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Corporate social responsibility initiatives and hotel guests' green consumption behavior in China: The mediating role of environmental awareness

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the effect of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities on the green consumption of hotel guests in China through the mediation of environmental awareness. Based on Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, CSR activities serve as the stimulus, environmental awareness as the organism, and green consumption behavior as the response. To measure environmental awareness, the higher-order construct of environmental knowledge and environmental attitude is used, combining the cognitive and evaluative elements of guests' internal processing of hotel responsibility cues. This research is a quantitative cross-sectional survey that used an online questionnaire in the WeChat mini-program. A total of 382 valid questionnaires were returned. SmartPLS 4 software was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that CSR activities have a significant positive impact on environmental awareness and green consumption behavior. Furthermore, environmental awareness also has a statistically significant positive impact on green consumption behavior. The indirect effect of CSR activities on green consumption behavior via environmental awareness is statistically significant, indicating complementary partial mediation through environmental awareness. The results of this study add to the literature on sustainable hospitality by demonstrating that hotel CSR activities can directly and indirectly affect guests' green behaviors through an integrated awareness mechanism. The findings also reinforce the validity of S-O-R theory as a theoretical approach to understanding the adoption of environmentally responsible consumption in hotels and the role played by visible responsibility practices.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the sustainable hospitality literature by elucidating the role that hotel CSR activities play in influencing guests' green consumption behavior through environmental awareness. It extends S-O-R theory in the Chinese hotel context by modeling environmental awareness as a higher-order mediator between knowledge and attitude, and provides suggestions for CSR communication and green service design.

1. INTRODUCTION

Awareness of sustainability in the hospitality sector has become a major topic of interest because of the close links between hotel activities and energy, water, and waste consumption, as well as other socio-environmental issues. At the same time, guests are increasingly assessing hotels on the basis of their perceivable environmental and social responsibility measures. In the field of hospitality, recent studies indicate that perceived CSR and green practices can

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elicit positive customer reactions, such as trust, loyalty, customer advocacy, and pro-environmental intentions (Rahman, Chen, & Reynolds, 2020; Raza, Farrukh, Wang, Iqbal, & Farhan, 2023).

However, responsible practices do not necessarily lead to 'green consumption behavior'. Although hotel CSR initiatives may be perceived by guests, they may not change their consumption behavior during their hotel stay. This is an important issue in China, as green development and sustainable consumption have become prominent topics on the country's policy agenda and in market practices. Research has demonstrated that environmental values and perceived green value have the potential to affect hotel selection in China, although the gap between the two is not consistent and is particularly influential among younger consumers (Chi, Chi, Xu, & Kennedy, 2022; Wu, Wang, Tao, Shao, & Yu, 2024). This gap calls for mechanism-based studies that elucidate the process through which hotel CSR cues influence behavioral responses. The present study attempts to address this issue using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework.

In this context, CSR activities can be considered external responsibility cues, green attitude an internal organismic state, and green consumption behavior a behavioral response. This theoretical logic applies to sustainability research in the hospitality industry, as it explains how visible actions trigger cognitive and evaluative processes before guests engage in environmentally responsible behaviors (Chang, Chanda, Vafaei-Zadeh, Hanifah, & Gui, 2024; Han, 2020). An important improvement in this study is the conceptualization of environmental awareness as a higher-level construct divided into environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. This specification is necessary because a guest's green behavior is unlikely to result from knowledge or attitude alone.

Knowledge represents awareness of the environmental consequences of hotel activities, while attitude reflects evaluative support for environmentally responsible practices. Using environmental awareness as a higher-order construct, as an integrated whole, therefore provides a more complete picture of the organismic stage in the S-O-R process. Based on this, the study examines whether there is a link between hotel CSR initiatives and guests' green consumption behavior in China and, if so, whether environmental awareness has a mediating effect.

The findings of the study add value to the literature on sustainable hospitality by explaining the CSR–awareness–behavior mechanism, providing a theoretical extension of S-O-R theory in a Chinese hotel context, and modeling environmental awareness as a higher-order mediator combining cognitive and evaluative dimensions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CSR Initiatives and Environmental Awareness

CSR initiatives in the hotel industry are those that can be seen and that show a hotel's dedication to preserving the environment, supporting the welfare of its stakeholders, and fulfilling its social responsibility. For guests, these initiatives are signals from which they infer the hotel's values, sincerity, and operational priorities (Rahman et al., 2020; Raza et al., 2023). Environmental initiatives include energy conservation, water-saving programs, waste reduction and recycling, and eco-friendly amenities; social initiatives include employee welfare, guest safety, local-community support, and ethical service practices.

While prior research has correlated hotel CSR and green practices with trust, engagement, loyalty, emotion, and customer citizenship behavior, how CSR initiatives contribute to guests' environmental awareness remains underexplained. From the S-O-R point of view, hotel CSR activities should not be considered independent reasons for behavior; rather, they are external stimuli processed within the individual's psychological interior. In this study, the concept of environmental awareness is used to represent this internal state, as it entails guests' environmental knowledge and their pro-environmental attitude.

This higher-order specification is necessary because knowledge about the environment indicates guests' knowledge of the impact of hotel activities on the environment, while an attitude towards the environment indicates how guests value environmentally responsible activities. Making CSR practices visible, credible, and understandable to hotel guests is more likely to allow them to understand the meaning of those practices in terms of the environment

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and to consider responsible consumption appropriate. Based on the above, the following hypothesis is suggested for the present study:

H_1: CSR initiatives have a positive effect on environmental awareness.

2.2. Environmental Awareness and Green Consumption Behavior

Green consumption behavior in hotels is defined as decisions and behaviors made by guests that are oriented toward the environment before, during, or after their stay in the hotel. These can include choosing eco-friendly accommodations, participating in conservation efforts, reducing waste, and promoting eco-friendly accommodation options. Yet, research in recent years in the hospitality sector has demonstrated that guests' environmental orientation is significant in predicting such outcomes; however, the predictive relationships between environmental orientations vary across different constructs, such as concern, values, trust, norms, and attitudes (Han, 2021; Piramanayagam, Sen, & Seal, 2024).

