



Exploring the Role of AI in Sustainable HRM

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ABSTRACT:

It is commonly read that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can substantially reduce resource consumption. This review aims to explore the Role of AI on the Sustainable Human Resources Management (HRM) practices within the hospitality industry. Adoption of AI within this sector is increasing and offers enhanced operational efficiency and sustainability. While on one hand AI offers the advantages of streamlining processes and reducing resource consumption, on the other hand it introduces challenges for HR including employee related concerns such as resistance to technology adoption and job insecurity. This literature review looks at 40 peer reviewed papers from 2014 - 2025 to examine the facilitation of HRM practices using AI in light of sustainability.

This review identifies recurring themes which include AI-induced stress, redefining HR roles, ethical considerations in AI implementation and tug between efficiency and human-centricity in practice. It explores the role AI can play in enabling sustainable HRM enhancing employee wellbeing, processes streamlining, reduction in environmental impacts, and alignment of HR policies with UN SDG's. Findings reveal that while AI adoption necessitated by Industry 4.0 has brought robots and automation and data driven decision making, the move now is towards responsible consumption and sustainability. AI adoption in hospitality employees may lead to both increased hospitableness and increased mistrust and job insecurity, hence human resource management need to incrementally and with stakeholder participation roll out AI in the march towards sustainable human resource management in the hospitality industry. This review could serve as a foundation to empirical investigation towards harnessing AI for responsible sustainable HR and transformation in the hospitality sector.

KEYWORDS: human resource management, artificial intelligence, sustainable human resource management, hospitality industry, literature review

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) stress the importance of responsible management in industries as environmental and social challenges rise globally. In their blueprint for peace and prosperity (UN, 2015) are clearly outlined SDG 8 '*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*' on decent work and economic growth, and SDG 12 '*ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*' on responsible consumption and production [1]. These themes are important for any industry when applying sustainability practices with an enhanced view toward economic, environmental, and social performance. This makes sustainability a non-negotiable part of organizational strategy, and by extension an important part of human resource management. The goals of every industry and organization have to overtly represent long-term commitment to resource efficiency, responsible management and equitable treatment of human and natural resources [2].

The labour-intensive hospitality industry plays an important role in economic growth and well-being [3]. In India this industry also faces unique challenges like skill shortage, high turnover thus amplifying need for innovative hr solutions [4]. In any organization, especially a service centric one like hospitality, it is the human element that is often the differentiating factor as the emotional connect remains in the customers memory [5], and as such it is proper management of human capital, that often defines an organization. Sustainable HRM goes beyond Strategic HRM by also integrating environmental stewardship, care for employees' well-being, and social responsibility within its practices. While Strategic HRM '*focuses on integrating all the entrepreneurial functions of the organisation with HRM, with the emphasis on its strategic role of setting and achieving the business goals*' [6] Sustainable HRM goes more ahead as '*sustainable HRM practices enhance organizational resilience and contribute to social, economic, and environmental sustainability*' [7]. By integrating such values within HRM, organizations can attract like-minded talent while contributing to broader societal objectives [8].

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been explained as machine that imitates cognitive functions of human mind like learning, problem solving [9]. Though first mention of AI in a research paper appears in 1984, only 16 papers of AI were published by 2000 [9] and henceforth the interest and articles increased to an extent that AI has now become critical in facilitating all activities in the form of tools that can make processes more efficient, scalable and greener. AI can automate repetitive tasks and enables creation of more personalized and relevant experiences for the human capital [10]. AI is emerging as significant enabler of transformation, not only by automating processes like recruitment and personalizing journeys in training but also with AI driven wellbeing tools as per Jiang (2018) [4]. In

HRM, AI and its application have great potential of upgrading and optimizing processes [11] such as recruitment without using superfluous resources and impairing the accuracy of talent selection. With the upside of efficiency and personalization also comes the downside of algorithm bias, data safety and job insecurity which could undermine employee psychological safety [12]. Psychologists discovered that while AI usage in recruitment was not demotivating for the job candidates [13], it could potentially increase employee turnover rates [14]. AI can facilitate real-time performance monitoring [15] along with predictive analytics that would allow companies to proactively address employee needs and reduce turnover while minimizing carbon footprint created by traditional HR operations.

