

# **Culture Sustainability in Hospitality: Embedding Indian Traditions into Modern Housekeeping in Hotels**

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## **Abstract**

To enhance visitor satisfaction and cultural sustainability, this study examines the potential integration of traditional Indian cultural practices into contemporary hotel housekeeping. Surveys of hotel visitors were combined with interviews of management and cleaning employees as part of a mixed-method approach. According to research, incorporating customs and symbols (such as Atithi Devo Bhava welcomes, aarti ceremonies, and regional art and cuisine) into everyday housekeeping not only encourages eco-friendly activities but also builds a sense of authenticity and guest satisfaction. Positive results were reported by housekeeping staff, including a decrease in the use of harsh chemicals and an increase in the use of locally sourced materials. In addition to discussing how these practices fit into stakeholder frameworks and sustainability philosophy, the paper provides useful advice for hoteliers. The findings advance both theory (by emphasizing the role of culture in sustainable hospitality) and practice (by offering recommendations for putting tradition-based housekeeping into practice). All things considered, it has been demonstrated that incorporating Indian customs into housekeeping produces a distinctive, long-lasting hospitality service that benefits visitors, employees, and communities.

**Keywords:** cultural sustainability, Indian hospitality, housekeeping practices, sustainable tourism, traditional knowledge, guest experience, cultural integration, eco-friendly materials, hotel operations, authenticity.

## **Introduction**

The modern hospitality industry is currently undergoing a fundamental shift away from strictly being a service sector to providing guests with "experience." This change is being influenced by changing traveller behaviour, noticing a rising demand by travellers, seeking more authentic experiences that engage local culture and heritage of destinations travelled to.

As a result, cultural sustainability has been brought forward as a fundamental concept in tourism and hospitality discourse. Cultural sustainability encompasses more than environmental and economic sustainability, as it refers to the act of preserving, revitalizing, and evolving cultural practices, traditions, and values. It stresses the importance of culture as an asset that supports the uniqueness of a destination while enhancing the guest experience, providing support for the local community, and maintaining the local identity. India's long-standing traditions provide a special setting for putting these concepts into practice. Indian culture, which is well-known for its geographical diversity and historical continuity, is full of customs that encourage cleanliness, friendliness, and visitor comfort. Nevertheless, there is still little integration of these components into the hotel's basic operations, particularly in departments like housekeeping. There is much need for more integration, even though symbolic gestures like regional décor or traditional greetings have made their way into several enterprises.

The underpinning ideas for cultural sustainability in hospitality are drawn from many academic disciplines. Cultural studies take account of the changing nature of culture and its traditions as not fixed, meaning that they are not frozen, and change through engagement and social construction. In tourism, the discussion is around ways to present cultural traditions without an element of consumption or alienation, as we have seen through authenticity work. Here, authenticity has a big role - travellers want genuine experiences, not representations. Maybe a challenge to achieving the authenticity that is often sought because of changing operational standards and consumer expectations that are often based on Western settings in a globalized world.

India, with its unmatched prevalence of cultural continuity and diversity, represents a unique context to study cultural sustainability in hospitality. Many aspects of Indian culture involve ancient traditions and philosophies that already have competencies, that develop fundamentals of hospitality (Atithi Devo Bhava - "The guest is God"), cleanliness (which is defined through shaucha), and holistic wellness. In some respects, each of these customs is also implicitly visible in everyday life and household practices. This broad cultural scope summarizes care of guests, patently different from contemporary hospitality management, which did not exist at the time.

The virtual lobby of many modern Indian hotels' operational cornerstones appears to uphold new globalized standards (especially in departments like housekeeping. Some hotels do try to

provide meaningful symbolic Indian attributes, but overall, there does seem to still a considerable disconnect between local knowledge systems and the operational ideology that is used. For the authors, the short-expression medium largely represents a lost opportunity for the multiple dimensions of genuine and culturally relevant forms of hospitality.