One of the largest limitations in this stream is the "privilege" that numerous studies bestow upon the notion of intention over actual behavior. While intention models can be useful, they cannot wholly shed light on whether guests can be persuaded to translate environmental awareness into actual consumption in hotels. This distinction is particularly crucial regarding the values of state security, because the 'consumer ecology' may be selective or consistent in some manner based on the formation of perceptions of value and markets (Wu et al., 2024). Hence, a model that directly connects environmental awareness with green consumption behavior is more explanatory than one that extends only to abstract intention. This problem is addressed in the present study by positing that environmental awareness is a higher-order organismic state constituted by environmental knowledge and environmental attitude.

In theory, this specification is more powerful than using either of these dimensions alone. Knowledge without attitude may breed recognition but not commitment, while attitude without knowledge may breed goodwill but not informed behavioral judgment. However, the integration of both is more apt to illustrate readiness to engage in environmentally related consumption behaviors. This thesis stands on the logic of previous studies, which is not integrated into this study. Demir, Rjoub, and Yesiltas (2021) proved that environmental awareness is also applicable to the concept of green visitation in hotels, and Seo, Kim, Kim, and Park (2024) proved that green marketing activities can affect customers' behavioral intentions and decision-making processes. Similarly, recent studies on sustainable hospitality have shown that pro-ecological attitudes and green value assessments can be considered strong motivators of green hotel loyalty and pro-ecological consumer behavior (Chang et al., 2024; Cheng, Yong, Lin, & Yusliza, 2026).

However, the results of these studies do not clearly indicate whether awareness can explain guests' green consumption behavior when viewed as a whole and as a higher-level construct. The answer should be yes, based on S-O-R theory. The stronger the organism's integration of environmental knowledge and a positive environmental attitude, the more likely environmentally responsible behavior is to emerge from this combination of influences. Based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed for the study:

H_2: Environmental awareness positively influences green consumption behavior.

2.3. CSR Initiatives and Green Consumption Behavior

There is now considerable evidence demonstrating that the responsible actions taken by a hotel can directly affect customer outcomes. Recent research suggests that guests' perceptions of CSR initiatives and green practices by hotels are linked to green consumer behavior, customer citizenship behavior, customer loyalty, and revisit-related outcomes (Raza et al., 2023; Wang, Vo-Thanh, Gursoy, Dang-Van, & Nguyen, 2024). This line of research is important because it demonstrates how guests can reward a responsible hotel through choices based on their behavior. However, there are some limitations in the direct-effect literature.

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First, it can lump together several responsible practices under the umbrella terms of a green or CSR orientation, or actions for sustainability, and, as a result, dilute the distinctive signaling effect of CSR practices, as perceived by guests. Second, some studies on direct effects focus on outcomes, such as revisit intention, word-of-mouth, or loyalty, rather than on green consumption behavior itself (Isaac, Mzembe, & Andon, 2025; Mohammed, Zhou, Abduljabbar Hael, Abdulwase, & Almuwaffaq, 2026). Third, even when green behavior is researched, the causality between the behavior of the hotel and the reaction of guests is sometimes assumed rather than unpacked. Despite all these constraints, the direct route is theoretically feasible. Before CSR may become a measure of internal awareness, it can act as an ethical and environmental signpost for guests' choices.

Well understood, when hotels take steps to be visible in their resource-saving efforts, social commitment, and responsible actions, guests may come to consider these hotels more legitimate, reliable, and consistent with their values. This perception can result in greater opportunities to choose green options, participate in environmental programs, or support responsible hotels. Such a broader logic of direct impact on behavior is supported by recent research in the fields of green practices and citizenship behavior (Wang et al., 2024). Hence, this study particularly emphasizes the mediation, but it is anticipated that there may also be a positive direct pathway between CSR initiatives and the development of green consumption behavior. The hypothesis is as follows:

H_5: CSR initiatives positively influence green consumption behavior.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Environmental Awareness

While the direct impacts are obvious, recent research in the hospitality industry has begun to assume that an organization's sustainability practices can influence customers' behavior through intervening psychological processes and mechanisms, rather than through one-step causality. Studies of green hotels have identified mediators such as perceived value, psychological safety, emotions, trust, and customer engagement when investigating hotel guests' behaviors. These studies have found that guests' behaviors are often influenced by what they understand and undertake when following responsible practices (Nosrati, Altinay, & Darvishmotevali, 2024; Raza et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024).

Hence, the theory of mediation is particularly useful for gaining insights into hotel CSR. From a theoretical point of view, mediation literature is presently split into two camps. Relational measures (e.g., trust or identification) and evaluative measures (e.g., perceived value) are both used in some research. These various methods, while valuable, do not always reflect the specific environmental cognitive change process that might lead CSR initiatives to change behavior. That is, many previous studies have indicated the indirect impact of hotel responsibility on guests, but the impact on guests' environmental awareness has not been fully demonstrated. This is a significant gap because green consumption behavior will not emerge as a result of positive affect and generalized trust alone, but should also involve an understanding and positive appraisal of the environmental responsibility associated with the behavior.

S-O-R theory offers a superstructure that can be employed to address this problem. The stimulus is CSR efforts, the organism is environmental awareness, and the behavioral response is green consumption behavior. In this architecture, mediation is not an "add-on" side logic; it is the main causal logic. In the present study, this mechanism has been reiterated by treating environmental awareness as a higher-order construct comprising environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. This can help shift the mediation argument beyond simple single-dimensional explanations toward an integrated explanation of responsible practices by hotel guests.