Predicted in McKinsey's Leadership Development Trends report (2024), one of the main trends as '*Leveraging generative AI across business operations and scaling its applications*', adoption of AI in HRM has significant implications, and Bersin & Chamorro-Premuzic [16] assert that it offers a remarkable benefit for HRM.

While AI-driven tools are developing at a tremendous rate, the research into the AI role in advancing the field of Sustainable HRM has been scant to date, especially in the field of hospitality. Current literature reveals disparity in that industries like IT and education harness AI to reinforce sustainable HR practice [17] [18], hospitality sector research has lagged behind [3]. Because this is a human oriented and operations and labor intense field, it would be a unique setting for implementing Sustainable HRM but it could face complexity in managing the agenda of employee welfare versus sustainability goals. Choosing to study hospitality in a growing tourist and hospitality hub, India [19], is also very relevant because not enough studies have been published so far.

While published global literature explored the role of AI and its transformational potential in HR functions, there however is limited research published on how the shift intersects with sustainable HRM in the Indian hospitality sector. This paper aims to explore the role of AI in developing as well as implementing various sustainable human resource management practices in the field of hospitality; what barriers and concerns emerge and how does cross sectoral research inform this domain. The focus is on mapping published literature to inform local, grounded, sustainability aligned HRM based AI agenda. Basis the review of available literature, an attempt has been made to identify a few drivers, challenges, and likely outcomes related to AI-enabled Sustainable HRM, thereby the focus is on AI potential to align HR function with UN SDGs and facilitate sustainable organizational change in hospitality.

To explore the current standing of the subject, identify emerging themes and add a more rounded understanding which could be used to underpin ways in which AI might support the sustainability agenda in this sector, the

review aims to explore these primary areas of inquiry: (i) what are the thematic gaps in current research on AI integration into HRM in Indian hospitality sector? ; (ii) from academic view point what directions are recommended for future research based on this existing literature?

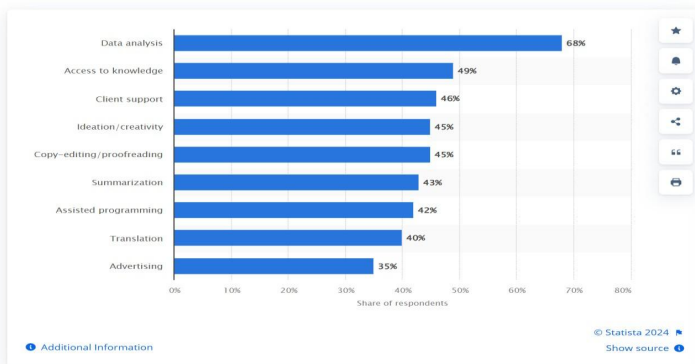
The study structure is the following sections: ‘background of the study’ which gives background and sets context for the literature review. ‘Methodology’ section which details the protocol used for the study. ‘Results’ section enlists the findings of the analysed research and the gaps. ‘Discussion and Implications’ discusses the limitations and implications of the study

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

2.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI):

From 1987 where Schank Roger defined ‘artificial intelligence’ as the ‘*science of endowing programs with the ability to change themselves for the better as a result of their own experience*’ to the integration of AI in daily life being discussed, in customer acquisition [20], in medical education [21], in redesigning interaction design [22], in forecasting external environment [23] to optimizing and managing decentralized renewable energies [24]. AI today is everywhere and in the field of hospitality the research has exhibited so far most interest in service robots [25] whereas lesser attention has been paid to service experience.

Exhibit 1: Applications of generative AI for internal processes by global travel companies 2024, Source: Statista (2024)



Applications of generative AI for internal processes by global travel companies 2024

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The power AI holds to transform hospitality, improving quality and efficiency to drive both growth and revenue is discussed by Huang [26] where the authors posit that the direct positive impact on consumers makes hospitality more responsive and customer-centric.

