*

2.2.4. Moderating Role of CSR

We expect CSR's moderating role to strengthen the relationship between sustainability marketing and brand image. CSR is defined as "the voluntary commitment of companies with the development of society and the preservation of the environment, from its social commitment and responsible behavior, towards companies and social stakeholders with whom they interact" ([70], p. 32). It is argued that consumers' evaluations of brand image are formed based on the company's engagement in CSR activities [71]. The perceived incongruence between an organization's CSR initiatives and that of consumers' characters will impose only a small impact on CSR activities in stimulating brand recognition [72]. Based on social identity, a consumer's self-esteem is subject to their relationship with a brand, i.e., the more prestigious a brand is, the higher their self-esteem will be [73]. For example, social responsibility and environmental protection are important issues, and individuals hold themselves accountable for their actions. In this milieu, organizations' social and ecological concerns relate "the brand with an image of responsiveness to the needs of society" [74]. As a result, consumers' preferences are shaped by organizational engagement in such activities as being socially and ecologically responsible [62,75]. From this perspective, Robinson [76] conducted research in the Asian context, i.e., characterized by a collectivist culture, and found that consumers' preferences are shaped by their perceptions of the brands that respect their values and ethical principles. In addition, He and Lai [71] found that CSR initiatives signal to consumers that an organization's actions are ethical and legally bound by laws, ultimately elevating their confidence in the brand. Obedience to laws indicates organizational efforts to address societal and environmental concerns. For instance, while designing products, an organization will use only those ingredients that do not violate laws and regulations and avoid unnecessary and low-quality materials that are deleterious to nature or society [77]. Similarly, the organization's ethical adherence influences consumers' perceptions of their relationship with the brand. Nguyen and Pervan [78] contended that consumers recognize a brand as an ethical player that has been building a positive relationship with society, which places a responsibility on the brand to maintain its reputation. Conclusively, CSR initiatives reinforce the connection between sustainability marketing and brand image. Thus,

H4. *CSR moderates the relationship between sustainability marketing and brand image such that the association is stronger (weaker) at higher (lower) levels of CSR.*

2.2.5. A Moderated Mediation Model

Thus far, we have explained how sustainability marketing leads to RSCB through brand image and propose the moderating role of CSR on the sustainability marketing–brand image link. In combination, we further propose the moderated mediation model of these associations. In the context of high CSR initiatives, a hotel's sustainability marketing is more likely to be cultivated into enhanced RSCB due to the consumers' perceptions of the socially and environmentally responsible brand image. However, the relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB, mediated by brand image, is less salient at low levels of CSR (Figure 1). Thus,
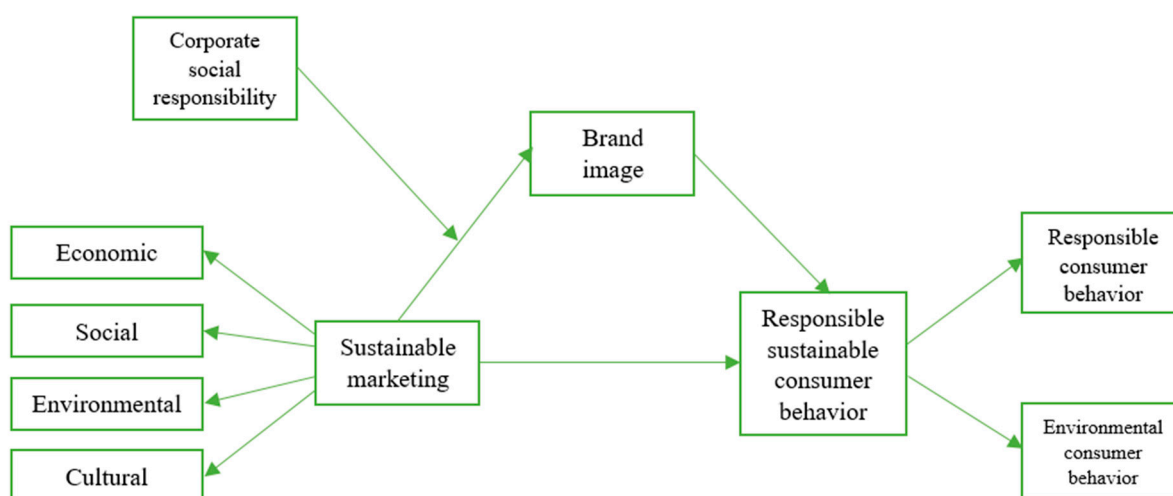