This is indirectly supported by recent studies. Green hotel intention was examined as a consequence of environmental awareness by Cao, Sial, Álvarez-Otero, Brugni, and Comite (2024) and Demir et al. (2021), who revealed that communication about sustainability can influence subsequent responses related to green hotel loyalty. Raza et al. (2023) also found that CSR initiatives have not only a direct impact on consumers' green behavior but also an impact through intervening internal states. Together, these studies suggest that there is a strong case for considering awareness as a mediational mechanism, although it has not been tested in the specific higher-order

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manner proposed here. In this regard, this study suggests that CSR efforts can be expected to positively affect hotel guests' green consumption behavior because they can lead to greater environmental awareness. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_4: Environmental awareness mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and green consumption behavior.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed S-O-R framework, in which CSR initiatives represent the stimulus, environmental awareness represents the organism, and green consumption behavior represents the response.

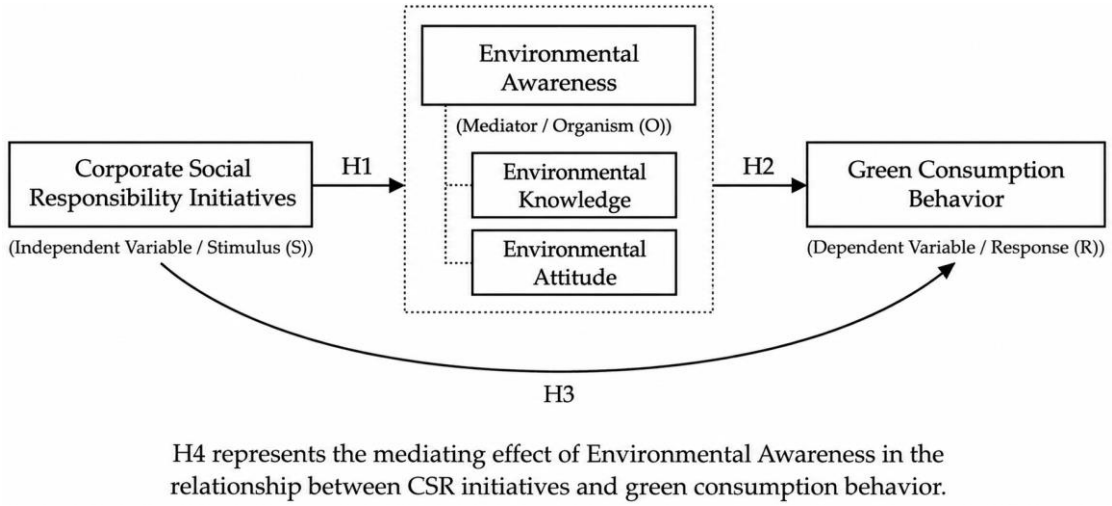


Figure 1. The proposed S-O-R framework positions CSR initiatives as the stimulus, Environmental Awareness (Environmental Knowledge + Environmental Attitude) as the organism, and Green Consumption Behavior as the response.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The proposed framework is grounded in Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory, which elucidates how external cues trigger psychological effects within the organism, followed by behavioral effects. Given the context of this enquiry, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are considered stimuli because they serve as salient hotel-responsibility cues upon which guests base their responses (Chang et al., 2024; Han, 2021).

The organism identified is environmental awareness, operationalized as a higher-order construct comprising environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. Green Consumption Behavior is the behavioral response construct that reflects the environmentally responsible choices and practices guests adopt in the hotel environment. Thus, it is assumed that CSR initiatives positively influence environmental awareness, environmental awareness positively influences Green Consumption Behavior, and environmental awareness mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and Green Consumption Behavior.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The current study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to explore the relationships among corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, environmental awareness, and green consumption behavior among hotel guests in China. Since the present study aimed to empirically test theoretically determined relationships and mediation paths, using a questionnaire framework was appropriate, based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) paradigm. The hypothesized model included CSR initiatives as the exogenous variable, environmental awareness as the mediating organismic construct, and green consumption behavior as the outcome variable.

Environmental awareness was conceptualized as a reflective-reflective higher-order construct comprising environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. This two-sided delineation enabled the model to encompass both the cognitive and evaluative aspects of guests' environmental processing. Considering the study's predictive approach and its design, which involved testing mediation effects and using a hierarchical component structure, the

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methodological tool employed was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (Becker, Cheah, Gholamzade, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2023; Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2024).

3.2. Population, Sampling, and Data Collection Procedure

The target population comprised all hotel guests aged 18 years and over who had stayed at any hotel in China during the last year. A purposive screening method was applied because the study required respondents with recent hotel-stay experience, enabling them to assess hotel CSR-related practices. Data were gathered using a WeChat online mini-program questionnaire from 4 January to 16 April 2025. The questionnaire was sent to individuals who were potential respondents rather than using automated panel recruitment, to better represent the population of actual hotel guests. A total of 500 questionnaires were returned. Following data screening and cleaning, 73 questionnaires were incomplete, 21 failed the screening criteria, and 24 were of poor quality, leaving 382 questionnaires for data analysis. The actual response rate was thus 76.4%. The results of the data collection and screening are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Online data collection and screening outcomes.

Stage	Number of responses	Explanation
Online questionnaires distributed	500	WeChat mini-program questionnaire
Returned questionnaires	500	All returned cases were downloaded for preliminary inspection
Incomplete responses removed	73	Cases with missing sections or unfinished submissions
Screening failures removed	21	Cases not meeting age or recent hotel-stay eligibility
Low-quality responses removed	24	Straight-lining, obvious inconsistency, or unrealistically short completion time
Final valid questionnaires	382	Retained for SmartPLS analysis

3.3. Questionnaire Development and Measurement

The questionnaire was created in English and included five sections: screening questions; respondents' backgrounds in terms of their demographics and hotel stays; CSR initiatives; environmental awareness; and green consumption behavior. A five-point Likert scale with five options (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree) was used for all substantive items. The measurement items were adopted and reworded from previous studies on CSR and green hospitality to suit the context of hotel guests in China. The target respondents were Chinese hotel guests; therefore, a translation and back-translation procedure was used to guarantee semantic equivalence. Two bilingual researchers/translators were assigned different tasks in the process. The forward translation from English into Chinese was conducted by one bilingual researcher. This version was back-translated into English by a second bilingual translator who did not use the original English version during this stage. The original English version and the back-translated version were then compared item by item by the research team. Ambiguities in terms, meanings, and contextual suitability were clarified and resolved through discussion before the questionnaire was finalized. Some minor wording changes were made to improve clarity, cultural appropriateness, and conceptual equivalence. A summary of the questionnaire structure is presented in Table 2, while the construct operationalization and adapted sources are presented in Table 3.