While much discussion has been done on the robot concierge which are powered by artificial intelligence and perform various tasks in front office, luggage storage, room service delivery, to assist with immediate responses and check-in check-out formalities and there exists published research which examines perceptions of tourists, their attitudes, loyalty and the satisfaction with services driven by artificial intelligence [27].

Ruel & Njoku [15] in 2020 introduce the "role-service-profit chain" framework and use it to analyze AI driven innovations and how this redefines employee retention, employee engagement, employee productivity and leading to quality service and customer satisfaction. They highlight that AI has the potential to enhance human resource management practices in hospitality using digital analytics and strategic talent management. The literature contributes a theoretical lens for assessing integration of AI into talent management and advocates for evidence based strategies to align using technology with organizations goals. Qiu [28], upon examining consequences of AI on the key players in hospitality, the front line employees (FLE) study how it empowers them mentally and emotionally and physically to facilitate hospitableness. Studying the consequences of AI enabled service attributes, and applying the theory of resource conservation, the conclusion is that *'carefully maintain Psychological job demand (PJD) at a reasonable level so that FLEs can work energetically and enthusiastically'*.

While examining the impact of awareness of artificial intelligence (AI awareness) on employee-outcome in the field of hospitality, Bakir [29] identify dual nature of AI as operational benefits contrast with challenges such as job insecurity and emotional exhaustion. This study advancing literature on psychological and operational implications displays a conceptual model of employee perceptions of AI influencing engagement and well-being and retention. The authors propose strategies to increase AI awareness to reduce turnover, improve engagement and balance efficiency with employee trust and adaptability.

2.2 Sustainable Human Resource Management:

Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) state that 'sustainability' has literally become a mantra in the 21st century, and under ever-increasing pressure, organizations such as Unilever took the lead to incorporate sustainability [30]. Sustainable management of human resources first makes an appearance in a research published in late nineties

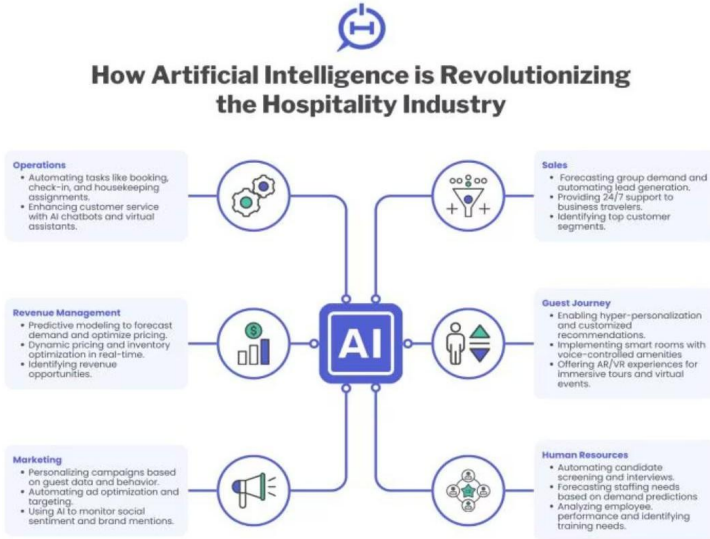
by Müller-Christ and Remer, 1999, and Kramer Robin in 2013 observe to date the research continues on the multi-level analysis like effect on individuals, effect on process management and interconnected HR tasks [31], effect on organization commitment [32], effect on society [33]. Another level of analysis of sustainable hrm in research seems to be on dimensions – economic, ecological, social and human [32]. Sustainable hrm is also discussed by Ehnert [30] in terms of perspectives of time i.e. short-term and long-term. Kramer, 2014 states that despite all the differing terminologies, all concur on the point *‘the human and social perspectives of organizations and the impact that human resources have on the success and survival of companies’*.

The sustainability perspective of HRM getting strengthened would *‘contribute to the positioning (or repositioning) of the internal People dimension, thereby improving its balance with the external People, Profit and Planet’* [34]. Implementation of sustainability in HRM should be aligned with achieving SDGs [35]. Sustainability and HRM still has gaps in research as per Macke & Genari [32].