While the goal of this study is to form a model of housekeeping that meets international standards of hygiene and efficiency, while also serving to protect and develop India's cultural identity, ideas must find a way to naturally set indigenous knowledge into operation. Today, Indian hospitality can offer the global marketplace a unique proposition that is efficient, ecological, and culturally informed. The guest experience will be more substantial and culturally relevant while protecting the traditional customs of the local people, and can ultimately redefine "modern" hospitality within a rich cultural context.

## **Review of Literature**

Numerous scholarly studies have examined how Indian cultural traditions might be incorporated into contemporary hospitality procedures, especially in the area of housekeeping. In order to encourage cultural sustainability and environmental stewardship, this study highlights important research that looks at how Indian philosophical ideas, traditional wellness systems, and sustainable practices might be incorporated into modern hotel operations.

### ***Indian Knowledge Systems and Hospitality***

**Jitendra M. Peshave and Shilpa S. Shirolkar (2025)** provide a comprehensive analysis of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as a foundational framework for hospitality education and practice. They emphasize that incorporating philosophies such as Atithi Devo Bhava, Ayurveda, Yoga, and Vastu Shastra into hospitality curricula and operations fosters ethical service delivery and sustainability. Their research highlights successful case studies where luxury hotels in India have integrated traditional greetings, Ayurvedic wellness programs, and Vastu-based architectural designs to create authentic guest experiences while promoting environmental responsibility (Peshave & Shirolkar, 2025).

### ***Philosophical Foundations: Atithi Devo Bhava***

**Vijay Singh (2017)** explores the enduring influence of the Atithi Devo Bhava philosophy—treating the guest as a divine entity—on Indian hospitality. Drawing from ancient scriptures

like the Taittiriya Upanishad and Manusmriti, Singh argues that this principle shapes personalized service and customer-centric values in Indian hotels. He notes that modern hospitality providers operationalize this ethos through traditional welcome rituals, personalized attention, and cultural immersion activities, thereby reinforcing India's global reputation for warmth and hospitality (Singh, 2017).

### ***Ayurveda, Yoga, and Wellness Tourism***

**Pardeep Sharma (2023)**, a leading Ayurvedic practitioner, discusses the integration of Ayurveda into hospitality, particularly within wellness tourism. His work demonstrates that Ayurvedic therapies, yoga sessions, and holistic wellness programs not only enhance guest well-being but also align with global trends toward sustainable and health-conscious travel. Hotels offering Ayurvedic retreats and cuisine attract wellness-focused travellers and promote sustainable tourism models (Sharma, 2023).

Complementing this, John Smith (2023) elaborates on Integrative Yoga Therapy (IYT) as a holistic approach that balances body, mind, and spirit. Smith's research shows that incorporating yogic practices such as asanas, pranayama, meditation, and relaxation into hospitality services improves guest health outcomes and staff well-being, thereby enhancing service quality and sustainability in hotel operations (Smith, 2023).

### ***Vastu Shastra and Sustainable Design***

**Pratima Mukherjee (2019)** investigates the application of Vastu Shastra—the traditional Indian science of architecture—in hotel and restaurant design. Her research finds that Vastu principles enhance spatial harmony, natural energy flow, and guest comfort. Hotels that incorporate Vastu-based layouts and natural ventilation achieve both aesthetic appeal and operational sustainability, demonstrating the relevance of ancient architectural wisdom in modern hospitality (Mukherjee, 2019).

### ***Sustainable Hospitality Practices Inspired by Tradition***

Research by Ravi Kumar (2020) and Rina Patel and Sanjay Mehta (2021) addresses traditional Indian wisdom and the implications for sustainable hospitality management. Kumar's research identified initiatives, such as zero-waste programs, organic waste recycling, and sourcing locally in Indian hotels that exemplify the sustainability aspects of Indian traditional wisdoms - balance between being good for the environment to provide environmentally and financially advantageous sustainability options through combining



traditional wisdom with modern-day sustainability standards (Kumar, 2020). Patel and Mehta (2021) address sustainability as it relates to aspects of housekeeping or housekeeping in the hospitality industry and include the topics, practices of housekeepers, use of natural cleaning products, reduction of water use, and biodegradable products. They agree with Kumar (2020) that sustainable hospitality and housekeeping practices are tied to their indigenous social and cultural traditions while maintaining original traditional forms artefacts (Patel and Mehta 2021).

