

Exploring Sustainability and Competitive Advantage in Hospitality: A Systematic Literature Review of Key Variables

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Abstract. This research aims to integrate and deeply understand the influence of key variables on Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) in the hospitality industry. This study used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on PRISMA guidelines. Analysis was conducted on 132 articles, with 20 articles meeting strict inclusion criteria to explore SCA in a hospitality context. The results show that effective integration of internal management practices related to service quality, innovation, and human resource management plays a key role in building and sustaining SCA. The study also identified significant variations in the focus of SCA-related research across countries, indicating global and regional trends in sustainability-related research. This study has significant implications for Sustainable Competitive Advantage, having successfully developed a comprehensive framework to explore key variables affecting SCA in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Sustainable Competitive Advantage; Hospitality Industry; Systematic Literature Review; PRISMA

1 Introduction

In the past decade, the hospitality industry has undergone a significant transformation influenced by several key factors. Globalization [1], rapid technological advances [2], and changes in consumer preferences [3], [4], especially toward sustainability practices, have pushed companies in the sector to revise and adapt the way they operate and compete. These challenges affect how services are delivered and how innovations are implemented to meet consumers' increasingly high expectations of social and environmental responsibility [5]. As a result, companies in the hospitality industry are now, more than ever, required to integrate sustainability strategies in their operations and business models to remain relevant and competitive in this dynamic global market.

Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) is crucial in the hospitality industry [6], where intense competition and constant innovation are crucial to survival and growth. SCA not only supports companies in providing products in response to consumer demands and complaints on product quality, customer needs, new market sourcing, and product innovation [7], but also in creating long-term value through customer retention and operational efficiency. In this industry, a company's long-term success is often determined by its ability to adapt to changing consumer preferences and market trends while effectively managing internal resources to maximize operational performance. Therefore, understanding and implementing strategies that support the achievement of SCA is essential to gain a competitive advantage and ensure business continuity in a highly dynamic and competitive environment.

Previous research on Systematic Literature Review (SLR) analysis focusing on SCA variables has been conducted in various sectors. For example, Satar [8] reviewed articles related to SCA from various industries, while Mahdi and Nassar [9] analyzed the relationship between variables related to SCA using the SLR method. However, neither study exclusively focused on the hospitality sector. On the other hand, Palacios et al. [10] conducted SLR on the hospitality sector but used bibliometric analysis and network analysis approaches. Although diverse, no

study has specifically examined Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the hospitality sector using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by providing a comprehensive and structured synthesis of the existing literature using the PRISMA method to gain a more holistic and applicable understanding of the factors that influence SCA in the hospitality industry context.

The journal "Exploring Sustainability and Competitive Advantage in Hospitality: A Systematic Literature Review of Key Variables" aims to integrate and deeply understand the variables that influence SCA in the hospitality industry. Through a Systematic Literature Review approach, this research aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research results, revealing how these variables interact and contribute to SCA. The novelty of this research lies in the attempt to develop a comprehensive analytical framework that not only presents the cause-and-effect relationships between variables but also identifies patterns that may not have been revealed in previous studies. In doing so, this study will provide theoretical and practical insights for practitioners and stakeholders in the hospitality industry, helping them implement strategies that will strengthen their competitive advantage in the long run. In addition, this study is also expected to provide a foundation for future research that is more focused on strategic interventions that can be practically applied in the day-to-day operations of the hospitality industry.

2 Literature Review

Competitive advantage refers to a company's capacity to intelligently execute business operations and effectively employ its resources in a way that creates value that cannot be replicated by competitors. Meanwhile, sustainability refers to the act of preserving a specific level over a specific duration [11]. Sustainability refers to the capacity of a corporation to endure and thrive in a fiercely competitive and constantly evolving global business landscape [11]. The competitive advantage must also serve as the primary catalyst for the company's long-term operations, so transforming it into a Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

SCA is a crucial goal for any firm. Experts have previously expanded the understanding of SCA from two different viewpoints. Initially, it scrutinizes the origins and attributes of competitive advantage, with scholars asserting that it stems from the creation and dissemination of value. Hence, it is imperative for organizations to incorporate both internal and external resources in order to showcase the organization's competitive edge, which is derived from resources or competencies that are scarce, hard to replicate, valuable, and indispensable in the realms of production and marketing [12]. Furthermore, in order to further emphasize and enhance sustainability, professionals in the field have formulated the idea of sustainability with a focus on the long-term growth and progress of organizations. Sustainability is defined as the ability of a firm to maintain long-term and unique market advantages over present or potential competitors [13]. Strategic Competitive Advantage (SCA) is a flexible and adaptable method that allows organizations to fulfill current competitive demands while also ensuring they can meet future competitive needs without any negative impact [9]. SCA is directly influenced by valuable, rare, unique, and irreplaceable materials. SCA refers to the company's current and future ability to outperform its competitors. Organizations must possess the capability to effectively allocate resources in order to manufacture competitive products and fulfill market demands.