2.3 Integration of Sustainability and Artificial Intelligence in HRM:

Integrating AI into Sustainable Human Resource Management initiatives in hospitality field shows the promise of HR practices getting aligned with organizational objectives as well as environmental and social goals. Use of AI in form of data driven insight for resource allocation, waste reduction and carbon footprint management would support sustainable hrm. Insights from AI help in crafting strategies to minimize environmental impact, while AI powered analytics track energy consumption patterns guiding formulation of sustainable hrm policies encouraging employees to adopt responsible energy practices [36]. AI systems can not just monitor and detect potential hazards in workplace but also monitor employee health data, identifying patterns and be used to generate personalized health recommendations. AI powered systems using sensors to detect and adjust temperature and humidity level [21] can enhances ergonomics for the employee as well as guests and decrease operational costs [37].

Exhibit 2: Infographic How Artificial Intelligence is Revolutionizing the Hospitality Industry, Source: Hollander (2025)



Chowdhury [38] elaborate that ‘workers want a simplified experience with AI at work, asking for a better user interface (34 percent), best practice training (30 percent) and an experience that is personalized to their behaviour (30 percent)’. Not only can AI identify stressors, engagement levels and communication patterns [39], but AI also has a very important role in employee training and development activities as it can be used to offer personalized training paths and real-time feedback. This keeps employee development aligned with organization objectives. Algorithms designed to focus on objective performance metrics help reduce discrimination and foster diversity, thereby aligning HR practices with the social dimensions of sustainability [40].

With AI automating most repetitive tasks, human resource team can focus on other aspects, leading to increase in their productivity [41] besides assisting in pin-pointing areas employee needs improvement, objectively measuring and making use of data and analytics [42] and making informed decisions on the same [38].

With artificial intelligence showing capacity to mitigate biases in human resource processes [43] like hiring and performance appraisals, it promotes workplace inclusivity and equity [44]. Having objective performance metrics in the algorithm reduce discrimination, therefore aligning HR practice with the social angle of sustainability. Predictive analytics using AI ensures HR forecast future skill requirements accurately thus ensuring long term sustainability of organization and employees.

The study background provides context for reviewing integration of AI into Sustainable HRM and how it empowers hospitality organizations moving towards operational efficiencies with an engaged, environmentally aware workforce with upholding ethical and social responsibility. Yet the intersection of AI with sustainable HRM is in nascent stage with Indian hospitality context and this study aims to explore how that gap can be addressed.

3. METHODOLOGY: DATABASE AND STUDY INCLUSION:

Meanings expressed through words form the basis of Qualitative studies [45] and meanings formed through studying numerical data constitute Quantitative studies [46]. Both were used in this review of literature. This study uses narrative review approach supplemented with identification of themes across widely accepted key databases such as Scopus.

Guided by the primary questions, deductive approach was used to filter out published papers from peer-reviewed journals available via databases like Google Scholar, Wiley, Elsevier ScienceDirect, and via EBSCO all made available to the scholar from the Institute. The criteria was literature published in top categories journals used for reference, and few books and online resources used to study the terminology and theory were read and added to bibliography. The literature search focuses on 40 peer-reviewed articles published in the last decade to maintain relevance and identify relevant gaps. Exclusion criteria include access to scholar, full article available online, non-English sources, technical studies with no HRM linkage, study not addressing sustainability aspects in HRM.

Keywords “Artificial Intelligence”, “Human Resource Management”, “sustainable HRM”, “hospitality”, “AI in HRM” and their combinations were used to find papers. The reviewed article were studied and analysed with context to Indian hospitality through analytical commentary.

4. KEY THEORIES:

While most studies are interdisciplinary and cover a variety of industries from manufacturing to IT to education and hospitality, the main underlying theories observed are:

4.1 Resource Based View:

The Resource Based View theory Barney (1991), Wernerfelt (1984) proposes that a firms competitive advantage

are those resources which are Valuable, Rare, Inimitable and non-substitutable and by this it can be highlighted how AI in hr practices can enhance competitive advantage by sustainable resource allocation [47].