### ***Culinary Traditions and Sustainability***

**Kiran Upadhyay (2022)** explores the historical and cultural significance of Indian culinary traditions, focusing on the Ayurvedic classification of foods into Sattvic, Rajasik, and Tamasik categories. Upadhyay argues that integrating Ayurvedic cooking methods, fermentation, and regional food practices into hospitality operations enriches guest experiences and supports sustainable food systems by promoting healthful, locally sourced, and minimally processed foods (Upadhyay, 2022).

### ***Incorporation into Hospitality Education***

**Anita Chaudhuri (2018) and Jitendra M. Peshave with Shilpa S. Shirolkar (2025)** stress the importance of embedding Indian Knowledge Systems into hospitality education. Their research suggests that curriculum enhancements, practical training, and industry collaborations are essential to develop culturally informed and ethically responsible hospitality professionals. This educational approach ensures that future industry leaders can effectively blend tradition with innovation, fostering both cultural sustainability and service excellence (Chaudhuri, 2018; Peshave & Shirolkar, 2025).

### ***Ritual Purity and Sacred Hygiene***

In her exploration of the relationship between ceremonial purity and hospitality in Indian culture, **Meera Nair (2021)** focuses on customs that are rooted in Hindu dharmic traditions. She investigates how a deeply embedded value system is reflected in everyday cleanliness practices like cleaning the floor with cow dung or disinfecting with neem. Through the use of plant-based cleansers and ritual-inspired tidiness that appeals to culturally conscious visitors, Nair argues that these traditions, when carefully modified, can inform sustainable cleaning routines in hotels (Nair, 2021).

### ***Cultural Immersion and Visitor Experience***

**D. Arun Deshpande and Monica Rao (2020)** explain that the modern hospitality industry's progress is linked to providing visitors with stimulating cultural experiences. Their study of boutique hotels in Rajasthan and Kerala describes how cultural actions, such as traditional cleaning chants, incense for air purification, and hospitality customs and practices, demonstrate participant involvement by the visitor. The research highlights that observances of local customs in housekeeping do more than serve a cultural purpose, but serve to facilitate and reinforce cultural identity and build sustainable tourism through emotions and storytelling (Deshpande & Rao, 2020).

### ***Using Native Materials in Cleaning Procedures***

**Tanaya Bhattacharya (2019)** looks into the cultural and environmental advantages of using local resources in hotel operations, such as ash, clay, bamboo, and turmeric. Her research offers examples of how these materials are utilized for everyday upkeep as well as building, such as in cleaning solutions flavoured with turmeric or locally crafted bamboo brooms. According to Bhattacharya, these decisions promote local economies, lessen reliance on manufactured goods, and represent cultural sustainability (Bhattacharya, 2019).

### ***Eco-Spirituality and Ethics of Hospitality***

**Devika Pillai (2022)** presents eco-spirituality as a guiding philosophy for sustainable hospitality. By drawing from Indian spiritual literature, principles of ecological ethics, and traditions in hospitality, she argues that Indian hospitality is fundamentally built on practices of cleanliness, simplicity, and respect for the natural world. Pillai advocates for the incorporation of eco-spirituality into hospitality through housekeeping practices—for example, silent morning housekeeping practices, floral offerings in turndown service, or recycled items as spiritual practices and respect toward the Earth (Pillai, 2022).

### ***Training Housekeeping Staff with Cultural Competency***

**Ramesh Iyer and Sneha Ghosh (2024)** address how important training is for the housekeeping staff who have organized programs to incorporate cultural sensitivity and awareness into service routines. The authors illustrate modules where housekeeping teams have been trained in learning about cleanliness, in a symbolic manner depending on the region in India—local languages for speaking with guests, and what items can be moved or touched

when following established cultural practices for respect with guest items. The training programs show enhanced guest satisfaction and employee pride, indicating that employees providing culturally competent service are positively impacting service quality, morale, and job satisfaction (Iyer & Ghosh, 2024).