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

H5. *CSR moderates the indirect relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB through brand image such that the association is stronger (weaker) at higher (lower) levels of CSR.*

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Procedure

The hospitality industry is one of the key market players that substantially contributes to the economic development of a country [15]. With increased pressures from customers, government, and international agencies, the hospitality industry must transform its business practices more sustainably and responsibly [22,79]. There is a dire need to respond to the environment and society's needs and the wants of society to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage [2]. Further, extensive research has shown that consumers' preferences and behaviors are largely shaped by an organization's product offerings and its societal and environmental responsiveness. Therefore, the current study employs a deductive approach following a cross-sectional research design to collect data from hotel customers. A total of ten hotels were selected from three metropolitan cities in Pakistan: Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. The chosen hotels represent a substantial share of the total population. Moreover, the majority of five- and four-star hotels are located in these cities. Therefore, we decided to focus on hotels with five-star and four-star rankings. The sample included customers from four five-star hotels and six four-star hotels. Using a non-experimental convenience sampling technique, the authors administered 400 questionnaires to the target respondents from September 2022 to December 2022. A convenience sampling technique was used because of the convenience of gathering data from the selected participants [80]. After screening the questionnaires, the authors found 355 completed questionnaires appro-

priate for data analysis (response rate: 88%). The questionnaire contained two sections: Section 1 asked about the demographic details of the respondents and Section 2 sought their responses on the study variables: sustainability marketing, brand image, RSCB, and CSR. The participants were also given a cover letter explaining the study's purpose. They were informed about the importance of the study and ensured of the confidentiality of their responses. The study total included 65% men and 45% women, with a mean age of 37.25 (SD: 5.05). Concerning education, 17% of the respondents were undergraduates, 43% of the respondents were graduates, and 40% of the respondents were post-graduates. Regarding their occupation, 61% of the participants were job holders and 39% had their own businesses. The study used SmartPLS SEM (4.0) for analyzing the data. In the first stage, the authors addressed the issue of common method bias (CMB) by assessing the variance inflation factor (VIF) and found that all the values were significantly below the acceptable threshold of 3.3 [81]. The analysis indicated that the study did not suffer from CMB. After successfully addressing the issue of CMB, the authors evaluated the hypothesized model in two stages. First, the measurement model was assessed to ensure reliability and validity of the study. Moreover, as the study contained two reflective–reflective higher-order components (HOCs), namely sustainability marketing and RSCB, the measurement model was first tested to yield the lower-order components (LOCs) scores. In the next step, the measurement model, including the HOCs, was assessed. In the second stage, the structural model containing the HOCs was tested for estimating the path model.

3.2. Measures

Guided by the study's design, i.e., the positivistic philosophical stance, the authors adapted the established measurement scales for empirically analyzing the data. The measurement scale for sustainability marketing was adapted from Jung et al. [18]. There were 12 items, with 3 items each, measuring the economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions of the construct. The sample items included "support activities for the community" and "environmentally friendly materials/practices used". The measurement scale for the brand image was adapted from Jung et al. [18]. The instrument contained 4 items. The sample items included "create visit intention" and "have a good impression". The measurement scale for RSCB was adapted from Roberts and Bacon [82], the ecologically conscious consumer behavior scale (ECCB), and Webb et al. [60]. The instrument contained 6 items. The sample items included "when I have a choice between two equal brands, I always prefer the one less harmful to the natural environment/When given a chance, I switch to brands where a portion of the price is donated to charity", and "I do not buy a product/service if the company that sells it is environmentally irresponsible/I do not buy a product/service if the company that sells it is socially irresponsible". The measurement scale for CSR was adapted from Turker [83]. The instrument contained 7 items. The sample items included "participates in activities which aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment" and "encourages its employees to participate in voluntarily activities". All the measurement scales were scored using a 5-point Likert scale (1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree").

4. Results

4.1. Measurement Model

As recommended by the guidelines of Hair et al. [81], before estimating the structural paths, the authors should assess the reliability and validity of the constructs to ensure that the chosen scales are reliable and valid. For this reason, the study analyzed the reflective–reflective model [84]. The measurement model was used to assess the reliability and validity using specified criteria [81]. The reliability analysis was measured using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha metrics. For measuring the validity, the authors assessed the outer loadings and convergent validity using average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity using Fornell–Larcker and heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) metrics. Hair et al. [81] recommended the cutoff values for the CR and Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.70 to 0.95. The values reported in Table 1 indicate that all the values fell within the

acceptable range to ensure the reliability of the scales [85]. Further, the outer loadings and AVE values shown in Table 1 establish convergent validity, as all the values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.50 [86].

