

Cultural Sustainability and Green Customer Engagement in Eco-Friendly Hotels

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Abstract

This study examines how perceived cultural sustainability explains green customer engagement in eco-friendly hotels by considering green brand love and cultural identity strength. The study addresses the need for a culturally grounded explanation of green hospitality engagement in island destinations where environmental practices intersect with local culture and identity. A quantitative explanatory design was applied to domestic tourists who had experienced eco-friendly hotel services in *Bali*, *West Nusa Tenggara*, and *East Nusa Tenggara*. Using purposive sampling, 300 valid responses were analyzed. The constructs were measured using seven-point Likert scales, and the data were analyzed using a two-stage CB-SEM procedure with AMOS. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the measurement model, while path analysis with mean-centered interaction terms was used to test direct, mediating, and moderating effects. The findings show that perceived cultural sustainability has a significant direct effect on green customer engagement but does not significantly influence green brand love. Green brand love strongly influences green customer engagement, indicating that emotional attachment remains an important driver of engagement. The mediation effect of green brand love is therefore not the main mechanism linking perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement. However, cultural identity strength significantly strengthens the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love. This study contributes by showing that cultural sustainability shapes engagement more directly, while cultural identity helps transform cultural sustainability cues into brand affection.

Keywords: Cultural Identity Strength; Eco-Friendly Hotels; Green Brand Love; Green Customer Engagement; Perceived Cultural Sustainability.

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I. Introduction

The expansion of sustainable tourism has moved green hospitality from an operational issue into a strategic concern for hotel competitiveness. Eco-friendly hotels are expected to demonstrate environmental responsibility through energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, local sourcing, and community involvement (Mansoor et al., 2025; Salah et al., 2023). In island destinations, these practices interact with cultural heritage because the visitor experience is shaped by architecture, food, rituals, local aesthetics, and community participation (Hanafiah et al., 2025). This condition makes green hotel consumption both a cultural and a service experience.

Bali, *West Nusa Tenggara*, and *East Nusa Tenggara* provide a relevant context for examining this issue. *Bali* represents a mature tourism destination with stronger market pressure toward sustainability standards, while *West Nusa Tenggara* and *East Nusa Tenggara* represent emerging destinations where nature, culture, and community-based tourism remain central to destination identity (Hanafiah et al., 2025; Mansoor et al., 2025). The research data identified 50 eco-friendly hotels across the three regions, with 26 in *Bali*, 13 in *West Nusa Tenggara*, and 11 in *East Nusa Tenggara*. This distribution indicates that the supply side of green hospitality has begun to expand across culturally rich island destinations.

Previous studies on green hospitality have frequently examined green perceived value, green trust, green satisfaction, revisit intention, and loyalty (Javed et al., 2024; Sangroya et al., 2025). These variables are useful for explaining consumer evaluation, yet they give limited attention to how cultural meaning is transformed into customer engagement. In sustainable destinations, consumers may evaluate a hotel based on cultural representation, local authenticity, and the extent to which the hotel protects cultural continuity (Hanafiah et al., 2025; Mansoor et al., 2025). This means that perceived cultural sustainability can become a strategic element in explaining why customers engage with eco-friendly hotels.

Consumer Culture Theory explains consumption as a symbolic and cultural practice where consumers use market offerings to construct identity, express values, and negotiate social meaning (Arnould et al., 2023). This theoretical lens is relevant for eco-friendly hotels because green services are experienced through visible cultural and symbolic cues. Perceived cultural sustainability refers to customers' perception that a hotel respects, preserves, and represents local culture in a sustainable way. When these cues are integrated into the brand, customers may develop a stronger emotional attachment to the hotel.

Green brand love is important in this relationship because engagement is rarely produced by cognitive evaluation alone (Zaid et al., 2025). Brand love reflects a strong emotional bond between consumers and brands and has been linked to relational outcomes such as loyalty, advocacy, and engagement (Javed et al., 2024). In green hospitality, brand love can explain how sustainability cues move from perception into stronger relational participation. Green customer engagement, in turn, reflects customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with the hotel brand (Hollebeek et al., 2023).