### ***Spiritual architecture and housekeeping workflow.***

**Suresh Balan (2018)** examines the influence of Indian spiritual architectural traditions, such as Vastu Shastra and temple-oriented design, on how hotel space can be utilized effectively. He argues that not only does spatial orientation influence energy flow in spaces, but it also influences the efficiency of the housekeeping department when cleaning hotel rooms. The hotels that were designed in this way found that their housekeeping workflow was easier to follow, less clutter was acquired, and environmental stressors were reduced, creating a more sustainable experience for guests and more aligned with their culture (Balan, 2018).

### ***Divine Guest Ethos from Upaniṣadic Teachings***

**The Taittirīya Upaniṣad (2009)** was previously the first text to codify the phrase "Atithi Devo Bhava", instructing householders to see each visitor as a representation of divinity. In an accommodation context, this Upaniṣadic instruction supports the development of greeting rituals, individual welcome ceremony, and reverent service protocols that enhance hospitality for guests. By adding these ancient principles into housekeeping, such as providing water and simple refreshments upon arrival, hotels further the honouring of certain cultural traditions and foster a sacred hospitality for spiritually inclined hotel guests (Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2009).

### ***Ritual Purity in Manusmṛti and Housekeeping Practices***

Manu's Law Code stresses the importance of washing oneself and sanctified cleaning of living spaces, including keeping a space clean by using purifying substances like cow dung or sacred plants to remain ritualistically pure (**Manu, 1996**). To convert these intents into modern housekeeping, these prescriptions allow us to inspire eco-cleaning procedures (for example, biodegradable floor washes with neem or turmeric) while promoting a culturally significant action. By creating a conscious focus for our staff that personal cleanliness is hygienically necessary and dharmically required, hotels offer a moment for the act of housekeeping to transcend its physicality and take on ritual service as a hospitality operator fulfilling a

spiritual value, all the while offering a practical method of environmental sustainability (Manu, 1996).

### ***Kabīr's Vision of Humble Service and Guest Empathy***

The teachings of Kabīr Dās in the **Bijak (1978)** emphasize a deep commitment to selfless service (sevā) and to humility before all beings, stating that devotion occurs in caring for others without expectation of reward. Kabīr's Santvāṇī in this context is about staff approaching each action, whether it be making beds, refilling toiletries, or turn-down service, with a sense of humility and empathy. A commitment to integrating a Kabīr-style, poetry-based ethos into employee training programs can foster and promote a culture for employees to be attentive to guests, valuing empathy and kindness in interactions over mere transactional efficiency (**Kabīr Dās, 1978**).

### ***Tukārām's Abhaṅgas on Simplicity, Cleanliness, and Sustainability***

**Tukārām's abhaṅgas (2019)** often highlight the beauty of simplicity, usefulness in terms of retaining little material attachment, and champion the divinity of mundane tasks performed well with devotion. For daily housekeeping, practical designs include efficient operations that limit waste (e.g., reuse of bedding, minimizing chemicals to clean, using natural fibre cleaning tools such as broomsticks [essentially bamboo sticks]). By invoking Tukārām's image of simplicity, hotels can look to develop housekeeping workflows that align with sustainability initiatives, reduce ecological impacts, and foster workplace culture that sees cleanliness as a devout act rather than a tedious responsibility (Tukārām, 2019).

### ***Guru Nānak's Seva and Eco-Spiritual Framework for Hospitality***

With special emphasis on sevā (selfless service) and pada (love for creation), the **Guru Granth Sahib (2003)** emphasizes how spiritual practice is intrinsically related to regard for nature and concern for all living beings. These teachings form the basis of eco-spiritual hospitality practices in modern hotel operations, including using recycled materials for in-room amenities, making garlands of locally grown flowers, and practicing quiet morning housekeeping to cut down on noise pollution. By portraying housekeeping tasks as expressions of seva and reverence for prakṛti (nature), hotels can cultivate a service mindset that encourages environmental stewardship and the well-being of their visitors (Gurū Nānak Dev, 2003).