Table 1. Validity and reliability of the constructs.

	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Economic		0.614	0.823	0.736
ECO1	0.859			
ECO2	0.866			
ECO3	0.595			
Social		0.591	0.814	0.718
SOC1	0.782			
SOC2	0.745			
SOC3	0.778			
Environmental		0.766	0.908	0.850
ENV1	0.904			
ENV2	0.893			
ENV3	0.828			
Cultural		0.655	0.850	0.753
CUL1	0.790			
CUL2	0.807			
CUL3	0.830			
Brand image		0.630	0.871	0.806
BI1	0.809			
BI2	0.856			
BI3	0.705			
BI4	0.797			
Responsible consumer behavior		0.565	0.886	0.845
RCB1	0.684			
RCB2	0.672			
RCB3	0.784			
RCB4	0.824			
RCB5	0.755			
RCB6	0.779			
Environmental consumer behavior		0.588	0.895	0.858
ECB1	0.720			
ECB2	0.825			
ECB3	0.659			
ECB4	0.768			
ECB5	0.777			
ECB6	0.836			
Corporate social responsibility		0.550	0.879	0.842
CSR1	0.703			
CSR2	0.764			
CSR3	0.820			
CSR4	0.804			
CSR5	0.636			
CSR6	0.707			
CSR7	0.703			

Notes: ECO: economic; SOC: social; CUL: cultural; BI: brand image; RCB: responsible consumer behavior; ECB: environmental consumer behavior; AVE: average variance extracted.

In addition to measuring the convergent validity, the authors also assessed the discriminant validity. First, the Fornell–Larcker criterion was assessed. The values shown in Table 2 illustrate the AVE values' square root and specify that the indicators are more strongly correlated with their own constructs than other constructs [81].

Table 2. Fornell–Larcker criterion.

	BI	CSR	CUL	ECO	ENV	ECB	RCB	SOC
BI	0.794							
CSR	0.523	0.742						
CUL	0.384	0.421	0.809					
ECO	0.398	0.386	0.430	0.784				
ENV	0.406	0.340	0.444	0.698	0.875			
ECB	0.594	0.397	0.497	0.655	0.681	0.767		
RCB	0.391	0.333	0.462	0.472	0.521	0.711	0.752	
SOC	0.360	0.464	0.564	0.525	0.635	0.566	0.526	0.769

Notes: ECO: economic; SOC: social; CUL: cultural; BI: brand image; RCB: responsible consumer behavior; ECB: environmental consumer behavior.

Furthermore, the HTMT ratio was analyzed to establish discriminant validity. Using the bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrapping technique, the HTMT confidence intervals (CIs) were obtained at a 90% significance level (one-tailed). This is in accordance with the recommendations of Henseler et al. [87], which sets a 90% significance level using a one-tailed test to harvest an error probability of 5%. The values reported in Table 3 confirm the discriminant validity of the study.

Table 3. Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio.

	BI	CSR	CUL	ECO	ENV	ECB	RCB	SOC
BI								
CSR	0.580							
CUL	0.457	0.521						
ECO	0.501	0.566	0.602					
ENV	0.453	0.413	0.545	0.804				
ECB	0.692	0.440	0.596	0.820	0.781			
RCB	0.444	0.399	0.557	0.608	0.587	0.819		
SOC	0.467	0.672	0.830	0.800	0.797	0.714	0.668	

Notes: ECO: economic; SOC: social; CUL: cultural; BI: brand image; RCB: responsible consumer behavior; ECB: environmental consumer behavior.

4.2. Validating the Reflective–Reflective Higher-Order Construct

The study contains two higher-order constructs: sustainability marketing involving four lower-order constructs, namely economic, social, environmental, and cultural; and RSCB consisting of responsible and sustainable consumer behavior. As discussed above, similar criteria were employed to establish the reliability and validity of the HOC. For measuring the reliability, the CR and Cronbach's alpha tests were used. The authors examined the outer loadings and the AVE to estimate the convergent validity. Table 4 shows the results of the reliability and convergent validity of the HOC. The analyses ensured the reliability and validity of the HOC, as all the reported values were greater than the acceptable threshold [81]. Furthermore, the discriminant validity was also assessed for the HOC using the Fornell–Larcker and the HTMT criteria. The results of these analyses indicated that the values were within the acceptable range and established the discriminant validity of the HOC (Table 5).

Table 4. Reliability and convergent validity of the HOC.