3 Methodology

In this research, the steps of SLR analysis will follow the research by Kitchenham and Charters [14] and Maqbool and Herold [15], which outline the SLR steps into 4 stages, namely identification of research, study selection, data extraction, and data synthesis. Each step in the SLR analysis will be described in more detail in the sub-chapters below.

3.1. Identification of Research

The objective of the SLR is to find a maximum number of primary papers relevant to the research issue by employing an impartial search method. The formulation of the search strategy should be undertaken in collaboration with librarians or specialists possessing pertinent expertise. This method is typically iterative and entails an initial search to discover pre-existing systematic reviews and evaluate the quantity of possibly pertinent publications. Articles used for the SLR were sourced from the Scopus database, one of the largest databases of research articles. In addition, Scopus-indexed articles have high credibility and are internationally recognized. The keywords used to search for articles in the Scopus database are “sustainable competitive advantage”, hospitality, hotel, and tourist, which are used by applying the boolean rules “AND” and “OR”. Several search filters have been applied in the Scopus database, such as the document type being an article, the publication stage being final, the source type being a journal, and the language used being English. Research questions were formulated to advance the current understanding of sustainable competitive advantage in the hospitality sector, which are:

- 1) RQ1: How many publications in previous empirical studies address sustainable competitive advantage in the hospitality sector each year?
- 2) RQ2: Which countries have been used in previous empirical studies to discuss sustainable competitive advantage in the hospitality sector?
- 3) RQ3: What are the determinants of sustainable competitive advantage discussed in previous empirical studies?

3.2. Study Selection

After obtaining potentially relevant primary research, it is necessary to evaluate their relevance. The study selection criteria aim to discover primary studies that offer direct evidence for the research topic. In order to minimize the potential for bias, it is important to establish the selection criteria at the outset of the protocol development, but they can be further modified during the search process. The inclusion and exclusion criteria should be determined based on the research question at hand. These criteria must undergo testing to confirm their interpretability and ability to classify studies appropriately. The inclusion criteria used in this study are as follows:

1. IC1: The article must be original research reviewed and written in English.
2. IC2: The article aims to analyze, test, and investigate the factors influencing sustainable competitive advantage in tourism/hospitality.
3. IC3: Research using quantitative or mixed methods

The data elimination process in the SLR study, illustrated in Figure 1, uses the PRISMA method, which illustrates the systematic steps in selecting literature relevant to the research topic. From the initial search in the Scopus database with specific keywords, 132 articles were obtained. The first inclusion criterion (IC1) applied was language restriction, i.e., only English articles were considered. After that, the articles were screened based on title, abstract, and keywords to ensure their relevance to the theme of “sustainable competitive advantage” in the context of the hospitality industry.

Of the 132 articles, 110 were eliminated because they did not meet the second and third inclusion criteria (IC2 and IC3), which required the articles to have the purpose of analyzing, testing, or investigating factors affecting sustainable competitive advantage in the tourism or hospitality sector and to use quantitative or mixed methods. Only 20 articles met all these criteria and were deemed relevant for further analysis in the qualitative review. This process of elimination was essential to ensure that the literature review was rigorous and that only high-quality articles that contributed scientific evidence were incorporated into the systematic analysis.