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Table 2. Questionnaire profile and section structure.

Section	Focus	No. of items	Response format
Screening section	Eligibility, informed participation confirmation, and background exposure to hotel environmental/social practices	4	Dichotomous/Categorical
Section A	Demographic profile	8	Categorical
Section B	CSR initiatives (Environmental initiatives; social initiatives)	10	5-point Likert scale
Section C	Environmental awareness (Environmental knowledge; environmental attitude)	10	5-point Likert scale
Section D	Green consumption behavior	7	5-point Likert scale
Total	Full questionnaire	39	Mixed structured format

Table 3. Construct operationalization and adapted measurement sources.

Construct	Role	Dimensions	Items	Adapted source(s)
Corporate social responsibility initiatives	Independent variable	Environmental initiatives; social initiatives	10	Turker (2009) and Raza et al. (2023) reworded for the hotel context
Environmental awareness	Mediator / Higher-order construct	Environmental knowledge; environmental attitude	10	Demir et al. (2021) and Han and Yoon (2015) adapted to hotel guest awareness
Green consumption behavior	Dependent variable	Single construct	7	Han and Yoon (2015); recent hospitality green behavior studies
Demographic profile	Descriptive information	Gender, age, education, income, stay frequency, trip purpose, hotel type, stay duration	8	Researcher-developed profiling items
Screening questions	Eligibility assessment, participation consent, and background exposure	Age, recent hotel stay in China, participation consent, and whether environmental/social practices were noticed during the most recent hotel stay	4	Researcher-developed screening items

The operationalization of CSR initiatives was achieved through a multidimensional exogenous construct that included environmental and social initiatives as measured by hotel guests. Environmental awareness was construed as a reflective higher-order construct comprising two first-order dimensions: environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. The construct Green Consumption Behavior was proposed and operationalised as the endogenous construct, reflecting respondents' environmentally responsible choices and actions in a hotel setting. This measurement architecture aligns with the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm used in the study, in which CSR initiatives are the stimulus, awareness of environmental issues is the organismic process, and green consumption behavior represents the behavioral response.

3.4. Data Screening and Quality Control

The screening process retained respondents who were aged 18 years or older, had stayed at a hotel in China within the preceding 12 months, and had voluntarily consented to participate. Before proceeding to the substantive questions in the WeChat mini-program, participants were presented with information about the study and provided electronic informed consent by selecting "Yes" in the voluntary consent screening question (S3). Only respondents who provided affirmative consent were eligible for inclusion in the analysis. One question was also posed to determine whether participants had observed any environmentally or socially responsible practices during their most recent hotel stay. This item was not considered an exclusion criterion but was used as a background exposure variable.

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Incomplete submissions, screening failures, internally inconsistent responses, failed attention checks, invariant response patterns, and unrealistically short completion times were removed during the data-cleaning procedure.

Following these procedures, 382 cases were considered valid and were used for the PLS-SEM analysis. Common method bias was controlled using both procedural and statistical solutions, since all substantive variables were obtained from the same respondents through a cross-sectional questionnaire. To minimize evaluation apprehension and item-context effects, the procedures included separating the questionnaire sections, providing clear instructions, and ensuring respondent anonymity and voluntary participation. All 27 substantive measurement items were first entered into an unrotated factor analysis to determine their factor structure according to Harman's single-factor test. The first factor accounted for 53.94% of the total variance.

This is only slightly higher than the conventional rule of thumb of 50%, and Harman's test is treated more as a preliminary diagnostic than as an ultimate test. Therefore, the result was interpreted with caution and was not the only factor used to assess common method bias. Thus, full collinearity VIF values were analyzed as an additional PLS-SEM diagnostic. The full collinearity VIF scores for CSR initiatives, environmental awareness, and green consumption behavior were 2.134, 2.547, and 2.647, respectively, which are less than the conservative value of 3.3 (Kock, 2015).

Overall, the procedural controls and collinearity diagnostics indicate that common method bias was unlikely to significantly bias interpretation of the structural relationships.

3.5. Data Analysis Strategy

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4. The analysis took place in two phases. The measurement model was initially explored with respect to indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The major criteria considered were outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio, where applicable. Second, the structural model was explored in terms of collinearity diagnostics, path coefficients, and coefficients of determination, and the significance of direct and indirect effects was examined using bootstrapping.

The two-stage approach used in SmartPLS 4 was employed to estimate environmental awareness as the higher-order construct. In the first stage, the lower-order components, namely environmental knowledge and environmental attitude, were estimated and validated. In the second stage, the lower-order latent variable scores were regressed on the higher-order latent variable, namely environmental awareness. SmartPLS 4 was used for model estimation, and the software is cited using the suggested citation style (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2024).

4. RESULTS

The final dataset comprised 382 valid responses received online. In line with current guidelines for PLS-SEM, the analyses were carried out in two subsequent steps: first, an evaluation of the measurement model, and second, an evaluation of the structural model and mediation analyses (Becker et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2024).

4.1. Respondent Profile

Before examining the measurement and structural models, the respondents' profile is presented to provide an overview of the valid sample in terms of demographic and recent-stay characteristics. Incorporating these characteristics is very important in tourism-related survey research, since it helps verify that the sampled respondents correspond to the intended unit of analysis, namely, actual hotel guests in China who possess the ability to appraise hotel CSR-related practices. A brief profile of the respondents is provided in Table 4.

