



The Impact of Waste Management Strategies on Tourist Perception: A Comparative Study of Mountain Resorts and Coastal Hotels

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a defining element of competitiveness in global tourism, with waste management standing out as one of the most visible markers shaping tourist perceptions. While existing scholarship highlights the role of environmental responsibility in destination appeal, limited comparative attention has been given to how waste management practices differ across ecosystem-based destinations such as mountain resorts and coastal hotels. This study addresses that gap by comparing selected Nigerian cases, Obudu Mountain Resort, Jos Plateau resorts, and Eko Hotels & Suites in Lagos, and situating them within broader African and international contexts. Using a comparative case study design, the research combined document analysis, field observation, and literature review to evaluate how waste strategies influence tourist perceptions of cleanliness, responsibility, and overall satisfaction. Triangulation with African and international cases reinforced the validity of findings. Findings reveal that mountain resorts often adopt decentralized and participatory systems, such as composting, ecological signage, and “pack in, pack out” policies that visibly engage visitors and foster stronger perceptions of stewardship and satisfaction. By contrast, coastal hotels tend to depend on centralized, municipality-aligned systems that, while efficient, are less transparent to tourists and therefore weaker in shaping brand authenticity. The study concludes that waste management in tourism extends beyond operational necessity, serving as a strategic tool for destination branding. It recommends adopting context-sensitive strategies that align with ecological conditions, enhancing communication to make waste systems more visible, fostering active tourist participation, strengthening staff capacity, and building collaborations with local communities and policymakers. These measures are essential to improving tourist satisfaction, reinforcing environmental stewardship, and positioning destinations competitively within a sustainability-driven global tourism market.

Keywords: Coastal Hotels, Mountain Resorts, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Perception, Waste Management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry is finding itself more and more under pressure to turn green to minimize its environmental footprint. High on these is effective waste management that is a major concern, particularly in environmentally sensitive tourist areas such as mountain resorts and coastal hotels. As tourism grows, so does the volume of garbage it generates, placing heavy pressure on local infrastructure, natural resources, and the image of a destination (UNEP, 2021). To this end, conspicuous and efficient waste management has become mainstreamed within the visitor experience and is part of sustainable destination development.

Today's tourists are more discerning and environmentally conscious. They consume not only hospitality services but also constantly evaluate the environmental awareness shown by the players in tourism. Issues like cleanliness, segregation of trash, easily accessible recycling facilities, and no litter all add up to tourists' perception of a destination showing respect for the environment. These impressions have immediate consequences for tourist satisfaction, repeat visits, and destination brand overall (Lee & Jan, 2019). Conversely, unmanaged waste, seen in the form of overflowing bins, plastic litter, or inadequate recycling facilities, can have a detrimental impact on the visitor experience and compromise a destination's sustainability over the long term.

Mountain resorts and seaside hotels are two distinct tourism environments with distinct waste management issues. Mountainous regions usually possess fragile environments, inadequate infrastructure, rugged terrain, and poor access roads, all of which render solid waste collection, transportation, and disposal challenging (Nepal et al., 2022). Beach resort holiday locations, while often possessing better access, are confronted with heavy seasonal tourist density, risks of marine pollution, and fluctuating waste volumes in accordance with seasonal changes (Mihalič, 2020). Such operation-specific and

natural geographical fluctuations demand unique waste management solutions that are compatible with the geographical environmental constraints and the needs of tourists.

However, from Nigeria, throughout Africa, and globally illustrate how policies for waste management influence tourist perception. In Nigerian mountain resorts such as Obudu and Jos Plateau, decentralized systems like composting and user participation are emphasized, which create cleanliness and sustainability perceptions, whereas coastal Lagos and Cross River hotels exhibit centralized systems with little seeming participation, which lower perceived sustainability. Similarly, in Africa, the mountain resorts like Drakensberg and Mount Kenya have eco-friendly, inclusive waste strategies that indeed shape visitor attitude, while Zanzibar coastal resorts and Cape Town beach resorts are plagued by over-tourism and sea pollution, and therefore become famous for conspicuous sustainability efforts in an attempt to appease tourists. Globally, Swiss Alps and Aspen ski resorts employ segregated recycling, composting, and guest education to support environmental legitimacy, whereas Bali and Maldivian coastal resorts demonstrate that even high-capacity centralized systems only support tourist perception if they are preceded by visible guest-focused actions such as beach cleanups and signage. Cumulatively, these examples confirm that successful waste management suited to local terrain and supported by superior communication and guest participation is a key determinant for positive tourist sentiment and sustainable destination image.