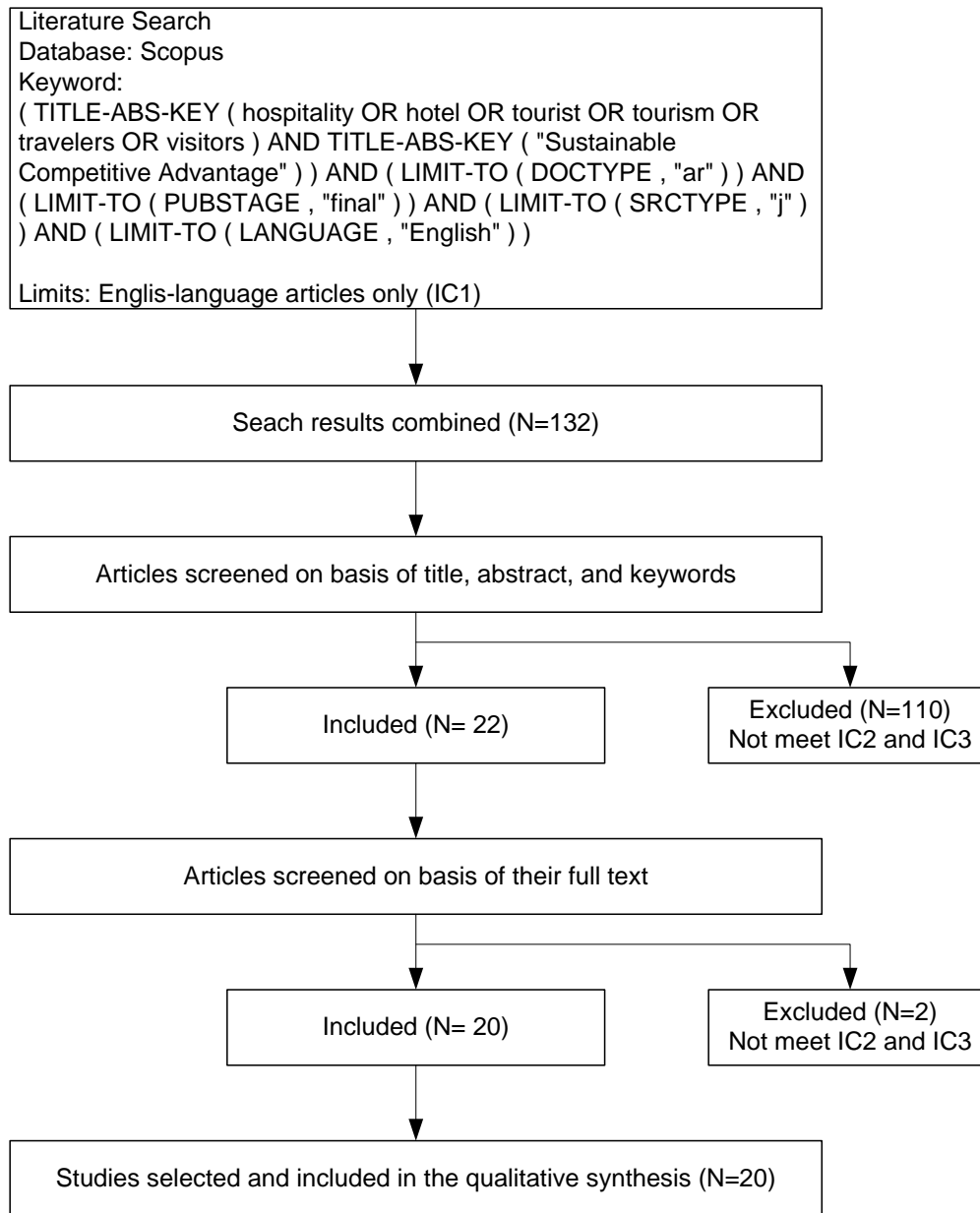


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

3.3. Data Extraction

The objective of this phase is to develop a data extraction form that accurately records the information that researchers collect from primary studies. The potential for bias should be minimized by defining and testing the data extraction form during the establishment of the study protocol. The results of the article extraction are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Extraction of Sustainable Competitive Advantage Journal Articles

Authors	Year	Predictor Variables
Abdul-Aziz Ahmad M.; Jais J.	2023	Service Quality (Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, sensory)

Authors	Year	Predictor Variables
Elidemir S.N.; Ozturen A.; Bayighomog S.W.	2020	High Performance Work Practices Innovative Behaviors Employee Creativity
Jibril I.A.; Yeşiltaş M.	2022	Talent (Identification, Development, Engagement, Retention) Employee Satisfaction Performance Management
Hossain M.S.; Kannan S.N.; Raman Nair S.K.K.	2021	Innovativeness Learning Capability Absorptive Capacity Team Culture Competitive Intelligence Entrepreneurial Behavior
Hossain M.S.; Hussain K.; Kannan S.; Kunju Raman Nair S.K.	2022	Innovativeness Strategic Flexibility Absorptive Capacity Team Culture Competitive Intelligence Awareness Entrepreneurial Behavior
Sarya I.N.; Arief M.T.S.; Saroso H.; Bandur A.	2022	Entrepreneurial Orientation Service Innovation
Ngan N.T.H.; Hanh D.H.; Lan H.T.	2023	Product Innovation Capability Responsible Innovation Process Innovation Capability Innovation Resources
Cheah S.; Ho Y.-P.; Li S.	2018	Business Model Innovation Industry Turbulence
Qureshi F.N.; Bashir S.; Mahmood A.; Ahmad S.; Attiq S.; Zeeshan M.	2022	Internal Brand Management Brand Commitment Brand Citizenship Behavior
Abdul-Aziz Ahmad M.; Jais J.	2024	Service Quality Logistic Resources
Hussain I.; Mu S.; Mohiuddin M.; Danish R.Q.; Sair S.A.	2020	Brand Equity Market Innovation
Hussein H.; Albadry O.M.; Mathew V.; Al-Romeedy B.S.; Alsetoohy O.; Abou Kamar M.; Khairy H.A.	2024	Digital Leadership Eco Innovation Green Absorptive Capability
Alqarni K.; Agina M.F.; Khairy H.A.; Al-Romeedy B.S.; Farrag D.A.; Abdallah R.M.	2023	Electronic Human Resource Management Sustainable Innovation Organizational Agility
Ahmad M, A. A.; Jais J.	2024	Logistics Resources Service Quality
Elsharnouby T.H.; Elbanna S.	2021	Human Capital Market Sensing Capability Brand Management Capability
Bushairi S.A.A.; Sularso R.A.; Tobing D.S.K.; Irawan B.	2024	Strategic Flexibility Innovation Culture Ambidexterity Open Innovation

Authors	Year	Predictor Variables
		Agility Company Innovation Collaborative Competitiveness
Ahmad M, A. A.; Jais J.	2023	Tangibles Reliability Responsiveness Assurance Empathy Sensory
Sitorus S.A.	2017	Marketing Communication Mix Innovation Customer Retention
Wang S.-L.; Li Y.-C.; Zhang C.-P.	2020	Social Support Life Ecology Production Integrated
Elgarhy S.D.; Abou-Shouk M.	2023	Entrepreneurial Orientation Marketing Capability Innovation Capability Marketing Innovation