	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Sustainability marketing		0.664	0.887	0.830
Economic	0.825			
Social	0.832			
Environmental	0.866			
Cultural	0.729			
Responsible sustainable consumer behavior		0.854	0.921	0.831
Responsible consumer behavior	0.905			
Sustainable consumer behavior	0.943			

Notes: AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability.

Table 5. Discriminant validity of the HOC.

	Fornell–Larcker					Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio			
	BI	**CSR**	**RSCB**	**SM**		**BI**	**CSR**	**RSCB**	**SM**
RSCB	0.543	0.398	0.924		RSCB	0.627	0.466		
SM	0.474	0.490	0.737	0.815	SM	0.559	0.602	0.876	

Notes: BI: brand image; CSR: corporate social responsibility; RSCB: responsible sustainable consumer behavior; SM: sustainability marketing.

4.3. Structural Model

The validation of the measurement model allowed the researchers to examine the structural model for obtaining the "path coefficients" (β), the "coefficient of determination" (R^2), the "predictive relevance" (Q^2), and the "effect size" (f^2). The authors ran the BCa bootstrapping on 5000 resamples to yield the relevant *t*- and *p*-values at a 95% significance level [81]. Table 6 illustrates the results of the direct relationship between the proposed variables. The analysis indicated that all four dimensions of sustainability marketing significantly and positively influenced the brand image, leveraging support for the impacts of economic marketing activities on the brand image *(H1a)* ($\beta = 0.195$, $t = 2.318$, $p = 0.021$, $f^2 = 0.124$); the social marketing activities on the brand image (*H1b*) ($\beta = 0.112$, $t = 2.132$, $p = 0.027$, $f^2 = 0.234$); the environmental marketing activities on the brand image (*H1c*) ($\beta = 0.258$, $t = 5.319$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.189$); and the cultural marketing activities on the brand image ($\beta = 0.164$, $t = 2.411$, $p = 0.018$, $f^2 = 0.241$), respectively. Further, the brand image significantly and positively affects the RSCB ($\beta = 0.250$, $t = 4.968$, $p = 0.000$, $f^2 = 0.318$) (supporting *H2*).

Table 6. Effects on the endogenous variables.

| Hypotheses	β	CI (5%, 95%)	SE	*t*-Value	*p*-Value	Decision	f^2	R^2	Q^2
H1a ECO → BI	0.195 ***	(0.092, 0.355)	0.084	2.318	0.021	Supported	0.124	0.332	0.423
H1b SOC → BI	0.112 ***	(0.067, 0.266)	0.080	2.132	0.027	Supported	0.234		
H1c ENV → BI	0.258 ***	(0.151, 0.340)	0.048	5.319	0.000	Supported	0.189		
H1d CUL → BI	0.164 ***	(0.085, 0.291)	0.067	2.411	0.018	Supported	0.241		
H2 BI → RSCB	0.250 ***	(0.152, 0.350)	0.050	4.968	0.000	Supported	0.318	0.591	0.534
H4 CSR × SM → BI	0.048 ***	(0.004, 0.091)	0.043	2.870	0.005	Supported	0.156		
H5 CSR × SM → RSCB	0.041 ***	(0.012, 0.148)	0.041	2.997	0.003	Supported	0.124		

Notes: BI: brand image; CSR: corporate social responsibility; RSCB: responsible sustainable consumer behavior; SM: sustainability marketing; *** significance *p* < 0.05 (1.96).

Furthermore, the study hypothesized that brand image mediates the association between sustainability marketing and RSCB. By employing Zhao et al. [88] mediation approach, the authors examined the mediating role of the brand image using the BCa bootstrapping on 5000 resamples to harvest the indirect effects [81]. Table 7 shows the results of this analysis. The results illustrate that the total effect of sustainability marketing on the brand image ($\beta = 0.798$, CI = 0.716, 0.866) is significant. Besides, the indirect effect of sustainability marketing on RSCB through the brand image ($\beta = 0.180$, CI = 0.129, 0.240) is also significant, indicating "complementary mediation" [81]. Moreover, the "variance accounted for" (VAF) was also tested to assess the mediation analysis. Table 7 shows the VAF values obtained by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect. The value of 22.55% indicates that the brand image partially mediates the relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB. The SEM is reported in Figure 2.

Table 7. Summary of the mediating effect tests.