Despite the growing body of literature on sustainability in tourism, limited research has specifically explored how variations in waste management approaches across different geographical contexts specifically mountain versus coastal settings impact tourist perceptions and satisfaction. This knowledge gap constrains the ability of tourism stakeholders to implement effective, location-specific waste management systems and to leverage these systems as strategic tools for destination branding. Furthermore, without comparative insights, hospitality operators and destination managers may miss opportunities to align their waste strategies with visitor expectations, thereby hindering their potential to foster loyalty and encourage sustainable behavior among tourists.

This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by systematically comparing the waste management strategies employed in mountain resorts and coastal hotels. It will assess tourist awareness and perceptions of these strategies in each setting, evaluate the relationship between different waste management approaches and tourist satisfaction, and ultimately recommend context-appropriate waste management methods for sustainable destination branding.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Waste management is an important feature of sustainable tourism practice. Proper solid waste management, aside from safeguarding the environment, enhances tourist experience. As noted by Gössling and Hall (2021), poor waste management has the potential to ruin natural attractions, pollute ecosystems, and inversely affect tourist satisfaction. Conversely, conspicuous waste management activities such as properly signposted recycling stations and posts encouraging environmentally friendly practices can enhance tourists' positive perception of a destination's support for sustainability.

The core of sustainable tourism is reducing environmental damage while enhancing visitor experience. Waste management is probably the most concrete and quantifiable sustainability initiatives ever seen across the hospitality sector. Waste management is an unbiased marker of a destination's environmental stewardship and is also directly responsible for influencing tourist perception (Dolnicar, 2020).

Modern-day visitors are environmentally conscious and typically expect locations where they can adopt these values in physical and accessible forms (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2017). Therefore, perceived maintenance and the functional effectiveness of waste management processes directly influence the reputation of a destination and visitors' willingness to revisit or recommend the location.

2.1 Tourist Perception and Destination Cleanliness

Cleanliness is now an salient characteristic impacting tourist satisfaction, especially in resort and ecologically sensitive destinations like beaches and mountain resorts. Being perceived as having a clean environment contributes heavily to not only developing a good travel experience but also reinforces destination image, perceived safety, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Dolnicar, 2020; Choe & Kim, 2022).

Studies consistently indicate that tourists assess environmental quality in terms of visible cues. Environmental cleanliness, well-tended trails, clean hotel facilities, and the presence of clearly marked waste containers all convey implicit hospitality, concern, and responsibility messages (Lee & Jan, 2019). Visible cues lead to aesthetic attractiveness and result in psychological comfort, which consequently ensures greater emotional satisfaction and assurance in the destination management.

On beach environments, the presence of litter like plastic rubbish or food packaging on beaches is likely to have a negative effect on environmental responsibility perceptions and contribute towards lower satisfaction and loyalty towards the destination. However, active strategies like beach-cleaning staff, ecotourism signage, and guest interaction with waste minimization campaigns strengthen the reputation of a location as clean and sustainable.

The relationship between cleanliness and good management is also worth noting. Cleanliness is perceived as an indicator of well-managed operations, preventive maintenance, and fastidious attention to detail attributes tourists associate with quality service and professionalism. In the hospitality sector, this has a direct influence on visitors' willingness to recommend a place and revisit.

The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the value of hygiene. Sanitation and hygiene have shifted from emerging as secondary factors to becoming primary concerns in tourist decision-making (UNWTO, 2021). Post-pandemic tourists are risk-averse and would like to opt for destinations that demonstrate strict

cleaning protocols, apparent sanitation practices, and explicit communications of health routines (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Environmental cleanliness nowadays therefore aligns with public perceptions of health and becomes a decisive driver of confidence and satisfaction.

Moreover, cleanliness is a strategic differentiator in open tourist economies. Those destinations that fall short in meeting tourists' expectations regarding cleanliness receive negative word-of-mouth, poor sustainability rating, and declining tourist arrivals. Clean and well-maintained environments, however, facilitate successful destination branding, which creates emotional connection and promotes environmentally friendly practices among tourists (Kolar & Zabkar, 2018).