The table above shows the results extracted from various scholarly articles that discuss the influence of various predictor variables on SCA in the hospitality industry. These variables include service quality, high-performance work practices, talent management, innovation, and brand management. Each article provides insights into how certain aspects of hospitality operations can contribute to achieving and maintaining competitive advantage within the sector. Although these variables have been identified and categorized, they still need to be integrated into a more comprehensive analysis planned to be conducted in the next phase of the SLR analysis. This next step will be essential to uncover how these factors interact with each other and collectively influence SCA, providing a stronger foundation for sustainable and competitive hospitality strategies.

3.4. Data Synthesis

Data synthesis involves combining and summarizing results from the primary studies included in the review. This synthesis can be descriptive (non-quantitative), where study results are summarized and explained without using statistics. However, it is sometimes possible to supplement the descriptive synthesis with a quantitative summary. The results of combining and summarizing the results of the selected articles are presented in Chapter 4, particularly in Table 2.

4 Results

4.1. Publication By Year and Country

This analysis presents data relating to the number of publications by year and country. Figure 2 provides an overview of publication trends from year to year, showing the development and increasing attention to the topic under study.

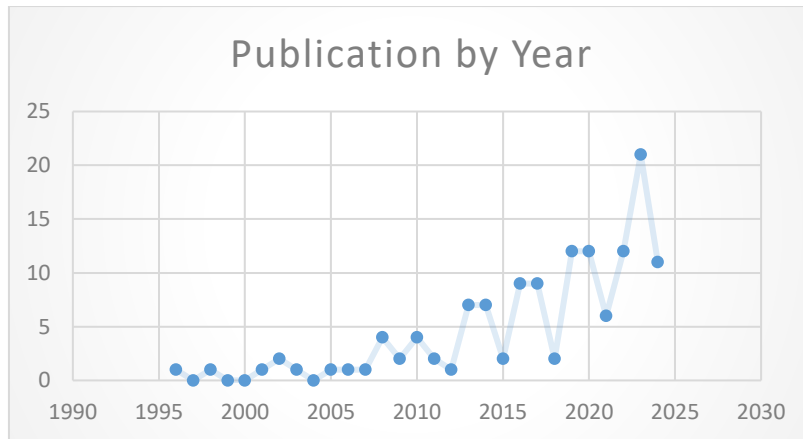


Figure 2. Publication by Year

Figure 2 shows the annual number of publications on “Sustainable Competitive Advantage”, illustrating the fluctuations and trends in research published from 1996 to 2024. The data presented shows a general increase in the number of publications over time, with some notable increases and decreases.

Furthermore, Figure 3 presents the distribution of publications by country, providing insight into each country’s contribution to this area of research. This data is essential for understanding research dynamics globally and recognizing regions that have significant influence in the analyzed literature.

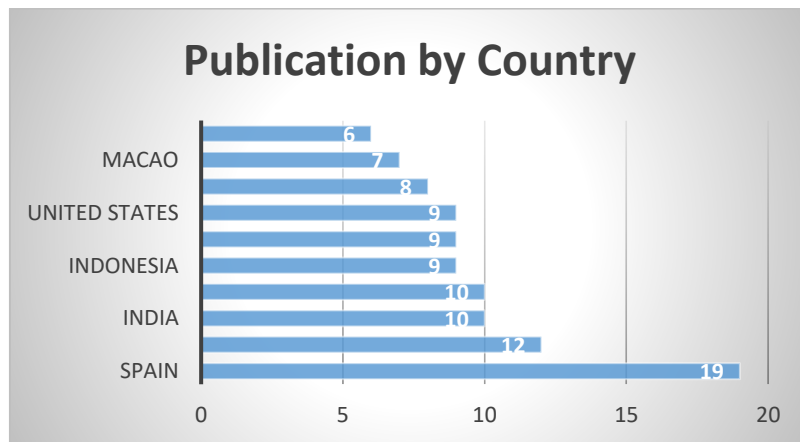


Figure 3. Publication by Country

The graph above shows the number of publications on SCA research topics by country. Spain has the highest number of publications, with 19, followed by China, India, and Malaysia, with 12, 10, and 10 publications, respectively. Other countries, such as Indonesia, Italy, and the USA, have a relatively smaller number of publications, showing the variation in the level of attention to this topic in different regions.

4.2. Variables Affecting Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the Hospitality Sector

This study identifies and categorizes various variables influencing sustainable competitive advantage based on synthesizing articles analyzed through the SLR method. Table 2 presents the predictor variables’ classification, including aspects such as innovation, resources, and performance.