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Table 4. Respondent Profile.

Profile characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	174	45.5
	Female	196	51.3
	Prefer not to say	12	3.1
Age	18–24	86	22.5
	25–34	129	33.8
	35–44	92	24.1
	45–54	47	12.3
	55 and above	28	7.3
Education	Secondary school or below	25	6.5
	Diploma	71	18.6
	Bachelor's degree	167	43.7
	Master's degree	89	23.3
	Doctoral degree	30	7.9
Income	Less than RMB 3,000	49	12.8
	RMB 3,001–6,000	100	26.2
	RMB 6,001–10,000	103	27.0
	RMB 10,001–15,000	72	18.8
	Above RMB 15,000	49	12.8
	Prefer not to say	9	2.4
Hotel stay frequency	Rarely	56	14.7
	Occasionally	131	34.3
	Sometimes	116	30.4
	Frequently	79	20.7
Most recent stay purpose	Leisure	181	47.4
	Business	104	27.2
	Family visit	43	11.3
	Study	26	6.8
	Other	28	7.3
Most recent hotel type	Budget	66	17.3
	Mid-scale	116	30.4
	Upscale	111	29.1
	Luxury	40	10.5
	Boutique	33	8.6
	Other	16	4.2
Most recent stay duration	1 night	72	18.8
	2–3 nights	179	46.9
	4–6 nights	78	20.4
	7 nights or more	53	13.9
Noticed environmental/Social practices	Yes	238	62.3
	No	53	13.9
	Not sure	91	23.8

Note: Percentages are based on the 382 valid questionnaires retained for analysis. This table presents the eight demographic and hotel-stay characteristics from Section A, together with one background exposure item from the screening section ('Noticed environmental/social practices'). The background exposure item was not used as an exclusion criterion.

As shown in Table 4, the sample was fairly equally divided between genders; females comprised 51.3% of the sample, while males comprised 45.5%. The age group of 25–34 years (33.8% of participants) was the largest, followed by those aged 35–44 years (24.1% of participants) and 18–24 years (22.5% of participants). Regarding educational level, the largest group held bachelor's degrees (43.7%), followed by respondents earning RMB 6,001–10,000 yuan (27.0%) and RMB 3,001–6,000 yuan (26.2%). Regarding travel behavior, most respondents said they stayed in hotels occasionally or sometimes (64.7%), and the most popular reason for their last stay was leisure (47.4%).

Nearly half of the respondents said they would stay for two to three nights, and the majority of recent stays were in mid-scale and upscale hotels. Overall, the profile suggests that the sample obtained is adequate for studying hotel guests' perceptions of CSR initiatives and their green consumption behavior in the Chinese hotel context.

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4.2. Estimated Model

Before the hypotheses were tested, the general pattern of relationships in the estimated models was identified by examining the construct-level means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations. Table 5 reveals that CSR had positive relationships with environmental awareness and green consumption behavior, and that environmental awareness had a positive relationship with green consumption behavior.

Table 5. Construct-level descriptive statistics and correlations.

Construct	Mean	SD	CSR Initiatives	Environmental Awareness	GCB
Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives	3.159	1.063	—	—	—
Environmental Awareness	3.698	0.962	0.671	—	—
Green consumption behavior	3.355	1.150	0.687	0.754	—

Note: n = 382. All correlations are positive and statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

4.3. Variables Reliability and Validity

In line with the current recommendations for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70 were regarded as acceptable, while an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50 and acceptable outer loadings were considered adequate (Becker et al., 2023). Given that the model contains two hierarchical constructs, two studies were carried out for each: reliability and convergent validity, at both the first-order and higher-order levels.

Table 6. Reliability and convergent validity assessment.

Construct	Order	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Loading range
CSR environmental initiatives	First-order	0.857	0.897	0.637	0.757-0.819
CSR social initiatives	First-order	0.866	0.903	0.652	0.777-0.828
Environmental knowledge	First-order	0.874	0.909	0.667	0.769-0.844
Environmental attitude	First-order	0.887	0.917	0.689	0.814-0.862
Green consumption behavior	First-order	0.913	0.931	0.658	0.759-0.832
CSR initiatives	Higher-order	0.927	0.965	0.932	0.965-0.965
Environmental awareness	Higher-order	0.850	0.930	0.870	0.933-0.933

As shown in Table 6, the values of internal consistency are high. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.850 to 0.927, composite reliability ranged from 0.897 to 0.965, and AVE ranged from 0.637 to 0.932. Together, these statistics provide evidence of adequate reliability and convergent validity for the reflective measurement model. Table 6 presents the reliability and convergent validity assessment. Note: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are all above 0.70, and AVE values are all above 0.50. CSR Environmental Initiatives and CSR Social Initiatives loaded 0.965 on CSR Initiatives, while Environmental Knowledge and Environmental Attitude loaded 0.933 on Environmental Awareness at the higher-order level. These high higher-order loadings suggest that each higher-order construct is highly coherent with its theoretically defined lower-order dimensions. They do not signify problematic redundancy, since the lower-order components represent conceptually different dimensions: CSR Initiatives (both environmental and social) and Environmental Awareness (both environmental knowledge and environmental attitude). The results presented in Table 8 and 9 also provide evidence of the discriminant validity of the higher-order measurement structure, supporting its retention.

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4.4. Measurement Items Fitness Statistics

To consider performance at the indicator level, the outer loading, mean, and standard deviation of each retained item are presented in Table 7. All first-order indicators achieved the commonly adopted loading threshold of .70 or higher in the final model; therefore, no measurement items were dropped (Hair et al., 2024).

Table 7. Measurement item fit statistics.