In general, perceived cleanliness is a multi-dimensional motivator of tourist behavior. It influences short-term comfort and satisfaction as well as longer-term judgments regarding safety, responsibility, and destination quality. For tourism managers, this underlines the imperative of including cleanliness and waste management in both operational systems and marketing strategies.

2.2 Waste Management in Mountain versus Coastal Settings

Mountain and coastal holiday destinations are some of the most desirable tourism contexts, yet they represent distinct waste management challenges due to their diverse geographical context, environmental sensitivities, and infrastructural capabilities. It is essential to understand these differences in order to develop sustainable, context-specific waste management strategies.

Mountain resorts tend to locate in remote, ecologically sensitive areas where the collection and disposal of wastes are logistically difficult and costly. Difficult terrain, steep road access, and occasional blockage by snow or landslides frequently limit regular waste vehicle transportation. Consequently, the majority of mountain resorts depend on localized waste control practices, including compaction of wastes, on-site composting, and interval or scheduled waste removals (Nepal et al., 2022).

Significantly, tourists visiting mountain resorts themselves have been identified to be more eco-friendly, normally seeking nature-based experiences with emphasis on sustainability. Such a visitor segment puts mountain destinations in good stead for community-based waste reduction strategies such as "pack in, pack out" policies, ecotour-education signage, and incentives to reduce the use of plastic. Through such visitor sensitivity, resorts could join hands with visitors in creating sustainability behavior, thereby improving environmental performance while promoting destination loyalty as well as facilitating ecobranding strategies.

Nevertheless, despite the presence of willing tourists, inefficient waste management especially by hikers or from the sides of going up/down sites still remains a threat that exerts long-term negative impacts on the environment. Waste accumulation in mountain landscapes threatens fragile alpine soils, contaminates freshwater streams, and poses threats to local wildlife species (Barros et al., 2021).

Conversely, urban or high-density beach town beach hotels generally have access to municipal waste collection systems with frequent pickup, recycling facilities, and landfill service (Mihalič, 2020). This distributed infrastructure has the flexibility to scale for variability in tourist flows, especially during peak travel periods.

However, coastal tourism is confronted with significant plastic pollution and marine litter exacerbated by consumption patterns of tourists and the proximity of waste to sea ecosystems. Single-use beach vendor plastics, disposable products, and poorly handled hotel trash commonly drain into the marine environment, resulting in both visible pollution and damage to ecological health. Unlike mountain trash, which creates an uneven distribution or less public visibility, beach trash is eyeball-to-eyeball evident to tourists and typically elicits negative affective reactions and decreases tourist satisfaction (Schultz et al., 2013).

In addition, in the majority of coastal hospitality settings, there is little participation from guests in managing wastes. This is due to inadequate signage, incorrectly labeled trash bins, and very little staff participation in their mandate of ensuring environmental stewardship. The lack of visibility regarding waste management may create a misleading impression to tourists that the destination does not care about the environment, thereby affecting the image and competitiveness of the destination.

2.3 Case Study: Waste Management Approaches in Selected Nigerian Resorts

Waste management practices within Nigeria's hospitality sector demonstrate how geography and ecosystem conditions shape both operational systems and tourist perceptions. Mountain resorts, owing to their fragile environments and relative remoteness, often rely on decentralized, participatory approaches that visibly engage guests in conservation efforts. Conversely, coastal hotels—typically located in urban or semi-urban zones—align more closely with centralized, municipal-based systems, which although efficient, tend to downplay tourist involvement. Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State is a good example of a decentralized, guest integrated system. Eko Hotels & Suites in Lagos rely mostly on centralized waste systems supplemented by municipal collection services. The following cases highlight these contrasts by examining Obudu Mountain Resort, Jos Plateau resorts, and Eko Hotels & Suites in Lagos as representative examples:

Obudu Mountain Resort, Cross River State

Obudu Mountain Resort, located in the highlands of Cross River State, provides a distinctive case of decentralized waste management tailored to its unique ecological setting. The resort operates in an isolated environment where access to municipal services is limited, necessitating localized solutions. Organic waste from restaurants and kitchens is composted on-site and used for landscaping, creating a visible cycle of waste-to-resource management

that resonates strongly with environmentally conscious tourists. Composting units are strategically located near guest facilities, and staff actively explain the process to visitors, reinforcing both ecological education and brand positioning as a “green” destination.