4.2 Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R):

While the model used has two main parts, ‘job-demands’ and ‘job-resources’ which are leading to burnout/exhaustion to motivation respectively [48], here it has been used to explore how AI can impact employee well-being and hospitableness, in the form of AI driven scheduling systems generating optimized work shifts once employee preferences are added [49].

4.3 TAM (Technology Adoption Model):

This model by Davis (1993) posits that the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease of use up the acceptability factor for any tech change in the organization. Once AI awareness is heightened, then AI adoption would lead to adoption and support of AI tools [50]. This theory has been used to examine factors influencing employees acceptance of AI driven hr practices.

4.4 Sustainable HRM and Green HRM Frameworks:

Sustainable HRM and Green HRM frameworks emphasize on the integration of environmental, economic and social sustainability into the human resource practices. They are used as a lens to examine role of HR and AI in sustainability and SDG achievements [51].

Exhibit 3: Summary Table summarizing underlying theories used, Source: Developed by the authors

Theory	Relevance to study	Integration with theme
Resource Based View (RBV)	Details competitive advantage via people	AI can and enhances the strategic value of talent data
Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R)	Stress and motivation balance is explained	While AI reduces repetitive workload it could increase monitoring induced stress in worker
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Adoption of AI in HRM	Predict employee trust and the intent to use AI tool

Sustainable/ Green HRM	The eco-social focus of HRM	This guides ethical and environmentally sound integration of AI in HRM
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5. DISCUSSION:

A few drivers that enable adoption of AI in hrm in hospitality as per Panda (2023) are increased awareness of environmental and social issues, improvement in employee experiences, enhancing efficiency of processes [38] removal of bias due to data driven decision-making [52], and regulatory frameworks encouraging adoption of AI in all systems.

There are few empirical studies delving into challenges in adoption of AI in HRM in firms in hospitality [29]. Comparatively less research has been published on positive as well as negative outcomes related to AI- enabled Sustainable HRM in hospitality firms in Indian subcontinent. Mixed method and longitudinal studies to study impact of sustainable on triple bottom line [53] could be undertaken . Also, cross-country comparisons and longitudinal studies on adoption of AI in hospitality hrm is negligible in peer reviewed publications [54].

While literature exists linking AI and sustainable HRM, the outcomes of this adoption have not been studied at a large scale and published. Industries mainly concentrated in studies are IT, banks, education and in functions such as recruitment, selection, training and development with not much data and elaboration on other functions of hrm.

There is also very minimal research linking AI empirically to specific sustainable hr outcome like reduction in carbon footprint. Such measurable KPI's could include a reduction in onboarding time [39] and less paperwork reducing carbon footprint of HR function.

A future facing HR model need to integrate AI outcome with sustainability metrics such as reduced time to hire, reduced paper use with digital onboarding, employee wellbeing score [55] on AI implementation , employee feedbacks on fairness and ethics in AI use. It also needs to consider the dimension of employee's attributes while adoption of AI [44].

6. IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Theoretical Implications:

New dimensions in existing hr theories could be explored. The existing Job-Demand Resource model by Demerouti & other categorises working conditions as demands of job and resources of job. Here demands of job are related with exhaustion and resource relate to disengagement. However now with AI this balance gets modified, as automation of repetitive tasks reduces job demands and AI providing data driven decision making tools increases job resources. However AI integration introduces AI-induced-stress thus necessitating introduction of new variables to the model.

Role of AI as a competitive advantage could be explored. Studies could be framed on how personalized employee experiences alters leveraging of human capital. The existing theory of Resource-Based View, the competitive advantage is called as sustainable when the resource is Valuable Inimitable Rare and Organized for exploitation. Proprietary AI algorithms optimizing human resource activities and making them more sustainable could be researched and developed as the competitive advantage of the hospitality firm.