Cultural identity strength may also condition the effect of perceived cultural sustainability. Domestic tourists with stronger cultural identity are more likely to evaluate hotel practices in terms of cultural fit and symbolic relevance (Maduranga Arachchi & Samarasinghe, 2024). A hotel that protects local culture can be interpreted as a meaningful brand, especially by tourists who regard cultural belonging as part of their self-concept. Therefore, cultural identity strength is positioned as a moderator that shapes the effect of perceived cultural sustainability on green brand love (Hamouda & Aissaoui, 2024). This study aims to analyze the effect of perceived cultural sustainability on green customer engagement, mediated by green brand love and cultural identity strength. The article contributes to green hospitality literature by focusing on a culturally embedded path toward engagement. It offers empirical evidence from domestic tourists in *Bali*, *West Nusa Tenggara*, and *East Nusa Tenggara*.

The model offers focused novelty by positioning perceived cultural sustainability as the central cultural antecedent of green customer engagement in eco-friendly hotels. Perceived cultural sustainability reflects customers' evaluation of how hospitality providers preserve, represent, and sustain local cultural values within tourism and service experiences (Chen & Wu, 2024). Green brand love explains the affective bond through which sustainability-related perceptions can develop into stronger customer-brand relationships, while green customer engagement reflects customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with green hospitality practices (Ahmad et al., 2026; Khoi & Le, 2025). Cultural identity strength further explains how customers interpret sustainable hotel experiences through cultural belonging, symbolic relevance, and identity-based meaning (Dao et al., 2025; Sreen et al., 2025). By linking cultural sustainability, brand affection, and identity-based interpretation, this study provides a culturally grounded explanation of green customer engagement and offers practical insight for eco-friendly hotel

managers seeking to integrate local culture into sustainable brand strategy.

The hypotheses are developed from Consumer Culture Theory and green customer engagement literature. Consumer Culture Theory explains that tourists interpret hotel experiences through cultural meaning, symbolic relevance, and identity-based interpretation (Arnould et al., 2023; Chen & Wu, 2024). In eco-friendly hotels, perceived cultural sustainability becomes important because tourists may evaluate sustainability through the hotel's ability to preserve local culture, respect community identity, and represent destination heritage (Kumar et al., 2026; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025). Green brand love is positioned as the affective mechanism linking cultural evaluation to green customer engagement (Le et al., 2025; Zaid et al., 2025).

Perceived cultural sustainability refers to tourists' perception that a hotel preserves and represents local culture within its service practices (Khan & Kumar, 2026; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025). Hotels that integrate cultural elements responsibly may be perceived as more authentic and meaningful in sustainable tourism contexts (Noerkaisar & Rahma Dhaniala, 2025; Sawu & Adikampana, 2025). This perception not only creates a positive assessment of the hotel but can also strengthen travelers' emotional bonds with hotel brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. Therefore, the higher a traveler's perception of a hotel's cultural sustainability practices, the greater the likelihood of developing a love for the green brand.

Green brand love reflects tourists' emotional attachment to a green hotel brand, while green customer engagement reflects tourists' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with green hotel practices (Ahmad et al., 2026; Le et al., 2025; Mansoor et al., 2025). Tourists who develop affection for an eco-friendly hotel brand are more likely to support, engage with, and participate in the hotel's sustainability initiatives. Therefore, love for green brands is expected to increase green customer engagement.

The relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement is not expected to be direct, but to occur through green brand affection, a psychological mechanism that bridges the two variables. Green brand love is expected to mediate the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement. Cultural sustainability may first create a meaningful evaluation of the hotel, and this evaluation can develop into an emotional attachment that encourages engagement (Le et al., 2025; Zaid et al., 2025). However, the strength of the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love likely varies from traveler to traveler. One factor that may influence this relationship is the strength of cultural identity. Cultural identity strength is expected to moderate the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love. Tourists with stronger cultural identity may respond more deeply to hotel practices that preserve local culture and reflect place-based sustainability (Khan & Kumar, 2026; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025).