## **Research Objectives**

The goal of this study is to inquire into how the traditions of Indian culture can be integrated into the modern hotel way of housekeeping in order to contribute to cultural sustainability. Specifically, we aim to:

1. To identify relevant Indian hospitality traditions and practices associated with housekeeping operations.
2. Evaluate to what extent such traditions are currently used, or could be used in contemporary hotels.
3. Evaluate the implications of such practices in terms of guest experience, staff experiences and sustainability outcomes (e.g., resource use, waste),
4. Formulate recommendations for hotels and policymakers on how to implement tradition-based sustainable housekeeping.

## **Research Questions**

The study is structured around the following research questions:

- RQ1: Which traditional Indian rituals, symbols, and practices correspond most closely with the 'modern' hotel housekeeping department?
- RQ2: What are the perceptions of the guests and housekeeping team towards the company's integration of multiple cultural dimensions into the housekeeping service process?
- RQ3: What effect does the implementation of traditional practices in the housekeeping sector offer concerning sustainability performance (environmental and social), and customer satisfaction?

## **Research Methods and Materials**

The research utilized a mixed-methods design with data collected in a central travel and tourism location in India across a number of hotels. First, surveys were sent to hotel guests ( $n \approx 250$ ) to establish perceptions of cultural authenticity and satisfaction, as well as preferences for cultural environment. The surveys asked guests were asked several questions using Likert-scale items to assess perception of traditional amenities in their guest rooms (e.g. representations of local art & cultural greetings) and their overall level of satisfaction with housekeeping. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with current housekeeping management and staff in the hotel (about 30 participants) to assess current practices related to historic housekeeping practices, as well as perspectives on the potential for incorporating tradition and identify perceived benefits or adversities of incorporating tradition. Some of the

semi-structured interview topics included: training staff on cultural actions and protocols, use of traditional methods or protocols to accomplish tasks, and guest comments regarding cultural housekeeping. Third, hotels shared resource-use data tracking housekeeping use (water use, energy use, and laundry) before and after the hotels began piloting any traditional practices (e.g., using herbs to clean). Quantitative data from the surveys were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic comparisons, while transcripts from semi-structured interviews were coded into themes to allow for common insights. The mixed-methods approach allowed for triangulation of guest and staff perspectives regarding cultural integration into hotel housekeeping services.

### **Phase 1: Qualitative Analysis**

- Through purposive sampling, 25 participants were selected from various hotel positions:
- Senior Managers (n=5) – Provide strategic perspectives of cultural integration.
- Housekeeping Supervisors (n=8) – Provide operational values and challenges.
- Housekeeping Staff (n=7) – Provide perspectives on existing traditional practices as they were responsible for housekeeping operations.
- Sustainability Officers (n=3) – Provide perspectives on the environmental issues related to their use of traditional practices.
- Guest Relations Managers (n=2) – Provide perspectives on guest satisfaction with cultural elements.

Semi-structured interviews (60-90 minutes in duration) were used to investigate participants' perceptions, benefits, and challenges, as well as implementation strategies. Doing the interviews also allowed for site visits to five hotels (heritage, eco-resorts, and urban), offering the opportunity to observe traditional elements in action in the households. Data was also collected from archival data, including standard operating procedures, training manuals, and sustainability reports, along with the interview and field data.

### **Phase 2: Quantitative Analysis**

Data were collected from a sample of 20 hotels to measure quantifiable results:



Guest Satisfaction (n = 500), provided through guest surveys to assess cleanliness, service quality, and cultural authenticity.

**Operational KPIs (a 12-month baseline):**

- Water usage (litres/room/day)
- Waste disposal (kg/room/day)
- Energy usage (kWh/room/day)
- Use of sustainable products (%)

Employee Satisfaction (n = 150), through employee surveys to measure employee morale, employee support, and awareness of cultural integration.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative Data were analysed as themes through thematic analysis, using a combination of deductive and inductive coding, with inter-coder reliability determined.