	Path	*t*-Value	BCCI		Path	*t*-Value	95% BCCI	Decision	VAF
Total Effect				Indirect Effect					
SM → RSCB	0.798 ***	18.014	(0.716, 0.866)	H3 SM → BI → RSCB	0.180 ***	2.825	(0.129, 0.240)	Supported	22.55%

Notes: BI: brand image; RSCB: responsible sustainable consumer behavior; SM: sustainability marketing; VAF: variance accounted for (indirect effect/total effect); Total effect: direct effect + indirect effect. *** significance *p* < 0.05 (1.96).
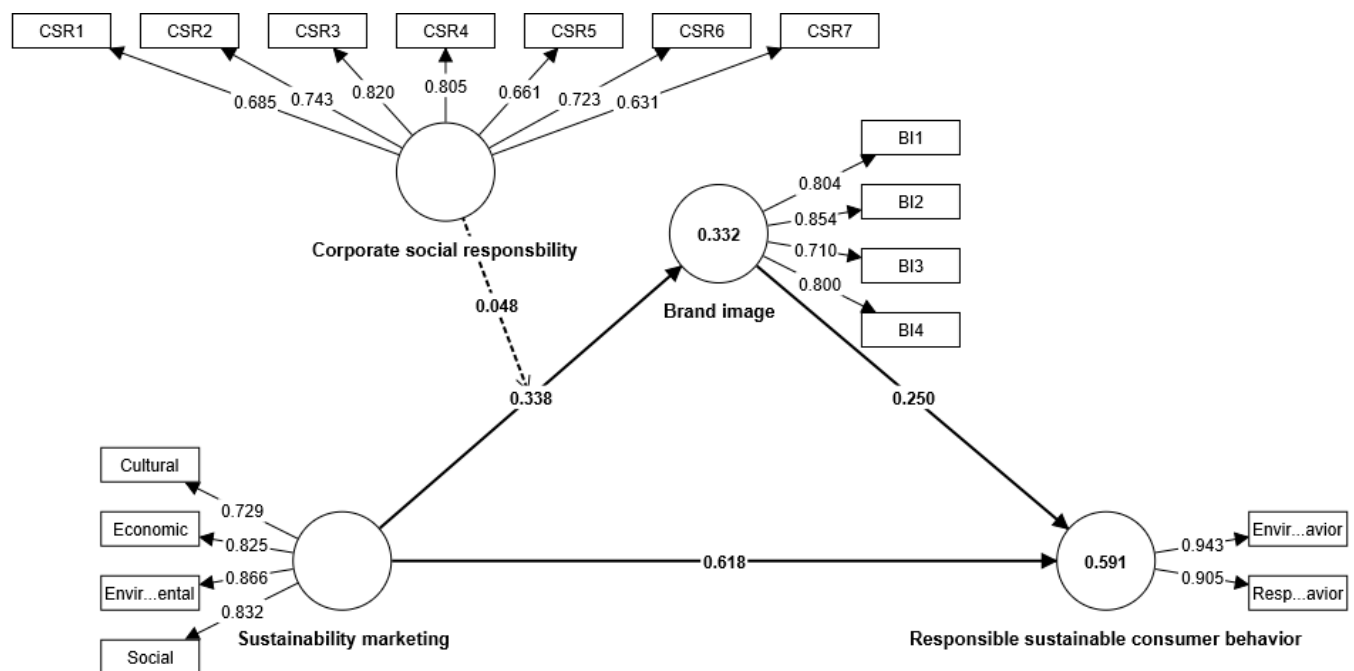
Figure 2. Structural equation model.