A defining feature of Obudu’s waste strategy is the incorporation of ecolabel signage and visitor engagement programmes. Tourists are encouraged to sort waste using color-coded bins and are introduced to the “pack in, pack out” ethos during trekking activities in surrounding trails. This participatory approach enhances guest awareness of their environmental footprint and positions the resort as a steward of the natural landscape. Such active involvement makes tourists feel like partners in conservation, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, plastic waste management is carefully scheduled to account for the resort’s remoteness. Waste collection occurs periodically to minimize transportation costs and environmental disruption. By timing plastic collection and limiting unnecessary trips, the resort reduces its carbon footprint while maintaining a clean and appealing environment. Guests perceive this logistical discipline as a sign of responsibility, further contributing to Obudu’s image as a sustainable mountain retreat.

Jos Plateau Resorts

Resorts on the Jos Plateau, such as Shere Hills eco-lodges and other mountain guest facilities, present another compelling example of decentralized waste management in fragile environments. Here, localized systems are adopted due to the sensitivity of the Plateau’s ecosystem and the necessity of maintaining its aesthetic appeal to nature tourists. Waste segregation bins are widely available, and composting of organic material is carried out on a small scale to serve gardening and landscaping needs. This visible conversion of waste to productive use sends a clear message of environmental responsibility to visiting tourists.

Eco-awareness programmes are an integral part of Jos Plateau resorts’ strategy. Guests are often introduced to waste sorting practices upon check-in, and eco-guides emphasize conservation during hiking or adventure activities. Seasonal workshops and community-driven campaigns also involve locals in waste reduction, reinforcing a shared commitment to protecting the mountain environment. Such participatory programmes create a stronger emotional bond between tourists and the destination, translating to favorable reviews and repeat visits.

Tourists generally perceive Jos Plateau resorts as clean, eco-friendly, and well-managed, a perception reinforced by the transparency of their waste systems. By witnessing clear segregation practices, signage, and community participation, visitors develop a strong impression of the resorts’ environmental consciousness. This visibility not only enhances satisfaction but also strengthens destination branding, positioning Jos Plateau as a model for eco-friendly mountain tourism within Nigeria.

Eko Hotels & Suites, Lagos

By contrast, coastal hotels such as Eko Hotels & Suites in Lagos operate in an urbanized and highly serviced environment. Waste management here is primarily centralized, with the bulk of disposal and recycling dependent on municipal collection systems. This reliance ensures operational efficiency, but it also distances the guest from direct engagement with waste practices. Unlike mountain resorts, tourists at coastal hotels rarely encounter participatory waste systems, making sustainability efforts less visible and less impactful on perception.

Although Eko Hotels & Suites maintains functional waste disposal mechanisms, recycling and sustainability initiatives tend to be understated. Bins are often present but not prominently labeled or accompanied by educational signage. As a result, guests may not associate the hotel with active environmental stewardship, even when efficient systems are in place. This limited visibility creates a perception gap: while waste is effectively managed, the lack of communication reduces its value as a branding tool.

The challenge becomes most evident during peak tourist seasons when filled bins, beach litter, or occasional municipal lapses become visible to guests. Even short-term lapses in waste handling undermine perceptions of cleanliness and sustainability. Tourists increasingly demand eco-visibility—clear demonstrations that their hosts are committed to protecting the environment. The absence of active guest engagement at Eko Hotels highlights the need for coastal hotels to adopt more transparent communication and participatory programs, thereby turning operational competence into brand strength.