Table 2. Factor Affecting Sustainable Competitive Advantage In Hospitality Sector

Grouped Variable Name	Variable Related	Authors	Number of Article Supported
Market and Innovation Strategies	Industry Turbulence, Business Model Innovation, Market Orientation, Competitive Intelligence Awareness, Participatory Leadership, Organizational Innovation Intensity	Cheah et al. [16], Gil-Cordero et al. [17], Hossain et al. [18], Sitorus [19], Ahmad & Jais [20], Ngan et al. [21]	6
Work and Talent Management	High Performance Work Practices, Employee Creativity, Talent Development, Talent Retention, Performance Management, Talent Engagement	Elidemir et al. [22], Jibril & Yeşiltaş [23], Sarfraz et al. [24], Wang et al. [25]	4
Brand and Service Excellence	Brand Equity, Marketing Innovation, Customer Retention, Service Innovation, Brand Commitment, Brand Citizenship Behavior	Hussain et al. [26], Qureshi et al. [27], Sarya et al. [28], Elgarhy & Abou-Shouk [29]	4
Organizational Learning and Flexibility	Learning Capability, Absorptive Capacity, Innovativeness, Strategic Flexibility, Organizational Agility	Hossain et al. [18], Hossain et al. [30], Alqarni et al. [31], Bushairi et al. [32]	5
Supply Chain and Sustainability	Sustainable Supply Chain Strategy, Blockchain Technology Adoption, Eco Innovation, Green Absorptive Capability	Sarfraz et al. [24], Hussein et al. [33]	2

Grouped Variable Name	Variable Related	Authors	Number of Article Supported
Entrepreneurship and Digital Leadership	Entrepreneurial Orientation, Digital Leadership, Company Innovation, Open Innovation, Collaborative Competitiveness	Sarya et al. [28], Hussein et al. [33], Bushairi et al. [32]	3
Human Capital and Agility	Human Capital, Organizational Agility, Market Sensing Capability, Ambidexterity	Elsharnouby & Elbanna [34], Bushairi et al. [32], Ahmad & Jais [35]	3

Based on the results, it can be seen that the variables that affect Competitive Advantage in the hospitality sector include Market & Innovation Strategies, Work & Talent Management, Brand & Service Excellence, Organizational Learning & Flexibility, Supply Chain & Sustainability, Entrepreneurship & Digital Leadership, and Human Capital & Agility. The explanation for each variable is shown in the next chapter.

5 Discussion

5.1. Publication By Year And Country

Figure 2 illustrates the trend of annual publications related to SCA research topics from 1996 to 2024. The patterns of increase and decrease throughout this period are discussed below:

- **Early Period (1996-2010):** During this early phase, publications were relatively low, with only sporadic contributions, highlighting that the concept of sustainable competitive advantage was still in its developmental stages in management literature. Years like 1997, 1999, and 2004 show no publications, suggesting limited interest or recognition of the topic. A gradual increase emerged from 2002 onwards, but the growth remained modest.
- **Growing Interest (2011-2023):** From 2011, the number of publications rose significantly, peaking at 21 in 2023. This period reflects a growing acknowledgment of SCA's relevance in academia and business practice. The publication surge can be attributed to increasing concerns over sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and global economic challenges businesses face. The substantial rise in publications indicates a response to shifts in international business dynamics and theoretical advancements in sustainability and competitive strategies.
- **Recent Trends and Fluctuations (2019-2024):** The number of publications fluctuates from 2019 onwards. Notably, 2023 marked the highest number of publications at 21, while 2024 shows a slight decline to 11, which may indicate incomplete data collection for that year or a natural variation in research focus. Despite this drop, the overall trend shows a sustained and growing interest in SCA, reflecting the continuing exploration of the concept in response to evolving business and sustainability challenges.

In conclusion, Figure 2 demonstrates that SCA has gained substantial attention over the years, particularly in response to global sustainability challenges and the strategic changes needed in modern business practices. The fluctuations observed in specific years could be

influenced by shifts in economic factors, evolving research priorities, or variations in research funding. Nonetheless, the overarching trend underscores SCA as an increasingly critical topic in management literature.

Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of publications on SCA in the hospitality industry across different countries. Spain leads with 19 publications, highlighting its strong emphasis on sustainability within the hospitality sector, likely driven by the importance of tourism to its economy. China follows with 12 publications, reflecting the growing focus on sustainability and competitive strategies in its large tourism industry. India and Malaysia have ten publications showcasing their roles as emerging hubs for SCA research, supported by their expanding tourism industries and sustainability-focused business strategies.

Indonesia and Italy each contribute nine publications, indicating significant academic and industry interest in SCA. The United States also has nine publications, signifying its solid commitment to researching sustainable strategies in hospitality. Australia, with eight publications, shows steady contributions to this area of research. Macao and Hong Kong, with 7 and 6 publications, respectively, further represent the increasing attention to sustainability in competitive hospitality markets.

Overall, the data indicates a broad geographical interest in SCA research, with certain countries leading the way in driving sustainability strategies in the hospitality sector. Differences in the number of publications may reflect varying levels of government policy support, economic resources, and the prioritization of sustainability within national research agendas.