In addition, the study followed Hair et al.'s [81] suggestion of utilizing the two-stage approach to measure the moderator effects. This is supported by Henseler and Fassott [89], that the two-stage approach is more appropriate because of its ability to yield superior statistical power compared with the "orthogonal approach" and the "product indicator approach". Table 6 shows the results of the interaction effect. The results confirm that CSR significantly moderates the direct relationship between sustainability marketing and brand image (β = 0.048, CI = 0.004, 0.091), and the indirect association between sustainability marketing and RSCB through brand image (β = 0.041, CI = 0.012, 0.148) (supporting *H4* and *H5*). Further, *f²* indicates the medium effect sizes. The graphical representation of the moderation analysis is presented using the simple slope analysis. Figures 3 and 4 show three lines indicating the relationship between sustainability marketing and brand image (and RSCB). The average of the moderator effect is reflected in the middle line, while the other two lines show the association between sustainability marketing and brand image (and RSCB), i.e., the mean value plus one SD for higher levels of CSR and the mean value minus one SD for lower levels of CSR.
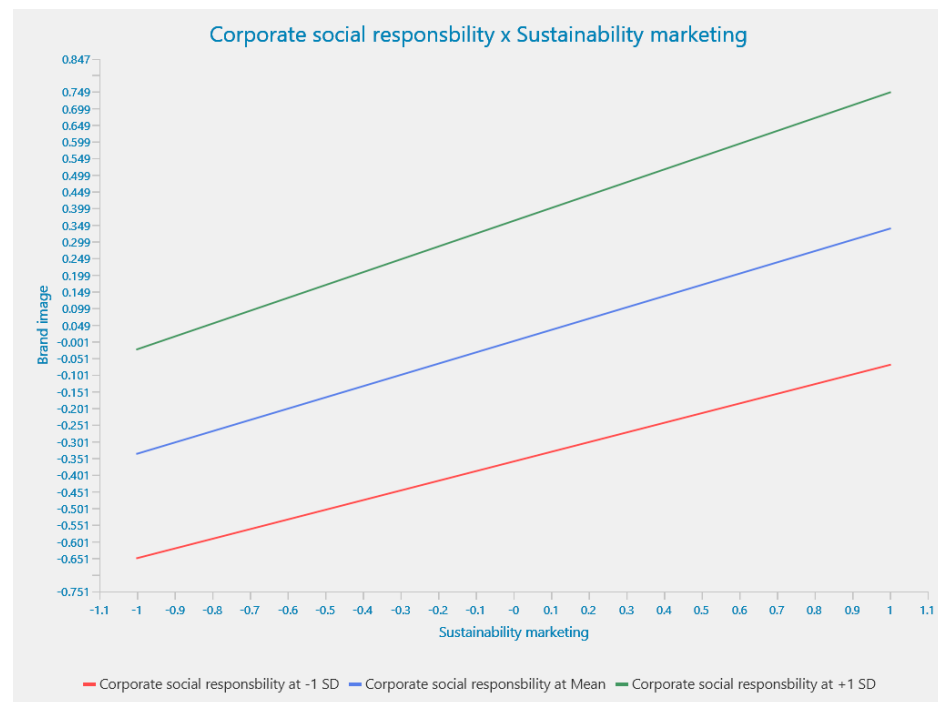
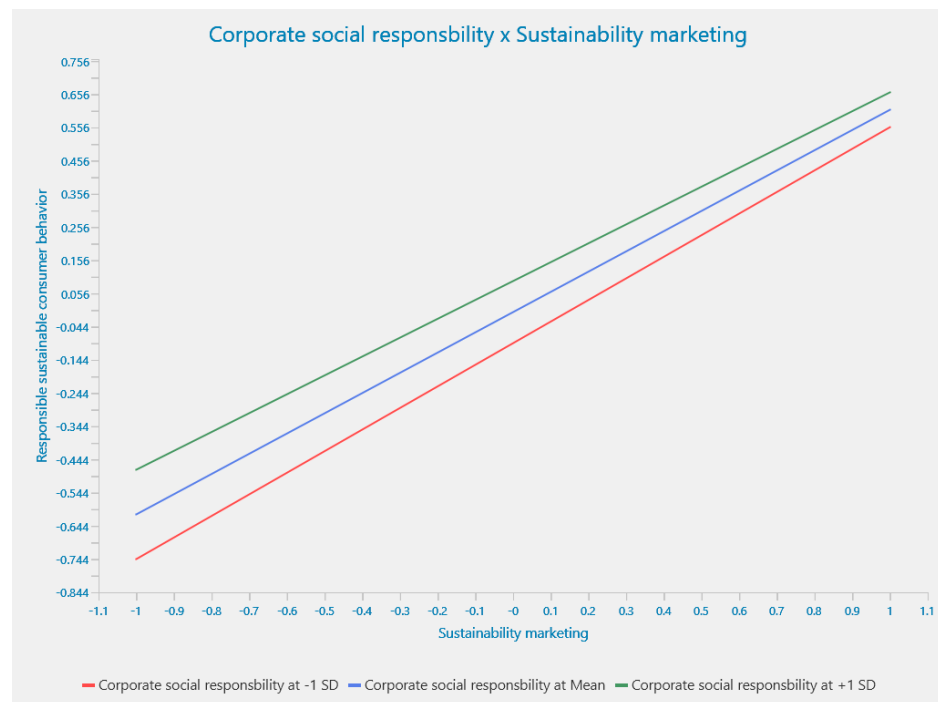**Figure 3.** Interaction effect of corporate social responsibility × sustainability marketing on brand image.

Figure 4. Interaction effect of corporate social responsibility × sustainability marketing on responsible sustainable consumer behavior.