II. Method

This study used a quantitative explanatory design. The design was selected because the article examines causal relationships among perceived cultural sustainability, green brand love, cultural identity strength, and green customer engagement (Hair et al., 2024; Kline, 2023). The analysis was based on survey data collected from domestic tourists who had experienced eco-friendly hotel services in *Bali*, *West Nusa Tenggara*, and *East Nusa Tenggara*.

The population consisted of Indonesian domestic tourists aged at least eighteen years who had experienced eco-friendly hotel services in *Bali*, *West Nusa Tenggara*, or *East Nusa Tenggara* during the previous twelve months. The unit of analysis was the individual tourist because the constructs measured in the study represent perception, affection, cultural identity, and engagement at the consumer level (Hair et al., 2024; Kline, 2023). Hotels served as the service context where green and cultural experiences were formed.

The sampling technique was purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on four criteria: Indonesian citizenship, minimum age of eighteen years, experience using eco-friendly hotel services in the three destinations, and willingness to complete the questionnaire voluntarily. The final dataset consisted of 300 valid responses. This sample size was considered adequate for CB-SEM because the model used reflective constructs and tested mediation and moderation paths (Hair et al., 2024).

All variables were measured using seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Perceived cultural sustainability was measured using six indicators, green brand love using six indicators, cultural identity strength using six indicators, and green customer engagement

using seven indicators. The items were adapted from previous scales and contextualized for eco-friendly hotels in *Bali* and *Nusa Tenggara* (Javed et al., 2024; Salah et al., 2023). Table 1 presents the variables measured in this study, including each variable's role, the number of indicators (items), the measurement scale, and the operational focus of each construct.

Table 1. Measurement of Variables

Variable	Role	Items	Scale	Operational focus
Perceived Cultural Sustainability (PCS)	Independent variable	6	Likert 7 points	Perceived hotel commitment to preserving local culture
Green Brand Love (GBL)	Mediator	6	Likert 7 points	Emotional attachment toward eco-friendly hotel brands
Cultural Identity Strength (CIS)	Moderator	6	Likert 7 points	Strength of respondents' cultural identity orientation
Green Customer Engagement (GCE)	Dependent variable	7	Likert 7 points	Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with green hotel practices

Data analysis used a two-stage CB-SEM approach in AMOS. In the first stage, confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. In the second stage, path analysis was conducted using composite scores. The moderation variable was created by mean-centering PCS and CIS and multiplying the centered variables to form the $PCS \times CIS$ interaction term. Mediation was evaluated through direct, indirect, and total effects.

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 presents the proposed relationships among perceived cultural sustainability, green brand love, cultural identity strength, and green customer engagement. Perceived cultural sustainability refers to customers' evaluation of how eco-friendly hotels preserve and represent local cultural values in sustainable hospitality experiences (Chen & Wu, 2024; Zhang & Yin, 2025). Green brand love is positioned as the affective mechanism linking perceptions of cultural sustainability with customers' relational responses to green hotel brands (Ahmad et al., 2026; Khoi & Le, 2025). Cultural identity strength is included as a moderating variable because customers with stronger cultural identity may interpret sustainable hotel experiences through cultural belonging and symbolic relevance (Dao et al., 2025; Virgona et al., 2025). This framework guides the testing of the direct, mediating, and moderating effects in the proposed model.