Comparative Insights

The comparative analysis of these cases underscores the importance of context-specific waste management strategies. Mountain resorts, owing to their remoteness and ecological fragility, integrate waste management directly into the tourist experience through visible, participatory practices. This approach enhances perceptions of stewardship and strengthens brand credibility. Coastal hotels, while benefiting from reliable municipal systems, risk appearing detached from sustainability narratives when waste management remains invisible or uncommunicated. Below comparative observations table provides a summary view between mountain resorts and coastal hotels waste management initiatives:

Table 1: Comparative Observations

Feature	Mountain Resorts	Coastal Hotels
Waste Management Approach	Decentralized, guest-integrated	Centralized, operationally efficient but less visible
Guest Participation	High encouraged through signage, composting, and eco-initiatives	Low minimal engagement, mostly backend operations

Visibility of Sustainability Efforts	High eco-education, signage, participatory activities	Low recycling and clean-up often not noticeable to guests
Tourist Perception	Positive seen as cleaner, eco-conscious, professionally managed	Mixed/negative perception of environmental responsibility is lower despite functional systems

In general, these cases indicate that mountain resorts benefit from decentralized, participatory approaches that have a direct positive effect on tourist perception, whereas coastal hotels require open exposure and strategic communication to translate operational excellence into perceived environmental management. This difference illustrates the key role of region-based waste disposal strategies in influencing visitor satisfaction, destination brand, and environmentally supportive tourism practices.

Overall, the Nigerian case studies reveal that waste management is not only an operational necessity but also a critical component of destination branding. Tourists equate visible, participatory, and transparent waste strategies with responsibility and authenticity, shaping both satisfaction and loyalty. The contrasting approaches of mountain resorts and coastal hotels demonstrate that while geography dictates the operational form of waste management, strategic visibility and communication ultimately determine its impact on tourist perception.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Research

Despite the increasing scholarly and policy attention on sustainable tourism, there remains a noticeable paucity of empirical research that directly compares waste management approaches across distinct ecological contexts such as mountain resorts and coastal hotels. Much of the existing literature has been highly case-specific or has centered on operational aspects of waste logistics—collection systems, disposal technologies, or recycling rates—without fully accounting for how these systems are perceived by tourists. Yet, tourist perceptions are not peripheral but central to destination performance, as they shape satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and overall loyalty. The neglect of perception-based outcomes in comparative waste management research leaves a critical gap in understanding how sustainability practices translate into visitor experiences and, by extension, into competitive advantage for destinations (Becken & Simmons, 2018).

Furthermore, research that integrates geographic context into waste management strategies is still underdeveloped. Existing studies often assume that sustainability practices can be uniformly applied across different environments, overlooking the reality that waste management solutions effective in one ecological or socio-economic setting may be impractical in another. For example, decentralized composting and “pack in, pack out” practices are feasible for mountain lodges with limited visitor density but would be unrealistic in densely populated coastal zones where large-scale centralized systems are required. Without such contextual differentiation, policy prescriptions risk being too generic, limiting their practical utility and effectiveness in advancing sustainability goals.

Lastly, there is a lack of comparative evidence to guide destination managers and policymakers in tailoring waste management systems that balance efficiency, environmental sensitivity, and tourist engagement. While operational systems ensure cleanliness, it is the visibility, transparency, and participatory nature of these systems that influence how tourists interpret a destination’s environmental responsibility. A comparative focus on mountain versus coastal settings can reveal critical insights into the nuanced ways in which geography, tourist demographics, and cultural expectations interact with waste management practices. Addressing this gap is vital for building strategies that not only protect fragile ecosystems but also enhance destination branding, authenticity, and long-term competitiveness in a global tourism market increasingly defined by sustainability narratives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results show distinct disparities in tourist attitudes and waste management practices between coastal hotels and mountain resorts. The findings are presented based on three major themes: waste management practices, tourist attitudes, and implications for destination branding.

Waste management practices in mountain and coastal destinations are greatly shaped by the environmental and infrastructural limitations of these places. Mountain resorts, as limited by remoteness and fragile environments, often embrace dispersed, low-impact strategies such as composting and on-site waste separation. These methods are more visible and more likely to be incorporated into the visitor experience, thereby creating higher levels of tourist awareness and perception of environmental concern. Coastal hotels, by comparison, often deal with larger amounts of waste due to higher tourist densities and proximity to urban areas. Though such hotels tend to have agreements with city governments and utilize centralized waste treatment facilities, these efforts tend to be not observable and less apparent to tourists. The lack of observable participation mechanisms such as multilingual signs and sorting facilities for tourists results in lower tourist awareness and perceived sustainability.