To assess the goodness-of-fit (GOF) index, the study employed the model fitness approach recommended by Tenenhaus et al. [90]. The GOF refers to "the geometric mean of the average communality and average R^2" ([90]. The results reported in Table 8 indicate a good model fit, as the GOF value was 0.558, greater than the cutoff value of 0.36, for ensuring the large effect size of R^2 [91]. Finally, using Stone–Geisser's Q^2, the authors assessed

the predictive relevance, and values greater than 0 ensured the predictive capability of the proposed model [81].

Table 8. Goodness-of-fit index (GFI).

Constructs	AVE	R^2
BI	0.630	0.332
CSR	0.550	
RSCB	0.854	0.591
SM	0.664	
Average scores	0.675	0.462
$(GFI = \sqrt{\overline{AVE} \times \overline{R^2}})$	0.558	

Notes: BI: brand image; CSR: corporate social responsibility; RSCB: responsible sustainable consumer behavior; SM: sustainability marketing; AVE: average variance extracted.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

As the nature of the business world is changing and becoming more complicated at an ever-increasing rate, practitioners must deal with burgeoning consumer demands and governmental pressures to fulfil environmental and social obligations. To be sustainable and responsible, hotels must upgrade their existing marketing practices to portray a sustainable brand image and tap into consumers' responsible and sustainable behaviors. Aligned with the rising trend to integrate sustainable marketing practices with the societal aspect, the current study investigated the impact of sustainability marketing on RSCB through the mediating effect of the brand image. Moreover, the study proposed that the hotels' CSR activities reinforce these relationships. Anchored on signaling and attribution theories, the study examined the hypothesized model with data from hospitality industry customers.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study present unique yet comparable theoretical implications, such as:

The study proposed the first hypothesis that sustainability marketing activities, i.e., economic, social, environmental, and cultural marketing activities, are positively related to the brand image. The findings support this projection that hotels with a sound focus on sustainability marketing activities may better portray their brand image as environmentally and socially responsible. This is because each dimension of sustainability marketing positively influences the brand image. The results of this analysis support previous studies that have linked sustainability marketing with brand image [18]. Similarly, other studies encompassing socially responsible marketing activities also report positive associations with brand image [92,93]. This finding supports the prior studies and extends the implications in two ways. Firstly, as discussed above, sustainability marketing activities need to focus on the societal aspect of the hotels' marketing practices. By projecting sustainability marketing as a comprehensive construct, our study integrates hotels' environmentally friendly and social marketing activities; thus, promoting the brand image of an organization that not only fulfils its environmental obligations, but also responds to the needs of society. Secondly, we assessed sustainability marketing as a higher-order construct encompassing the hotels' economic, social, environmental, and cultural activities. Firstly, we examined the impact of each dimension of sustainability marketing: economic marketing activities, social marketing activities, environmental marketing activities, and cultural marketing activities on the brand image. Secondly, as the construct of sustainability marketing involves LOCs, we calculated the latent scores of the LOCs and examined the impact of sustainability marketing as a HOC on RSCB through the mediating role of the brand image. By investigating sustainability marketing as an antecedent, our study distinguishes its implications for brand image from Jung et al. [18], who assessed the relationship between each dimension with the brand image. In addition, Jung et al. [18] study found an insignificant impact of social marketing activities on brand image. However, in the context of environmentally and

socially responsible behaviors, we anticipated that the hotel's social and other marketing activities are positively and significantly linked with their brand image.

Similarly, our second hypothesis stated that brand image is positively linked with RSCB. Our findings support the notion that consumers will more likely be shaping socially and environmentally responsible behaviors, engendered by the hotel's brand image fostered through its sustainability marketing. Our findings are in harmony with preliminary studies that have found a positive influence of brand image on consumer behaviors. For instance, Zhang [94] related brand image from a consumer perspective with customer equity and found positive correlations between them. Similarly, Chang and Fong [95] found positive associations between green corporate image and green customer satisfaction and loyalty. Another host of researchers in recent years has related green brand image with consumer beliefs on the environment [96]. Moreover, their study revealed that consumer environmental beliefs are provoked through the green brand image guided by green marketing activities, which is consistent with our findings. The significant relationship between brand image and RSCB supports the mediating role of the brand image between sustainability marketing and RSCB. Investigating the impact of brand image stimulated by sustainability marketing activities on RSCB advances the prior research on environmentally and socially sustainable behaviors. Thus, our third hypothesis extends previous studies [96] by assessing the impact of sustainability marketing on brand image and RSCB. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is one of the few studies that examined these associations and, hence, contributes to the existing literature more meaningfully. Further, we addressed the call of Hosta and Zabkar [2] by examining the antecedents of RSCB. We draw on insights from signaling theory, which posits that hotels' sustainability marketing activities depict positive signals to consumers through portraying a sustainable brand image, ultimately stimulating RSCB. Besides, additional insights are drawn from attribution theory, which provides a causal explanation to determine consumers' behaviors based on the attributes they associate with a hotel's motives in performing environmentally and socially responsible activities. Hence, consumers' consumption choices may be influenced by their behaviors, stimulated by a positive brand image based on the perceptions of the hotel's sustainability marketing activities. Moreover, our findings can be extended to other essential deliverables of sustainability marketing, *such as* customer satisfaction and loyalty [97], and sustainable competitive advantage [98].