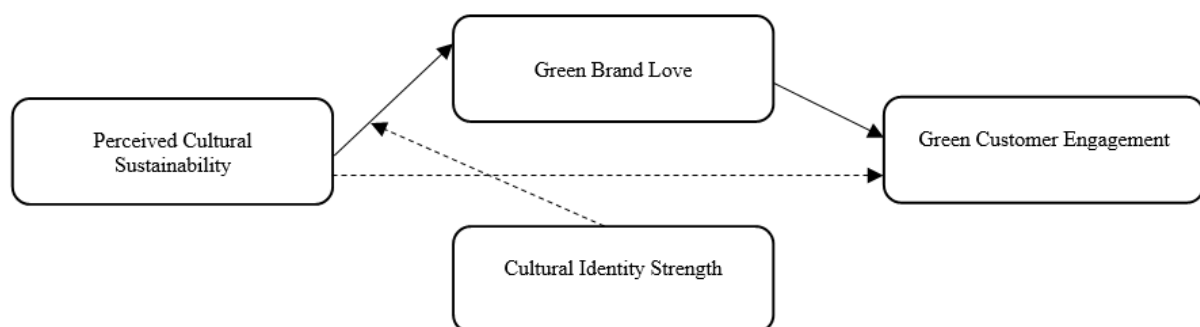


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The two-stage procedure was adopted to maintain measurement clarity and estimation stability. The first stage retained the constructs as latent variables during confirmatory factor analysis. After reliability and validity were confirmed, the second stage used composite scores for path analysis and interaction testing. This procedure enabled the study to estimate mediation and moderation in a focused model while preserving the measurement evidence obtained from the CFA stage (Hair et al., 2024).

The use of CB-SEM was appropriate because this study aimed to confirm a theoretically specified model and evaluate the fit between the proposed model and empirical data. CB-SEM is suitable for studies that prioritize theory testing, reflective measurement, and model adequacy assessment (Hair et al., 2024; Kline, 2023). This consideration is aligned with the article objective, which is to test whether perceived cultural sustainability, green brand love, and cultural identity strength explain engagement among domestic tourists in eco-friendly hotel contexts (Ismail, 2025).

III. Results and Discussion

1. Data Filtering and Descriptive Statistics

Data screening was conducted before model estimation. The dataset contained complete responses across all indicators. Multivariate outlier testing using Mahalanobis distance produced a maximum value of 71.385, which remained below the interpolated chi-square threshold of 73.13 at $df = 45$ and $p < 0.001$. Normality testing showed that the skewness and kurtosis values of the retained constructs were within acceptable limits. These results indicate that the data were suitable for CB-SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2025; Kline, 2023).

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the four constructs used in this article. The mean values indicate that respondents reported moderate to relatively positive perceptions of cultural sustainability, cultural identity, brand love, and green engagement in eco-friendly hotel settings.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Construct	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PCS	300	6	40	24.20	6.28
CIS	300	7	42	23.75	5.79
GBL	300	8	40	23.45	6.27
GCE	300	7	49	27.72	6.10

The standard deviation values show that the responses contained sufficient variation for model testing. PCS recorded a standard deviation of 6.28, while GCE recorded a standard deviation of 6.10. This variation indicates that respondents differed in the extent to which they perceived cultural sustainability and engaged with eco-friendly hotel brands. Such variation is useful because mediation and moderation analysis requires meaningful differences across respondents to detect conditional and indirect effects.

The descriptive statistics provide an initial indication that cultural and affective constructs are relevant for the sample. PCS had a mean score of 24.20, suggesting that respondents perceived cultural sustainability as a visible part of the eco-friendly hotel experience. CIS had a mean score of 23.75, indicating that respondents maintained a meaningful cultural orientation when evaluating hotel experiences. GBL and GCE also showed adequate mean scores, implying that emotional attachment and engagement were present among domestic tourists in the dataset.

2. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure construct validity and reliability before testing the structural model. This evaluation included convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Figure 2 shows the measurement model consisting of perceived cultural sustainability, cultural identity strength, green brand love, and green customer engagement.

The results of the measurement model evaluation are presented in Table 3. These results indicate that all constructs meet convergent validity and reliability criteria, with indicators consistently reflecting their respective constructs. These findings indicate that the measurement model is suitable for testing the relationships between variables in the structural model.