5.2. Market and Innovation Strategies

The grouped variable Market and Innovation Strategies encompasses several critical components contributing to SCA. These components include industry turbulence, business model innovation, market orientation, competitive intelligence awareness, participatory leadership, and organizational innovation intensity. Each plays a unique role in ensuring that organizations remain agile and competitive in an ever-evolving business landscape.

Industry turbulence refers to the rapid changes and disruptions in market conditions, requiring businesses to innovate continuously to maintain their competitive edge. According to Cheah et al. [16], business model innovation is vital for companies in highly volatile industries, as it allows them to adapt their value propositions and operational processes to new market realities. This ability to innovate the business model gives organizations a significant advantage, enabling them to navigate market uncertainty more effectively.

As discussed by Gil-Cordero et al. [17], market orientation emphasizes the importance of understanding customer needs, competitor actions, and broader market trends. By maintaining a market-oriented approach, firms can better align their strategies with consumers' evolving preferences, thereby improving their competitive position. Complementing this, competitive intelligence awareness is crucial, as it helps organizations gather and analyze information about their external environment, allowing them to anticipate market shifts and adjust strategies accordingly [18].

Another important element is participatory leadership, which Gil-Cordero et al. [17] identify as a leadership style that fosters collaboration and engagement across all levels of the organization. This inclusive approach enhances innovation by encouraging employees to contribute ideas and insights, driving the organization's capacity for continuous improvement. Additionally, organizational innovation intensity refers to the degree to which an organization emphasizes innovation across its operations. As Sitorus [19] noted, fostering a culture of innovation ensures that companies can consistently introduce new products, services, or processes that enhance their competitive advantage.

Finally, the integration of these strategies is effective in service industries, as outlined by Ahmad and Jais [20], who emphasize that aligning market strategies with innovation-driven leadership is crucial for maintaining SCA, particularly in the hospitality sector. The continuous

alignment of market and innovation strategies ensures that organizations survive and thrive in competitive markets, as they are better equipped to respond to internal and external challenges.

5.3. Work and Talent Management

The grouped variable Work and Talent Management encompasses a range of practices and strategies designed to enhance organizational performance by effectively managing human capital. This variable includes critical elements such as high-performance work practices, employee creativity, talent development, talent retention, performance management, and talent engagement, all of which contribute significantly to achieving sustainable competitive advantage (SCA).

High-performance work practices (HPWPs) are essential for fostering a work environment that encourages productivity, innovation, and excellence. Elidemir et al. [22] highlight the role of HPWPs in enhancing employee creativity, which is a crucial driver of innovation. By promoting creativity, organizations can harness the potential of their workforce to generate new ideas and improve processes, ultimately strengthening their competitive position. HPWPs, when aligned with effective talent management strategies, ensure that employees are empowered and motivated to contribute to the organization's success.

Talent development and retention are equally critical components of an intense work and talent management system. As noted by Jibril and Yesiltas [23], investing in employee development not only enhances their skills and capabilities but also increases their loyalty to the organization. This, in turn, improves talent retention, reducing turnover rates and ensuring that the organization retains its top talent over the long term. Organizations prioritizing continuous learning and growth create an environment where employees feel valued and are more likely to remain committed.

Performance management is another essential element of work and talent management, as it provides a structured approach to evaluating and improving employee performance. Sarfraz et al. [24] emphasize the importance of aligning performance management systems with organizational goals to drive higher levels of talent engagement. When employees are engaged, they are more likely to contribute to the organization's success, as they feel connected to its mission and motivated to achieve its objectives. Effective performance management also helps identify improvement areas, ensuring that employees are consistently developing and performing at their best.

Overall, the integration of high-performance work practices, talent development, retention strategies, performance management, and engagement initiatives creates a comprehensive framework for managing human capital to support long-term organizational success. These elements foster a motivated, skilled, and creative workforce, essential for maintaining a competitive advantage in today's dynamic business environment.

5.4. Brand and Service Excellence

The grouped variable Brand and Service Excellence encompasses several key components that drive sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) by focusing on the brand's value and the quality of service delivered. The critical elements within this variable include brand equity, marketing innovation, customer retention, service innovation, brand commitment, and brand citizenship behavior. These factors contribute significantly to an organization's ability to differentiate itself in a competitive market and maintain long-term success.

Brand equity refers to the value that a brand holds in the minds of consumers. Hussain et al. [26] argue that substantial brand equity is essential for organizations in industries like hospitality, where a trusted brand can significantly influence customer decisions. A well-established brand attracts new customers and fosters loyalty, which is critical for retaining customers over the long term. Additionally, customer retention is closely linked to brand equity, as a strong brand encourages repeat business and reduces customer churn. Maintaining high

customer retention levels helps ensure a steady revenue stream and reduces the costs of acquiring new customers.

Marketing and service innovation play pivotal roles in enhancing brand and service excellence. According to Qureshi et al. [27], marketing innovation involves implementing new strategies that enhance the brand's visibility and attractiveness in the marketplace. This includes leveraging digital platforms, personalizing marketing messages, and improving customer engagement through creative campaigns. Similarly, service innovation, which continuously enhances service offerings, is vital for maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. Organizations that innovate their marketing strategies and services can create a lasting competitive advantage by meeting and exceeding customer expectations.