The fourth and fifth hypotheses demonstrated that the hotel's CSR activities intervene with the relationship between sustainability marketing and the brand image (and RSCB). The findings support these hypotheses, such that the relationships between sustainability marketing and brand image (and RSCB) are stronger at higher levels of CSR than at lower levels. Our findings are in agreement with previous studies. For instance, Khan et al. [32] found the significant role of brand social responsibility affected the relationship between the brand image and customer purchase intention, stimulated by green supply chain management. Our findings contribute to the crucial role of CSR, by assessing the hotel's CSR activities as a moderating variable that underpins the association between sustainability marketing and brand image, and sustainability marketing and RSCB through the brand image. Consumers' behaviors stimulated by a hotel's sustainability marketing activities and brand image are reinforced by the perception that the hotel's CSR activities are congruent with their current and future needs.

Last, but not least, our study relies on signaling and attribution theories to hypothesize the relationship between sustainability marketing and RSCB, through the mediating effect of brand image and the moderating effect of CSR. By extending the implications of the aforenoted theories to infer the hypothesized relationships, our study contributes to the theoretical underpinning of signaling theory and attribution theory in the context of sustainability marketing and RSCB. In addition, both of these theories complement each other in predicting the association among the proposed variables.

5.2. Practical Implications

These findings turn into meaningful practical implications that will help marketers and policymakers to enhance the desirability of responsible and sustainable behavior. For instance, given increasing environmental pressures and burgeoning demands on the hospitality industry to foster environmental and societal sustainability, marketing professionals find it imperative to devise ways that may provoke sustainability marketing. Besides, organizations are required to maintain a balance between sustainable and responsible activities for the betterment of all at large. As indicated by our findings, sustainability marketing stimulates the brand image of the hospitality industry. Thus, we suggest that marketing managers should not only operate environmental activities, but also execute social activities to present a stronger and more sustainable image to customers. Subsequently, the brand image formed based on the hotel's sustainability marketing may nurture RSCB. Hence, marketing managers should consider all sustainability marketing activities, such as those relating to economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects, to better position their image to customers as environmentally and socially responsible. This will result in improved RSCB, because customers identify themselves with brands, and their behaviors might be regulated based on their perceptions and the positive image of the brand. The awareness of responsible consumers can be enhanced by enriching the presence of social issues and confining the hurdles to this type of behavior. Marketing managers and policymakers could use positive examples or influencers that are admired by a specific population. Hence, this will ultimately influence their consumption choices that address social and environmental issues. Moreover, hotel managers should emphasize their CSR practices' ethical, legal, and ecological aspects. Hotels should participate in community welfare through sponsorships and donations. Prior studies have shown that customers turned away from companies that performed unethical activities [99]. However, when consumers perceive that hotels exercise socially and environmentally responsible activities guided by their CSR initiatives, they develop long-lasting relationships with these hotels. This is because CSR not only influences the image of a brand, but also impacts its bottom-line [79]. Hence, the execution of CSR activities should not be an option, but a mandatory approach, for hospitality firms.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

This study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, we assessed the theorized model using the convenience sampling technique. We invite future studies to conduct longitudinal research design and investigate these underlying relationships. Secondly, we examined the impact of sustainability marketing on brand image (and RSCB) using it as a HOC. However, the dimension of sustainability marketing that explains more variance in the proposed outcome variables should be an interesting avenue for future studies. Thirdly, we assessed brand image as a mediating variable between sustainability marketing and RSCB. Our findings indicate that brand image partially mediates this link. This indicates that other contingent factors may influence the association. Fourthly, despite the burgeoning interest in studying RSCB, more empirical research is needed to explore its antecedents. Hence, future studies should expand the boundary conditions of RSCB. Finally, the study was conducted in a non-Western country, therefore, caution is required in generalizing and interpreting this study's findings.

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