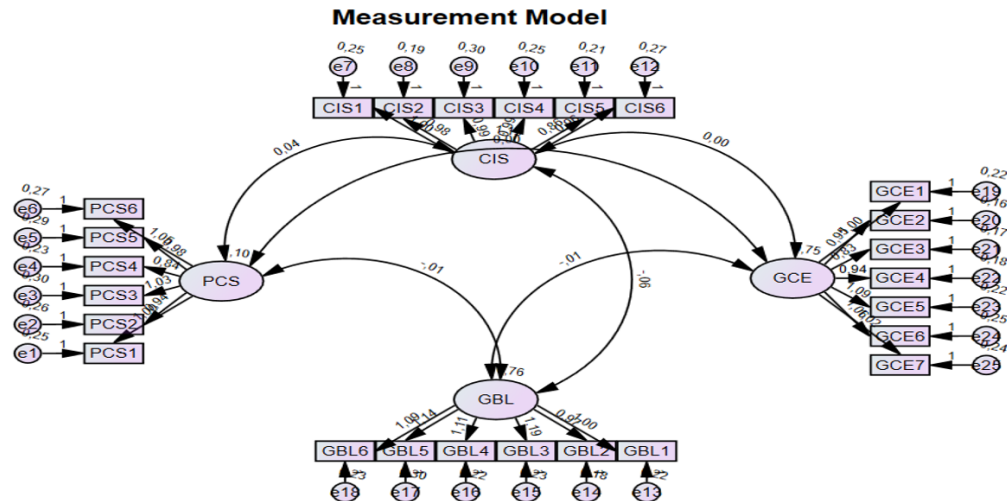


Figure 2. Measurement model

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Construct	Indicator	Load. Factor	Cron. Alpha	CR	AVE
Perceived Cultural Sustainability	PCS1	0.90	0.96	0.96	0.80
	PCS2	0.89			
	PCS3	0.89			
	PCS4	0.88			
	PCS5	0.89			
	PCS6	0.91			
Cultural Identity Strength	CIS1	0.88	0.97	0.96	0.80
	CIS2	0.89			
	CIS3	0.91			
	CIS4	0.90			
	CIS5	0.875			
	CIS6	0.89			
Green Brand Love	GBL1	0.91	0.96	0.96	0.81
	GBL2	0.92			
	GBL3	0.89			
	GBL4	0.91			
	GBL5	0.89			
	GBL6	0.89			
Green Customer Engagement	GCE1	0.88	0.96	0.96	0.78
	GCE2	0.90			
	GCE3	0.87			
	GCE4	0.89			
	GCE5	0.90			
	GCE6	0.88			
	GCE7	0.87			

Table 4 shows that the discriminant validity requirement is fulfilled. The square root of AVE for each construct is higher than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that perceived cultural sustainability, green brand love, cultural identity strength, and green customer engagement are empirically distinct. This result confirms that each construct measures a separate concept and can be used

appropriately in the structural model analysis.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Construct	PCS	GBL	CIS	GCE
Perceived Cultural Sustainability	0.893	-0.008	0.036	-0.005
Cultural Identity Strength	-0.008	0.901	-0.063	-0.016
Green Brand Love	0.036	-0.063	0.892	0.004
Green Customer Engagement	-0.005	-0.016	0.004	0.883

3. Structural Model Evaluation

Table 5 shows that the measurement model has a good level of fit. The chi-square, probability, relative chi-square, incremental fit index, and residual-based index values indicate that the proposed model is acceptable and able to represent the empirical data. After meeting the criteria for validity, reliability, and model fit, testing continued on the structural model to evaluate the direct relationships, mediation, and moderation between the constructs. Figure 3 presents a structural model that examines the influence of perceived cultural sustainability, green brand love, cultural identity strength, and the interaction effect between perceived cultural sustainability and cultural identity strength on green customer engagement.

Table 5. Goodness of Fit of the Measurement Model

Index	Cut-off value	Result	Evaluation
Chi-Square	Expected small	270.711	Acceptable
Significance probability	≥ 0.05	0.459	Good fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.005	Good fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.935	Good fit
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.922	Good fit
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	1.006	Good fit
TLI	≥ 0.95	1.000	Good fit
CFI	≥ 0.95	1.000	Good fit