Construct	Item	Loading	Mean	SD	Status
CSR Environmental	CSR_EI1	0.783	3.453	1.331	Retained
CSR Environmental	CSR_EI2	0.813	3.293	1.359	Retained
CSR Environmental	CSR_EI3	0.819	3.246	1.379	Retained
CSR Environmental	CSR_EI4	0.757	3.003	1.408	Retained
CSR Environmental	CSR_EI5	0.817	3.215	1.334	Retained
CSR Social	CSR_SI1	0.828	3.238	1.395	Retained
CSR Social	CSR_SI2	0.789	2.948	1.443	Retained
CSR Social	CSR_SI3	0.777	3.039	1.373	Retained
CSR Social	CSR_SI4	0.819	2.995	1.355	Retained
CSR Social	CSR_SI5	0.823	3.157	1.346	Retained
Env. Knowledge	EK1	0.823	3.788	1.212	Retained
Env. Knowledge	EK2	0.810	3.882	1.172	Retained
Env. Knowledge	EK3	0.769	3.539	1.333	Retained
Env. Knowledge	EK4	0.844	3.746	1.280	Retained
Env. Knowledge	EK5	0.835	3.702	1.227	Retained
Env. Attitude	EA1	0.814	3.775	1.251	Retained
Env. Attitude	EA2	0.824	3.733	1.226	Retained
Env. Attitude	EA3	0.862	3.694	1.264	Retained
Env. Attitude	EA4	0.828	3.610	1.295	Retained
Env. Attitude	EA5	0.821	3.510	1.269	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB1	0.824	3.408	1.451	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB2	0.823	3.490	1.387	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB3	0.832	3.385	1.442	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB4	0.823	3.309	1.372	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB5	0.813	3.288	1.390	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB6	0.801	3.395	1.414	Retained
Green consumption behavior	GCB7	0.759	3.209	1.477	Retained

Note: All indicators were retained because each loading exceeded 0.70. CSR_EI1–CSR_EI5 denote CSR environmental initiatives, whereas CSR_SI1–CSR_SI5 denote CSR social initiatives.

4.5. Discriminant Validity

To investigate discriminant validity, it was examined at the higher-order structural level because the substantive model operates through three main constructs: CSR initiatives, environmental awareness, and green consumption behavior. Both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio were assessed, with HTMT values below .85 considered evidence of conservative discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2024).

Table 8. Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Construct	CSR Initiatives	Environmental Awareness	GCB
CSR Initiatives	0.965	0.671	0.687
Environmental Awareness	0.671	0.933	0.754
Green consumption behavior	0.687	0.754	0.811

Note: Diagonal values represent the square root of AVE.

The square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) were greater than the interconstruct correlations, as shown in Table 8 and 9, and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios ranged from 0.727 to 0.822. These results indicate discriminant validity for the higher-order constructs in the structural model.

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Table 9. Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT).

Construct	CSR initiatives	Environmental awareness	GCB
CSR Initiatives	—	0.727	0.748
Environmental Awareness		—	0.822
Green consumption behavior			—

Note: All HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85.

4.6. Variables Effects Overview

Table 10 reports the total effect of CSR initiatives on green consumption behavior ($\beta = 0.687$, $p < 0.001$). The direct and indirect effects used to evaluate H1–H4, together with their bootstrapping statistics, are reported in Table 13.

Table 10. Total effect of CSR initiatives on green consumption behavior.

Relationship	Effect type	β	p	Decision
CSR Initiatives → Green consumption behavior	Total effect	0.687	< 0.001	—

Note: The total effect combines the direct and indirect effects of CSR initiatives on green consumption behavior. Hypothesis-specific estimates are presented in Table 13.

4.7. R-Square Statistics and Model Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Given that PLS-SEM is mostly geared toward predictive applications, the model's explanatory ability and structural diagnostics were interpreted simultaneously, rather than relying on one unique global index. In Table 11, all the variance explained within each endogenous construct is provided, along with all supplementary effect-size, collinearity, and model-diagnostic statistics available in Table 12 (Becker et al., 2023; Hair et al., 2024).

Table 11. Explanatory power of the endogenous constructs.

Endogenous construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Interpretation
Environmental Awareness	0.451	0.449	Moderate-to-high explanatory power
Green consumption behavior	0.628	0.626	Substantial explanatory power

Note: Environmental awareness and green consumption behavior both show meaningful explained variance.

The model accounted for 45.1% of the variance in environmental awareness and 62.8% of the variance in green consumption behavior. The effect size of CSR initiatives on creating environmental awareness was large ($f^2 = 0.821$), the effect size of environmental awareness on green consumption behavior was large ($f^2 = 0.418$), and the direct effect of CSR initiatives on green consumption behavior was small to medium ($f^2 = 0.161$). The saturated model SRMR value (Table 12) was below the recommended value of 0.08 (0.044). The measurement model assessment, structural collinearity, explanatory power, effect sizes, and bootstrapped path estimates are the main criteria for interpreting the PLS-SEM results, while the SRMR is reported as a supplementary model diagnostic.

Table 12. Supplementary effect-size and model fit diagnostics.

Statistic	Value	Interpretation
f^2: CSR initiatives → Environmental awareness	0.821	Large effect
f^2: Environmental Awareness → Green consumption behavior	0.418	Large effect
f^2: CSR initiatives → Green consumption behavior	0.161	Small-to-medium effect
SRMR (Saturated model)	0.044	Acceptable supplementary model diagnostic (< 0.08)
Maximum inner VIF	1.821	No problematic collinearity

Note: SRMR refers to the saturated model output in SmartPLS 4 and is reported as a supplementary diagnostic rather than as the sole basis for evaluating model adequacy.

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4.8. Structural Model for Path Analysis

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to assess the structural paths. The path coefficients of the four hypotheses, along with the standard error, t value, confidence interval, and decision, are reported in Table 13.

Table 13. Structural model and path analysis results.