6.2 Practical Implications:

Balanced approach to AI implementation: the aim is to complement not displace humans, in a field like hospitality service is the differentiating factor and so is the human capital of the organization. To begin identifying the HR managers need to have interaction with all the stakeholders which includes employer, employee and AI business experts. Studies show five major perceptions in these stakeholders – divergent perspectives of fairness, accuracy of AI used, algorithms decision making is not transparent, algorithm cannot be interpreted by everyone, trade-off between productivity and human touch . Feedback loops to be set up so concerns and challenges can be addressed as they arise, improving the rollout of AI with each iteration/batch.

Training is the cornerstone of any successful implementation of new technologies. Beginning with the training of the hr team and continuous learning opportunities being made available to all employees. These could be workshops or on-demand modules so each one gets the opportunity to analyze and have hands-on experience with AI. Another important focus to be on ethical decision making using AI and data security.

Transparency builds trust in AI and in HR systems. There has to be a clear understanding of how the data driven decision making is leading to bias elimination and promoted by the use of artificial intelligence. All stakeholders need to be clearly communicated intended use and benefits of any AI application and their concerns regarding

how their data is collected, stored and utilized to be addressed in detail.

Ethical Guidelines promote ethical use of AI in sustainable and strategic HRM. Hospitality organizations need to be vigilant about the designing, deployment and the evaluation of the AI in their systems thus ensure data security, privacy, fairness and accountability mechanisms to be set in place for addressing errors or breach.

Monitoring of frameworks is necessary to optimize the benefits of artificial intelligence in sustainable HRM and moving to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations. AI enabled dashboards that track metrics like reduction of carbon footprint, turnover rates and employee well-being directly link to specific SDG's like the SDG 8 '*decent work and economic growth*' and SDG 12 of '*responsible production and consumption*'. Audits to measure efficiency of the set up system towards achieving sustainability and involvement of representatives from all stakeholders in monitoring these results to ensure diverse perspectives are taken into account.

7. PROPOSED FUTURE RESEARCH:

As move is towards Industry 5.0 where priority is towards sustainability the emphasis will move greatly towards human resource management initiatives enlisted as 6R policy of recognize, reconsider, realize, reduce, reuse, and recycle; research could be conducted on how AI integrates into this aspect of hr.

Ethics in AI in hospitality can be further delved in the context of hr. Also, agency of human capital in the implementation of AI systems, human centric, fair and sustainable system development are themes which can be considered further for research. Whereas, there will emerge new hr roles centering around AI adoption to increase sustainability in hospitality and this can be studied in future studies. Research can be conducted and organized as cross-sectional study of HR KPI's improved by AI implementation, alignment with various SDG's and ethical and environmental alignment of AI implementation in HRM functions, but also a long-term study of impact of these in Indian hospitality sector. Distinct future themes that seem underexplored in this context currently are AI-human collaboration and *cobots*, AI in DEI in Indian context or even algorithmic bias mitigation.

8. CONCLUSION

The ongoing move is from Industry 4.0, digitization and use of AI to enhance efficiency, towards Industry 5.0 where focus shifts to fairness, human centricity and sustainable development. As the focus of 5IR is focused around the three core of human centricity, resilience and sustainability, it ties in perfectly with the aim of sustainability.

While AI undoubtedly has potential of significantly impacting sustainable HRM by providing tools and insights to center employees' wellbeing, foster inclusive environments, and perform administrative work more efficiently, managers and organizations in hospitality should be cognizant of the drawbacks and the challenges of AI adoption. By embracing a responsible approach in implementing AI in HRM functions in hospitality with robust ethical guidelines, and prioritizing sustainable HR practices, managers and organizations can move towards a more equitable, fulfilling, and sustainable work environment.

Researchers need to move ahead of techno-optimism and examine critically ethical and cultural contexts of AI deployment in HR functions in hospitality, while practitioners could look to co-create AI tools with workers to ensure high trust and alignment with sustainability goals.

Abbreviations:

AI – Artificial Intelligence

DEI – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

HRM – Human Resource Management

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

SDGs – Sustainability Development Goals

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