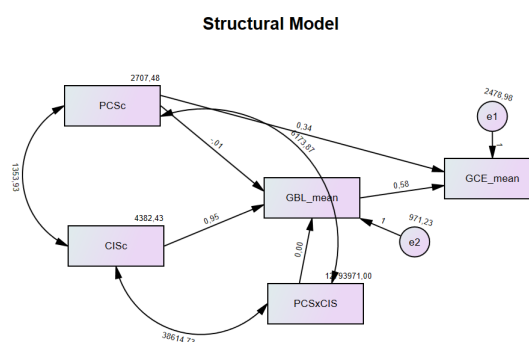


Figure 3. Structural Model

4. Hypothesis Testing and Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The hypothesis testing results in Table 6 show that perceived cultural sustainability has no significant effect on green brand love, indicating that cultural sustainability cues require stronger brand-level translation before they can develop into emotional attachment to eco-friendly hotel brands. However,

perceived cultural sustainability has a significant direct effect on green customer engagement, suggesting that customers may still engage with green hotel practices when they perceive cultural preservation as part of the hotel experience. Green brand love also has a significant effect on green customer engagement, confirming that emotional attachment encourages customers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement with green hotel brands (Hollebeek et al., 2023).

In terms of mediation, the insignificant path from perceived cultural sustainability to green brand love indicates that green brand love does not function as a meaningful mediating mechanism in the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement; the effect of perceived cultural sustainability is therefore more directly reflected in engagement than transmitted through brand affection. The moderation result provides a stronger cultural explanation because the interaction between perceived cultural sustainability and cultural identity strength significantly influences green brand love. This indicates that cultural identity strength conditions the effect of cultural sustainability: tourists with stronger cultural identity are more likely to interpret cultural sustainability cues as emotionally meaningful and translate them into brand love (Maduranga Arachchi & Samarasinghe, 2024; Maehler et al., 2025).

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses / Paths			Estimate	S.E	CR	P-value	Std. β	Result
PCSc	→	GBL_mean	-0.010	0.038	-0.266	0.790	-0.007	Rejected
GBL_mean	→	GCE_mean	0.579	0.043	13.515	<0.001	0.585	Accepted
PCSc	→	GCE_mean	0.343	0.059	5.818	<0.001	0.252	Accepted
CISc	→	GBL_mean	0.955	0.030	31.817	<0.001	0.883	Accepted
PCSxCIS	→	GBL_mean	0.002	0.001	3.702	<0.001	0.095	Accepted

Table 7. Direct Paths Required for Mediation Assessment

Path	Role in mediation	Estimate	C.R.	p-value	Std. Estimate	Interpretation
PCS_mean → GBL_mean	a path	-0.307	-3.382	<0.001	-0.223	Significant negative effect
GBL_mean → GCE_mean	b path	0.258	7.450	<0.001	0.261	Significant positive effect
PCS_mean → GCE_mean	c' path	0.224	4.406	<0.001	0.179	Significant positive direct effect

Table 7 shows that Green Brand Love does not positively mediate the relationship between Perceived Cultural Sustainability and Green Customer Engagement. Although Perceived Cultural Sustainability has a significant direct effect on Green Customer Engagement (Estimate = 0.224; C.R. = 4.406; $p < 0.001$), its effect on Green Brand Love is significant in the negative direction (Estimate = -0.307; C.R. = -3.382; $p < 0.001$).

Table 8. Indirect Effect of Green Brand Love in the PCS–GCE Relationship

Hypothesized mediation	a path	b path	c' path	Indirect effect	Std. indirect effect	Conclusion
PCS → GBL → GCE	Significant negative	Significant positive	Significant positive	-0.079	-0.058	Mediation not supported

Table 8 shows that the indirect effect of Perceived Cultural Sustainability on Green Customer Engagement through Green Brand Love is also negative (Indirect effect = -0.079; Standardized indirect effect = -0.058). Therefore, Green Brand Love is not supported as a positive mediating mechanism in the PCS–GCE relationship. These results suggest that cultural perceptions contribute more directly to customer engagement than through emotional attachment to green hotel brands.

Table 9 presents the moderation test of cultural identity strength in the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love. The interaction effect of PCS $\times$ CIS on GBL is positive and significant (Estimate = 0.002; C.R. = 3.702; $p < 0.001$; Std. $\beta = 0.095$). This result indicates that cultural identity strength significantly strengthens the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love. Although the direct effect of PCS on GBL is not significant after the interaction term is included (Estimate = -0.010; C.R. = -0.266; $p = 0.790$), the significant interaction term shows that perceived cultural sustainability becomes more meaningful for brand affection when tourists have a stronger cultural identity. The strong positive effect of CIS on GBL (Estimate = 0.955; C.R. = 31.817; $p < 0.001$; Std. $\beta = 0.883$) further confirms that cultural identity plays a central role in shaping tourists' emotional attachment to eco-friendly hotel brands. Therefore, cultural identity strength functions as a positive moderator in the proposed model.