Brand commitment and brand citizenship behavior are also crucial components of this framework. As Sarya et al. [28] point out, brand commitment refers to employees' and customers' emotional and psychological attachment to the brand. Employees committed to the brand are more likely to embody its values and deliver high-quality service, enhancing the customer experience. This commitment also extends to brand citizenship behavior, which describes how employees voluntarily go above and beyond their job requirements to support the brand's reputation. Elgarhy and Abou-Shouk [29] highlight that these behaviors strengthen the brand's identity and customer perception, contributing to long-term loyalty and competitive advantage.

In conclusion, Brand and Service Excellence is a holistic approach that integrates brand equity, marketing innovation, service innovation, customer retention, and employee engagement to create a sustainable competitive edge. Organizations can build a strong market presence and ensure long-term success in highly competitive industries by focusing on the brand's external perception and employees' internal commitment.

5.5. Organizational Learning and Flexibility

The grouped variable Organizational Learning and Flexibility encompasses several interconnected concepts for sustaining competitive advantage in dynamic business environments. This variable includes learning capability, absorptive capacity, innovativeness, strategic flexibility, and organizational agility, enabling organizations to adapt to changes, innovate, and maintain their competitive edge.

Learning capability is the foundation of organizational learning, enabling firms to effectively acquire, interpret, and apply new knowledge. Hossain et al. [18] emphasize that organizations with strong learning capabilities in the hospitality industry are better equipped to respond to shifts in customer preferences and market conditions. This capacity to learn and integrate new insights allows companies to continually improve their processes, services, and products, contributing to long-term sustainability.

Absorptive capacity complements learning capability by referring to the organization's ability to recognize the value of external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends. As Hossain et al. [30] note, absorptive capacity is essential for organizations operating in fast-paced industries, enabling them to incorporate external innovations and trends into their existing knowledge base. This external focus allows firms to stay competitive by leveraging new technologies, ideas, and market opportunities before their competitors.

Innovativeness and strategic flexibility are also critical in this framework. Alqarni et al. [31] highlight the role of innovativeness in enabling organizations to develop new products, services, and processes that keep them ahead of competitors. At the same time, strategic flexibility ensures that firms can adapt their strategies quickly in response to changes in the market environment. Strategic flexibility allows companies to pivot when necessary, enabling them to capitalize on emerging opportunities or mitigate risks more effectively. This adaptability is particularly important in industries where market conditions can shift unexpectedly.

Bushairi et al. [32] discussed that organizational agility is another vital component of managerial flexibility. Agility refers to the ability of organizations to respond rapidly to external

changes without losing momentum or vision. In today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, organizational agility is indispensable for sustaining competitive advantage. Agility allows firms to act quickly, make decisions faster, and implement changes more efficiently, positioning them to thrive amidst uncertainty.

In conclusion, Organizational Learning and Flexibility are multidimensional concepts that integrate learning capability, absorptive capacity, innovativeness, strategic flexibility, and organizational agility. These elements enable organizations to continuously learn, adapt, and innovate, which is critical for maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic markets.

5.6. Supply Chain and Sustainability

The grouped variable Supply Chain and Sustainability integrates vital concepts that focus on enhancing supply chains' efficiency, transparency, and environmental impact. This variable encompasses sustainable supply chain strategy, blockchain technology adoption, eco-innovation, and green absorptive capability. Together, these elements enable organizations to build resilient supply chains that support long-term sustainability goals while maintaining a competitive edge in the marketplace.

A sustainable supply chain strategy is critical in aligning business operations with environmental and social sustainability objectives. As Sarfraz et al. [24] emphasize, developing a sustainable supply chain involves adopting practices that reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, and minimize the environmental footprint of the entire supply chain. These strategies contribute to reducing the impact on the environment and enhancing organizational reputation and compliance with regulatory requirements, providing a competitive advantage in industries where sustainability is increasingly important to consumers.

Blockchain technology adoption has emerged as a transformative tool in supply chain management. According to Sarfraz et al. [24], blockchain enhances transparency and traceability, allowing businesses to track goods from their origin to the end consumer. This technology ensures that all transactions within the supply chain are visible and verifiable, which helps reduce fraud, improve accountability, and ensure compliance with sustainability standards. Blockchain also supports greater collaboration between supply chain partners, which is essential for implementing sustainable practices across all supply chain stages.

Eco-innovation is another fundamental component of sustainable supply chains. Hussein et al. [33] highlight the importance of eco-innovation in driving the development of products, services, and processes that reduce environmental harm. By integrating eco-innovative practices into their supply chain operations, organizations can develop greener products, optimize resource use, and reduce emissions, all contributing to sustainability. Eco-innovation helps organizations meet environmental goals, fosters creativity, and enhances competitive advantage by differentiating products and services in the marketplace.

As discussed by Hussein et al. [33], green absorptive capability refers to an organization's ability to acquire, assimilate, and apply external knowledge related to environmental sustainability. This capability enables firms to stay at the forefront of sustainable practices by adopting the latest green technologies and innovations. Green absorptive capability ensures that companies can rapidly incorporate new sustainability trends and technologies into their operations, improving overall efficiency and reducing environmental impact.