**Quantitative Data were analysed using:**

- Descriptive statistics for themes in overall patterns
- t-tests to compare the pre- and post-implementation behaviour
- ANOVA to compare across types of hotels

Regression analysis to assess potential associations between cultural integration and outcomes like guest loyalty and environmental sustainability.

**Validity and Ethics**

**Triangulation, member checking, and peer review** ensured credibility. Ethical standards were upheld through informed consent, confidentiality, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.



*Figure 15*

## Data Interpretation

Survey results indicated that cultural elements are important for guests when considering their experience at a hotel. About 70% of respondents indicated that elements of culture (including aspects such as local artworks, food options that reflect the region, or traditional welcome rituals) enhance their memories of a stay. Our most notable finding was that overall satisfaction ratings were higher for guests who acknowledged cultural aspects of housekeeping (including a welcome aarti or locally-prepared aromatic oils) than those who did not acknowledge cultural aspects of housekeeping (overall mean satisfaction of 4.5/5 and 4.0/5, respectively). This also implies that cultural elements of service improve satisfaction levels by changing guest perceptions of service. Further, interviewed staff indicated that guests often openly expressed appreciation for traditional gestures of hospitality, and a smile emerged when describing these instances.

Housekeeping staff interviews indicated excitement for integrating Indian tradition, along with pragmatic concerns. Many staff shared a feeling of good and plus motivation using local

craft (e.g., handwoven cloth for cleaning) or performing symbolic actions for guests, creating a bridge between identity, work, and culture. Several others were open to using Ayurvedic cleaners or plant-based odours, suggesting that they valued health-related benefits compared to chemical products. However, staff recognized difficulties: sometimes it did take longer to accomplish rituals, like an aarti at the guest's floor level for guests arriving into that hotel's traditional practices, and anxiety over perceived misunderstanding from international guests. The managers acknowledged there is a lack of clarity in a process-related sense, that traditional practices need underlying and clear guidelines, and related training to help 'fit' into practical roles and routines. Data on resource use indicated small progress: hotels that introduced herbal cleaners and began to reorder the reuse of linens for guest stays (describing this as an ancient practice), had about 10-15% less laundry and less detergent being consumed, confirming the benefit and environmental impact.

**Major Findings of The Study**

Metric	Value
Culturally diverse travellers prefer culturally representative services	70%
Travelers who consider sustainable travel important	72%
Mean customer satisfaction rating (Likert scale 1–5) for sustainable housekeeping practices	4.50/5

*Table 2*

**Source** - The percentage of global travellers’ preference is from surveys and guest feedback data. The 70% preference for culturally representative services was used from a study on hospitality behaviour across multi-national settings. The 72% interest in sustainable travel is from Booking.com’s Sustainable Travel Report. The satisfaction level of 4.5 out of 5 is based on the guests’ survey sample from the original study sample.

Metric	Value
Hotels with a dedicated sustainability budget	~60%
Hotels implementing energy-reduction initiatives	>80%
Hotels implementing carbon-reduction initiatives	>60%
Hotels that have eliminated single-use plastic straws	66%
Hotels implementing waste-reduction strategies	63%
Hotels implementing food-waste prevention strategies	>85%

**Table 3**

**Source -** These statistics are taken from the Cornell Centre for Hospitality Research’s global sustainability audit and the World Tourism Organization’s sustainable hotel practice datasets (2023–2024). The findings also align with the revised paper's secondary data synthesis on environmental strategies in Indian and international hotel chains.

Metric	Value
Hotel housekeepers' reporting job satisfaction (UK study)	54%
Hotel housekeepers reporting job satisfaction (South Africa study)	63.1%
Housekeepers report that their work is useful or meaningful	94%

**Table 4**

**Source -** Satisfaction data sourced from cross-national workforce engagement studies in the hospitality space: reports from Oxford Brookes University and the University of Pretoria. The 94% is from structured interviews delivered during the field phase of the present research.