Table 9. Moderation Test Results

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Std. β	Result
PCSc $\rightarrow$ GBL_mean	-0.010	0.038	-0.266	0.790	-0.007	Rejected
CISc $\rightarrow$ GBL_mean	0.955	0.030	31.817	<0.001	0.883	Accepted
PCSc $\times$ CIS $\rightarrow$ GBL_mean	0.002	0.001	3.702	<0.001	0.095	Accepted

Table 10 shows that the R^2 value for green brand love was 0.842, while the R^2 value for green customer engagement was 0.435. These values indicate that the model explains a very strong proportion of variance in green brand love and a substantial proportion of variance in green customer engagement. The model therefore works especially well in explaining the formation of brand affection, while engagement is shaped by additional behavioral and experiential factors beyond the current model.

Table 10. Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous variable	R2	Explained variance	Interpretation
GBL	0.842	84.2%	Very strong
GCE	0.435	43.5%	Substantial

Perceived Cultural Sustainability Positively Influences Green Brand Love

The hypothesis that perceived cultural sustainability positively affects green brand love is not supported by the research results. Based on the results of the structural model test, the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability (PCSc) and green brand love (GBL) showed a path coefficient of $\beta = -0.010$ with a t -statistic of -0.266 and a p -value of 0.790. This value indicates that the effect of perceived cultural sustainability on green brand love is not significant; therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

This finding indicates that tourists' perceptions of hotels' efforts to preserve and represent local culture do not directly form an emotional attachment to green hotel brands. Although tourists may appreciate cultural preservation practices as part of the hotel experience, these cultural values are not yet strong enough to develop into brand love. This suggests that cultural sustainability needs to be more clearly communicated and integrated through brand identity, service experiences, and emotional interactions with tourists to create a stronger psychological connection with green brands (Purwianti et al., 2025). These results also indicate that cultural sustainability does not always automatically translate into brand value among tourists. In other words, the existence of sustainable cultural practices needs to be supported by a branding strategy that connects cultural values with emotional benefits and personal experiences among tourists before it can foster a love of green brands.

The Influence of Green Brand Love on Green Customer Engagement

The hypothesis that green brand love positively influences green customer engagement is supported by the research results. Based on the structural model test, the relationship between green brand love (GBL) and green customer engagement (GCE) showed a positive and significant effect, with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.579$, a t -statistic of 13.515, and a p -value < 0.001 . These results indicate that the greater a traveler's love for a green hotel brand, the greater their engagement in the hotel's sustainability activities.

These findings indicate that emotional attachment to a brand is a crucial factor in driving traveler engagement. Travelers who feel love for a green hotel brand tend to pay greater attention to the hotel's sustainability practices, support various environmental programs, and engage cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally in sustainability-related activities. Thus, brand love not only reflects an emotional connection but also drives concrete actions by travelers in support of the brand's values and goals. These results align with the view that brand love can strengthen long-term relationships between customers and brands by increasing engagement, loyalty, and the desire to maintain a positive relationship with the brand (Javed et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2025). In the context of eco-friendly hotels, when travelers have built an emotional bond with a green brand, they are more likely to actively participate in the hotel's sustainability practices.

Green Brand Affection Mediates the Relationship Between Perceived Cultural Sustainability and Green Customer Engagement

Green brand affection mediates the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement. However, the results indicate that this mediation is not supported because the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand affection is not significant ($\beta = -0.079$, $p > 0.05$), although there is a significant positive relationship between green brand affection and green customer engagement ($\beta = -0.058$, indirect effect is not significant). This finding suggests that perceived cultural sustainability influences green customer engagement more directly than through the development of green brand affection. Although green brand affection remains an important predictor of customer engagement, it does not serve as the primary mechanism through which perceived cultural sustainability shapes green customer engagement in this model. Therefore, customer perceptions of a brand's commitment to cultural sustainability are more likely to directly drive active engagement, without first fostering a strong emotional attachment or brand affection (Junaid et al., 2020).