In conclusion, Supply Chain and Sustainability is a comprehensive approach that integrates sustainable strategies, advanced technologies like blockchain, eco-innovation, and green absorptive capability. Together, these elements enable organizations to build resilient and sustainable supply chains that meet environmental objectives and enhance their competitive advantage in a rapidly changing market.

5.7. Entrepreneurship and Digital Leadership

The grouped variable Entrepreneurship and Digital Leadership focuses on integrating entrepreneurial orientation and digital leadership to drive company innovation, open innovation, and collaborative competitiveness. Entrepreneurial orientation refers to a firm's willingness to

take risks, innovate, and proactively pursue new opportunities. As Sarya et al. [28] highlight, firms with a solid entrepreneurial orientation are better equipped to navigate market challenges and exploit new business prospects, fostering sustainable competitive advantage.

Digital leadership, as discussed by Hussein et al. [33], plays a critical role in guiding organizations through the complexities of digital transformation. Influential digital leaders leverage technology to enhance business operations, improve customer experiences, and drive innovation. By adopting a forward-thinking leadership style, digital leaders help organizations remain agile and competitive in rapidly changing industries.

Company and open innovation are central to this framework, as innovation allows businesses to develop new products, services, and processes that differentiate them from competitors. Bushairi et al. [32] emphasize that open innovation, which involves collaborating with external partners to share ideas and resources, accelerates the innovation process and improves outcomes. This approach fosters collaborative competitiveness, where companies work together to strengthen their market position, particularly in industries like tourism and hospitality.

In conclusion, combining entrepreneurial orientation, digital leadership, and a focus on innovation and collaboration enables organizations to stay ahead in competitive markets. These factors create a dynamic environment where businesses can adapt, innovate, and thrive.

5.8. Human Capital and Agility

The grouped variable Human Capital and Agility highlights the essential role of a skilled workforce and organizational flexibility in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employees bring to an organization. As Elsharnouby and Elbanna [34] emphasize, human capital is a critical resource for firms, especially in the hospitality sector, where employee expertise directly impacts service quality and customer satisfaction. A solid human capital base supports operational efficiency and fuels innovation and strategic decision-making.

Organizational agility, as discussed by Bushairi et al. [32], is the ability of a company to adapt to changes in the market environment. Agility allows firms to respond rapidly to new opportunities or threats, ensuring they remain competitive in volatile and uncertain markets. This flexibility is closely tied to market sensing capability, which enables organizations to detect shifts in market trends, customer needs, and competitive pressures. Ahmad and Jais [35] note that firms with substantial market sensing capabilities are better positioned to anticipate changes and adjust their strategies proactively, enhancing their agility.

Ambidexterity, which refers to an organization's ability to balance exploitation (optimizing current operations) and exploration (innovating for future growth), is another critical element of this framework. Firms that achieve ambidexterity can efficiently manage their existing resources and develop new capabilities, creating a dynamic balance that supports long-term success [32]. This capability ensures that organizations are not only agile but also innovative and able to navigate current and future demands.

In conclusion, Human Capital and Agility form the foundation for organizational success by integrating employee expertise with the ability to adapt swiftly to market changes. This combination of human capital, agility, market sensing, and ambidexterity helps organizations remain resilient and competitive in dynamic environments.

6 Conclusion

Based on the extraction and analysis of various journals discussing predictor variables and their impact on SCA, several key variables emerge as critical in driving sustainable excellence across industries. These factors include Market and Innovation Strategies, Work and Talent Management, Brand and Service Excellence, Organizational Learning and Flexibility, Supply Chain and Sustainability, Entrepreneurship and Digital Leadership, and Human Capital and Agility. The analysis underscores that innovation in products, services, and marketing

processes, effective human resource management, and robust brand strategies play a pivotal role in fostering and maintaining SCA. These elements improve market performance and contribute to long-term competitive sustainability.

This research carries significant implications for the field of SCA. This study explores the interplay between key variables influencing SCA, particularly in the hospitality industry, by developing a comprehensive analytical framework. Theoretically, the study opens avenues for further research by providing a foundation for analyzing these variables across different sectors or global contexts. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for hospitality industry managers on the critical role of product innovation, service quality, human resource management, and brand management in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage.

This study makes a notable contribution to management and strategy literature by integrating multiple internal organizational factors that support the achievement of SCA. It highlights how a strategic orchestration of management practices across various organizational functions can maximize competitive advantage. The research also emphasizes the importance of synergy among these functions in fostering a sustainable competitive edge.

However, some limitations should be acknowledged. First, the data and analysis scope is restricted to the hospitality and hotel industries, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the research primarily relies on quantitative data and structural equation modeling, which may not fully capture the complexities of internal organizational dynamics. Future research could investigate how these predictor variables interact in other industry contexts and under evolving market conditions. Moreover, upcoming studies might explore the impact of digital technologies and innovations in talent management and employee engagement processes on SCA.

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