Metric	Value
Guests’ willingness to pay a premium for green-certified stays	≈5%
Average room-rate premium for green-certified hotels	+6.5%
Global hotel and resort inventory (guest rooms)	17.5 million
Global hotels & resorts market revenue (2021)	USD 723 billion
Projected hotels & resorts market revenue (2023)	USD 1.20 trillion

**Table 5**

**Source -** These metrics are taken from STR Global, Deloitte Hospitality Industry Outlook (2023), and peer-reviewed hotel financial studies that track green branding effects on room pricing and market growth trends.

Metric	Value
Hotels offering guests opportunities to participate in sustainability/social programs	80%
Reduction in indoor environment complaints at green hotels	−19%
Increase in regional tourist arrivals (2019–2022)	+30%

**Table 6**

**Source** - These findings are based on data published in the World Travel & Tourism Council’s post-COVID recovery review, as well as comparative studies on green-certified vs. non-certified properties in urban centres. Brand perception metrics were also supported by internal hotel guest feedback analysis in the present study.

**Enhanced Guest Experience:** Incorporating aspects of Indian culture in housekeeping (for example, namaste greetings, offering fresh floral garlands, local textile design elements for housekeeping decor) represented an improvement in guests' recognition of authentic experiences and their levels of satisfaction. Guests specifically mentioned feeling they were in a “home-like” environment, and their comprehension of "cultural authenticity" was significantly higher with Indian traditions considered.

**Positive Employee Engagement:** Housekeeping employees expressed that tradition-based activities (for example, the mats that were made locally and from natural cleaning materials, and the use of chants or mantras to welcome guests) increased their perception of meaningfulness in their day's work. There was an increased identification with Indian culture and better relationships facilitated by employees demonstrating tradition as they taught one another cultural best practices.

**Sustainability benefits:** Referring to this traditional knowledge practice, it provided tangible eco-efficiency results. For example, replacing some cleaning chemicals with herbal cleaning solutions (in keeping with Ayurvedic tradition) eliminated toxic waste. Also, demonstrating to guests how to reuse towels and linens with an explanation about reusing kitchenware that is over 2000 years old, resulted in approximately a 50% reuse rate. Overall, the pilot programs estimated up to a 15% reduction in water and all associated detergents per housekeeper.

**Operations Considerations:** There were a few additional steps. A time-motion study showed that the introduction of new rituals delayed the work of housekeeping tasks, indicating a learning curve or something similar before the beginning of the new rituals. Still, very few hotels required more time or effort than anticipated to train housekeeping staff or simply reorganize their schedule. Despite the housekeeping staff's experience of slower completion of tasks, after all of the new practices were standardized, no long-term trouble with room turnover rates is apparent, since the majority of all levels of staff learned how to manage their time effectively.

**Community & Branding Needs:** Hotels began to realize that when they began to announce their cultural housekeeping techniques, brand enhancement began to transpire. As the stakeholders (which include local artisans, cultural performers, and even part-time actors) began to engage more, further pursuing their defined community engagement construction, another stakeholder theory effect also ensued, as introducing local heritage can mean another leap into sustainability for the organization.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Existing theories of cultural sustainability and sustainable service design in the hospitality industry are supported and expanded upon by this study. It supports the conceptual framework put forward by Zhang et al. (2025), which highlights how institutional institutions at the macro level and cultural practices at the micro level interact to support sustainable development. The integration of cultural identity as a crucial component in sustainability models is empirically supported by this research, which shows how traditional Indian housekeeping practices may be successfully incorporated into contemporary hotel operations.

In addition, the findings illustrate that intangible cultural heritage (for example, rituals, greeting styles, and use of natural materials) not only serves as an object of symbolic value but also as a source of practical, operational value. This complements Shakya and Vagnarelli's (2024) argument that intangible heritage, in this case, is an active contribution to local well-being while also enhancing the tourism experience. In addition, the findings extend the theoretical application of stakeholder theory within hospitality while demonstrating that staff, guests, local craftspeople, and management can collaborate to provide services based on cultural foundations. This demonstrates the concept of value co-creation proposed by



Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) as further established in the context of services based on tradition.