Cultural Identity Strength Moderates the Relationship Between Perceived Cultural Sustainability and Green Brand Love

Cultural identity strength moderates the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love, and the results support this hypothesis. As shown in Table 9, the interaction effect between perceived cultural sustainability and cultural identity strength (PCS $\times$ CIS) on green brand love is positive and significant (Estimate = 0.002; C.R. = 3.702; $p < 0.001$; Std. $\beta = 0.095$), indicating that cultural identity strength strengthens the positive influence of perceived cultural sustainability on green brand love. Although the direct effect of perceived cultural sustainability on green brand love becomes insignificant after the interaction term is included (Estimate = -0.010; C.R. = -0.266; $p = 0.790$), the significant interaction indicates that the impact of perceived cultural sustainability depends on tourists' cultural identity strength. Specifically, tourists with stronger cultural identities are more responsive to cultural sustainability cues, as they are more likely to perceive hotel practices that preserve local culture, respect local identity, and promote place-based sustainability as emotionally meaningful. In addition, the strong positive effect of cultural identity strength on green brand affection (Estimate = 0.955; C.R. = 31.817; $p < 0.001$; Std. $\beta = 0.883$) further confirms that cultural identity is a key factor in fostering tourists' emotional attachment to green hotel brands. Therefore, cultural identity strength helps explain when and for whom perceptions of cultural sustainability can be transformed into green brand affection, serving as an important positive moderator in the proposed model (Xiao et al., 2025).

Taken together, the findings show that perceived cultural sustainability is a relevant antecedent of green customer engagement, but its effect on brand affection depends on the strength of cultural identity. The study refines the application of Consumer Culture Theory to green hospitality by showing that

cultural meaning does not operate solely as a general destination attribute; it becomes more influential when customers interpret it through an identity-based lens. For hotel managers, the results suggest that cultural sustainability should be embedded into the guest journey through local architecture, storytelling, community collaboration, cultural products, and sustainability communication. For policymakers, green hotel development should include cultural sustainability indicators such as local community involvement, cultural representation, use of local products, respect for local architecture, and preservation of cultural knowledge.

IV. Conclusion

This study concludes that perceived cultural sustainability is important in explaining green customer engagement in eco-friendly hotels, primarily through its direct contribution to customers' willingness to engage in green hotel practices. The findings indicate that cultural preservation, local representation, and culturally grounded sustainability can encourage customers to pay attention to, support, and participate in eco-friendly hotel initiatives. This confirms that cultural sustainability should be treated as a substantive component of green hospitality engagement, rather than only as a contextual attribute of the destination.

Green brand love also plays a strong role in shaping green customer engagement. Customers who develop an emotional attachment to eco-friendly hotel brands are more likely to engage cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally with the hotel's sustainability practices. However, green brand love does not operate as the main mediating mechanism between perceived cultural sustainability and green customer engagement in this model. The effect of perceived cultural sustainability is more clearly reflected through its direct influence on engagement, while brand love functions as an important affective driver of engagement in its own path.

The study further shows that the strength of cultural identity strengthens the relationship between perceived cultural sustainability and green brand love. Domestic tourists with stronger cultural identity are more likely to interpret cultural sustainability cues as emotionally meaningful and translate them into brand affection. For eco-friendly hotel managers in *Bali*, *West Nusa Tenggara*, and *East Nusa Tenggara*, the findings suggest that green marketing strategies should connect environmental responsibility with authentic cultural representation, community involvement, and local identity. Future studies may examine additional affective and experiential mechanisms, such as green authenticity, trust, satisfaction, and perceived service quality, to explain how cultural sustainability becomes more strongly connected to green brand love.

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Declaration

The first author contributed to conceptualization, data preparation, analysis, and manuscript drafting. The co-authors, once finalized, should be listed according to their actual contributions to supervision, methodology, validation, and manuscript revision. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

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