Hyp.	Path	β	SE	t	p	95% CI	VIF	Decision
H1	CSR Initiatives → Environmental Awareness	0.671	0.037	18.108	< 0.001	[0.594, 0.740]	1.000	Supported
H2	Environmental Awareness → Green consumption behavior	0.532	0.038	14.061	< 0.001	[0.456, 0.605]	1.821	Supported
H3	CSR Initiatives → Green consumption behavior	0.330	0.041	8.006	< 0.001	[0.252, 0.412]	1.821	Supported
H4	CSR Initiatives → Environmental Awareness → Green consumption behavior	0.357	0.031	11.481	< 0.001	[0.296, 0.418]	—	Supported

Note: Confidence intervals are bias-corrected bootstrap intervals based on 5,000 resamples.

4.9. Path Analysis

The results of the structural equation analysis showed that corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives had a significant positive effect on environmental awareness ($b = 0.671$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding was significant because hotel guests who more clearly identified the hotel's environmental and social responsibility actions also demonstrated greater environmental awareness and more positive attitudes towards the environment. The results also revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between environmental awareness and green consumption behavior ($b = 0.532$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 2.

In concrete terms, guests who possessed a higher level of environmental knowledge and had a more positive attitude towards environmental responsibility were much more likely to adopt green consumption practices during the hotel selection process and stay. Hypothesis 3 was supported, as the direct relationship between CSR initiatives and green consumption behavior was statistically significant ($b = 0.330$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that guests change their actions to match the level of hotel responsibility they observe.

Importantly, the indirect link between CSR programs and green consumption behavior through environmental awareness was positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 4. The mediation pattern can be described as complementary partial mediation because both direct and indirect effects were significant.

5. DISCUSSION

The results offer consistent and substantial support for the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, which was introduced in the context of hotel CSR initiatives and green consumption behavior in China. Environmental awareness was found to mediate the relationship between CSR initiatives and green consumption behavior: CSR initiatives positively affected environmental awareness, which, in turn, positively affected green consumption behavior, while CSR initiatives also directly influenced green consumption behavior. Furthermore, mediation analysis revealed that guests' reactions to CSR practices and their environmentally responsible consumption behavior reflected complementary partial mediation. This is not merely a superficial response, but involves internal cognitive and evaluative processes that lead to reactions to CSR initiatives. The empirical evidence related to Hypothesis 1 highlights that visible CSR efforts can complement visitors' environmental consciousness. This finding indicates that CSR is not merely a symbolic or reputational resource; rather, it offers an interpretation that has greater salience for guests in terms of environmental responsibility.

At a broad level, this result is similar to much previous hospitality scholarship, which demonstrated that CSR and sustainability communications impact consumers' understanding of responsible practices and values at hotels (Cao et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2023). However, in the current study, the effect is more than just a feeling of trust, loyalty, or affective response; it reflects a more fundamental internal state, environmental awareness, which is

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composed of environmental knowledge and attitude. Support for Hypothesis 2 also shows that environmental awareness is one of the internal factors influencing green consumption behavior. Higher environmental knowledge and a positive attitude toward environmental responsibility are associated with a higher probability of selecting, supporting, and practicing green consumption while staying in a hotel. This result aligns with the broader sustainable hospitality literature highlighting the significance of an internal pro-environmental orientation for pro-environmental behavior (Demir et al., 2021; Piramanayagam et al., 2024).

Importantly, the findings indicate a positive association between environmental awareness, conceptualized as a higher-order construct comprising environmental knowledge and environmental attitude, and guests' green consumption behavior. Support for Hypothesis 3 indicates a positive effect of CSR initiatives on green consumption behavior; that is, CSR initiatives have a direct influence on green consumption behavior. This finding implies that guests may respond behaviorally to observing responsible hotel actions even without engaging in the mediating awareness process. In the hospitality context, practices such as towel-reuse schemes, waste reduction, community support, and environmentally friendly operational choices can be considered ethical and environmentally friendly signals that encourage tourists to associate the hotel with responsibility. This finding is consistent with previous research, which identifies youth as an attribute that can directly influence customers' green behavioral parameters, supportive responses, and attitudes toward such initiatives (Raza et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024).

The support for Hypothesis 4 is of special significance, since it substantiates the results concerning the relationship between CSR initiatives and green consumption behavior as mediated by environmental awareness. This is quite consistent with the S-O-R theory: CSR is the stimulus, the organismic mechanism is environmental awareness, and the behavioral response is green consumption behavior. In this sense, the finding supports the argument that guest behavior is not a straightforward reaction to responsible practices; rather, it is filtered through an internal awareness process. This contribution is interesting because research in hospitality has mainly focused on mediators such as trust, emotions, engagement, or perceived value, but has paid less attention to environmental awareness itself as the explanatory pathway (Nosrati et al., 2024; Raza et al., 2023). Another noteworthy fact is that the mediation in this study is partial rather than complete. This indicates that environmental awareness plays a significant role in the relationship between CSR and green consumption, but cannot completely explain it.

This translates into a practical and theoretical scenario in which guests may respond to hotel CSR as a whole by reacting to each of its CSR channels. In the present study, the effect of awareness-based processing was found to be significant, but other potential processing routes may also have been at work, such as trust, perceived value, moral elevation, emotional reactions, or hotel identification. This interpretation is in line with the recent resurgence of research in hospitality, which suggests that green practices and CSR-related activities often involve psychological mechanisms that operate through overlapping pathways rather than along one linear path (for example, Safeer, Abrar, and Qing (2025) and Tran, Nguyen, and Nguyen (2025)).