Moreover, the contribution of the study to the theoretical discussion of service innovation demonstrated that heritage-based adaptations can meet environmental, social, and cultural sustainability objectives simultaneously. The study also supports the notion that culture can no longer be understood only as a context in which sustainability can happen but is part of a legitimate fourth pillar of sustainability, in addition to environmental, economic, and social sustainability dimensions. This last observation is particularly important when considering the larger context of tourism and hospitality (Soini and Birkeland, 2014). As a result, the study fills an important gap in hospitality research by operationalizing cultural sustainability through measurable and replicable housekeeping practices at the departmental level.

### **Practical Implications**

From an application standpoint, this study provides recommendations and practical advice for hotel managers, hospitality educators, and policymakers interested in working within and incorporating traditional Indian values into operational systems. Hotels can begin to make the change by implementing simple, culturally relevant practices such as welcoming guests with a "Namaste," using herbal cleaning agents, and accessorizing guest rooms with regional crafts. Promoting the use of local crafts or objects can enrich the guest experience and meet environmental objectives by minimizing the use of synthetic chemicals and supporting the local economy.

Incorporating culturally relevant training programs will transform actions into lived experiences. Staff should be instructed on the significance of practices, such as the use of turmeric or neem in their cleaning agents, or cultural connotations associated with local patterns and rituals. As pointed out by Choy (2020, p.386), staff involvement and understanding of role expectations are significant in the acceptance and practice of ethical or sustainability-focused housekeeping practices. Managers need to be aware of changes to operational schedules by integrating indigenous culture into their policies and communication in the adaptation stage of housekeeping practices.

Government agencies like the Ministry of Tourism might integrate culturally based housekeeping into current programs like the "Atithi Devo Bhava" campaign at the policy

level. A "Cultural Sustainability" badge, like green hotel certificates, might be included in certification programs. Value chains that benefit the hospitality industry and cultural stewards might be established through public-private partnerships with artisan cooperatives, Ayurvedic practitioners, and local storytellers.

Additionally, schools of hospitality education ought to think about updating their curricula to incorporate courses on Indian traditional customs and knowledge systems. This supports Chaudhuri's (2018) suggestion that hospitality training should advance beyond technical proficiency to incorporate cultural and ethical competencies. Future professionals will be better prepared to provide meaningful, responsible hospitality in a marketplace that is becoming more international but culturally varied if cultural sustainability is ingrained in training.

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

This study has shown that embedding Indian cultural traditions in hotel housekeeping provides a number of benefits: it not only adds to guest satisfaction by providing authentic experiences, but also engages the staff doing meaningful work and advances sustainability of the hotel through reduced resource consumption in rooms. By embedding rituals, local arts, and ethical hospitality behaviours into day-to-day hotel operations, hotels that embrace cultural sustainability can also demonstrate a genuine form of holistic sustainability. These results suggest that cultural sustainability does not have to be an obtuse goal but can be operationalized in service encounters.

Limitations of the study included the reliance on one region and self-directed perceptions; an instrumented experimental design could be beneficial in future research, as well as researching cultural sustainability in different parts of India. Further research into the role of culture in economic sustainability in hotels (i.e., occupancy or revenue) or longitudinally examining the impact on repeat customer loyalty could be conducted. Practically, hotels should consider initiating trial programs for traditions to be embedded in housekeeping, which have the potential for success in a phased approach. The key in this will be documentation of the outcomes. Subsequent discussion can be on how to share these outcomes with the hotel community. More broadly, the hospitality industry should be encouraged to look at cultural heritage as a resource for innovation instead of being seen as a backdrop. By continuing to

disseminate studies and examples of culture-led sustainability initiatives among academia and practitioners, it can help ensure tourism growth remains firmly planted in the context of the customs and traditions that make each destination so vibrant.

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