These findings have even more significance when viewed in the Chinese context. Past studies have indicated that the transfer from "theory to practice" may not be seamless when it comes to preferences for green hotels in China, particularly when convenience, price sensitivity, market cues, or value judgments are involved (Wu et al., 2024). The present study contributes to closing this gap by demonstrating that hotel CSR activities might be able to narrow the gap between the 'environmental principle' and 'behavioral practice' by developing 'environmental awareness'. As a result, it can be concluded that guests are likely to engage in green consumption if hotels' green practices are also visible and explained differently with the help of contextual factors; this affects guests' understanding of green consumption during their stay. In general, the results can be seen to support three more general conclusions: First, hotel CSR initiatives are important for guest behavior beyond image management. Second, the psychological mechanism of environmental awareness is meaningful in translating CSR initiatives into green consumption behavior. Third, it is believed that coherent, empirically based knowledge can explain this process in the hospitality context,

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namely, S-O-R theory. All these findings combined support the notion that hotel sustainability is not only an operational issue but also a behavioral mechanism that affects customers and can have tangible consequences.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of hotel CSR practices on the green consumption behavior of guests in China, with environmental awareness as the mediating variable. The results indicated that CSR activities positively affected environmental awareness, and environmental awareness positively affected green consumption behavior, based on the S-O-R framework. The substantial indirect effect confirmed that environmental awareness is a partial mediator of the relationship between CSR and green behavior. The study's most prominent contribution is its explanation of the internal awareness mechanism that helps work out the connection between visible hotel responsibility practices and guest behavior. The study conceptualises environmental awareness as a higher-order construct comprising environmental knowledge and environmental attitude, indicating that guests' green consumption behavior is influenced by their environmental cognition and positive evaluation of the environment. This provides a more holistic implementation of S-O-R theory in the Chinese hospitality context. The results show that, in general, hotel CSR programmes are most effective when they are implemented, presented, and explained to guests and understood by them. Responsible hotel practices have a direct impact on green consumption, and their behavioral impact is further enhanced when they positively influence guests' environmental awareness.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1. Theoretical Implications

Some implications are drawn for the theory of hospitality sustainability research from this study. First, it applies Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory to the context of hotel CSR and guests' green consumption behavior. The study offers a sound explanation of the effect of CSR on consumer behavior by identifying CSR initiatives as the stimulus, environmental awareness as the organism, and green consumption behavior as the behavioral response. Second, the study contributes to CSR research by going beyond direct-effect explanations. Past research has found that hotel CSR influences engagement, positive emotions, loyalty, and green behavior, although there is no clear connection among these factors (Isaac et al., 2025; Raza et al., 2023). This study aims to fill this gap by positioning environmental awareness as an important mediator to elucidate guests' cognitive and evaluative processing in the context of CSR activities. Thirdly, the study contributes to green consumption research by conceptualizing environmental awareness as an upper-level construct comprising two components: environmental knowledge and environmental attitude. This is of theoretical importance because numerous research studies differentiate between predictors of knowledge and attitude. The results of the present study indicate that a more integrated awareness construct is a more complete representation of the organismic stage in S-O-R theory. Lastly, this research contributes to understanding sustainable hospitality research by demonstrating that awareness-based mediation provides a helpful explanatory mechanism for sustainability research. In doing so, it advances and develops theory, making the study more relevant to the literature on hotel sustainability and consumer behavior.

7.2. Practical and Policy Implications

The results have practical implications for hotel managers. CSR efforts must be viewed not only as internal programs or symbolic reputation instruments but also as sustainability cues for guests. Environmental and social responsibility practices should be made visible, understandable, and credible to guests through in-room messages, digital-media communication, signage, staff explanations, and service-design cues. Through environmental awareness, the relationship between CSR and green behavior shifts from passive green presentation to active green interpretation by raising guests' awareness of the importance of saving water and energy, recycling, reusing towels, and consuming responsibly during a hotel stay. These findings could help industry associations and destination

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managers enhance sector-level sustainability communication. By providing guests with standardized guidelines for communicating hotel CSR practices, confusion is minimized, and statements that are not credible sustainability practices can be differentiated from promotional ones. In addition, training programs can help hotels relate CSR activities to guests' education, service interactions, and green behavioral nudges, so that CSR does not appear to be merely a corporate image program. The results indicate to policymakers and regulators the importance of stimulating transparency in sustainability disclosure and green hotel standards for consumers.

Policy measures are needed to incentivize hotels to provide an accurate picture of their CSR activities, ban greenwashing, and inform guests about how these activities are connected to environmental effects. Guests' environmental knowledge and attitudes can be further reinforced through public campaigns and certification schemes, making it more probable that hotel CSR activities will result in green consumption behavior.

7.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are a number of limitations in this study. First, the research used a cross-sectional design, suggesting a limitation in making causal inferences. The findings are consistent with the proposed S-O-R framework, but future studies might use longitudinal or time-lagged study designs to examine changes in guests' awareness and behavior over time. Second, the study was conducted on the basis of self-reported data.

Although self-report measures are a commonly used technique in hospitality research, they may be influenced by social desirability or consistency bias when environmental responsibility is involved. For future studies, it is recommended that behavioral tracking, observational indicators, or mixed-methods designs be included to supplement self-reported green consumption behavior. Third, the investigation was conducted only with hotel guests in China, increasing its relevance to the context in question but reducing its generalizability.

Depending on the cultural norms and the sustainability maturity and expectations in other countries or among tourism consumer markets, attitudes toward CSR and environmental responsibility may differ considerably. It would therefore be useful to conduct cross-country comparative studies. Fourth, while environmental awareness accounted for a large proportion of the CSR-to-green-consumption relationship, this mediation was partial rather than complete. This suggests that other important mechanisms may exist. Future research might investigate other mediators, such as trust, perceived value, moral obligation, green image, customer engagement, or emotional responses, in order to develop a more complex explanatory model. Future research could also examine different model structures, including moderation, mediation, or multi-group comparisons. Researchers might compare, for instance, the CSR-awareness-behavior pathway across different types of hotels, age groups, or travel purposes and frequencies of hotel use.

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Informed Consent Statement: Before responding to the substantive questionnaire items via the WeChat mini-program, participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided electronic informed consent by selecting "Yes" in response to the voluntary consent screening question (S3). Only responses from participants who provided affirmative consent were included in the analysis. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time before submitting the questionnaire. All collected data were used exclusively for academic research purposes, and the findings were reported in aggregate form. All data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.
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