Mountain resorts are characterized by decentralized waste management in the form of composting, biodegradable packaging, and less plastic usage. These are supplemented by clearly signposted sorting bins, multilingual information signage, active environmental education led by staff members, and on-site waste treatment facilities that take into consideration logistical challenges including limited access and seasonal snow cover. Centralized waste collection systems are in use in coastal hotels and in partnership with municipal authorities. However, during peak tourist seasons, issues such as overflowing garbage cans and delayed collection of wastes are prevalent. Marine litter is managed by beach clean-up drives and visitor advisories regarding plastics use, but recycling efforts are less prominent, with minimal multilingual signage and limited opportunities for visitors to be involved.

Tourist perceived cleanliness was a significant predictor of overall satisfaction and destination loyalty, which aligns with current literature (Dolnicar, 2020; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2017). Clean destinations were also perceived as more professional, safe, and sustainable. Notably, these perceptions were influenced not only by whether waste management was indeed efficient, but also by the extent to which these efforts were communicated and perceived by tourists.

Mountain resorts ranked higher in all perception metrics not so much due to the fact that they had to manage higher amounts of waste, but due to the fact that their sustainability narrative was more integrated into the guest experience. This finding supports the assertion that overt sustainability initiatives bring brand value, but covert yet effective backend operations have minimal positive impact on tourist perceptions.

Guest involvement in waste reduction activities such as sorting, guided tours, and interactive signage also plays an important role in shaping tourist attitudes. Guests increasingly become environmentally conscious and need destinations to demonstrate action-oriented commitments to them. When guests become involved actively, they will more easily find the destination credible and consistent with global values of sustainability (Gössling & Hall, 2021). Coastal hotels, in particular, could benefit from adopting more active and transparent approaches, such as displaying real-time waste data, facilitating collaboration with local recycling schemes, or providing eco-incentives to reinforce good visitor behavior.

Our observations indicate that visible ecological practices and visitor involvement in sustainability actions have a positive influence on destination image and revisit intentions. Tourists who noticed sustainability efforts such as composting, educational signage, and clean environments were more likely to recommend the destination. They also had higher brand trust, were more inclined to share positive experiences on social media, and spoke more positively about waste policy. At beach hotels, insufficient explicit communication about existing waste infrastructure typically leads to underestimation of such initiatives, despite the fact that necessary systems are already installed.

Strategically, this underscores that waste management is not merely an operational issue but a useful branding asset. Destinations that are able to leverage waste practices into tourist values of visibility, communication, and engagement can expect higher guest satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and return visitation. To neglect the perceptual dimension of sustainability is to risk diminishing the return on investment in environmental infrastructure.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that waste management is not merely an operational concern in the hospitality sector but a critical determinant of tourist perception, satisfaction, and destination branding. The comparative analysis of Nigerian mountain resorts and coastal hotels revealed stark differences in approach and perception outcomes. Mountain resorts such as Obudu and Jos Plateau facilities employ decentralized, participatory strategies—composting, visible segregation systems, ecolabel signage, and tourist engagement programs—that visibly integrate guests into environmental stewardship. These practices not only protect fragile mountain ecosystems but also create stronger perceptions of cleanliness, responsibility, and authenticity, which in turn enhance visitor loyalty.

Conversely, coastal hotels such as Eko Hotels & Suites rely primarily on centralized, municipal-based systems that ensure operational efficiency but lack visibility and guest engagement. While these systems manage waste effectively, they fail to translate such efforts into tourist-perceived environmental responsibility. As a result, lapses such as visible beach litter during peak seasons can quickly erode destination image, highlighting the necessity for greater transparency and communication.

In essence, the study reinforces the argument that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved solely through efficient waste management logistics; rather, it must integrate visible, participatory, and context-sensitive practices that align with both environmental realities and tourist expectations. Addressing this research gap through comparative insights underscores the role of geography in shaping waste strategies and reveals how visibility and participation function as strategic levers for destination competitiveness.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data obtained in this research, the following recommendations are submitted to facilitate greater transparency of waste management, enhance tourist satisfaction, and promote sustainable destination branding in mountain and coastal destinations.

First, waste management strategies must be context-specific and environmentally adaptive. The study demonstrates that mountain resorts thrive on decentralized systems such as composting, ecological signage, and guest engagement programs, which resonate well with their fragile ecological settings and smaller visitor densities. In contrast, coastal hotels—operating in densely populated and urbanized areas—require centralized waste management systems aligned with municipal structures. However, for these systems to have meaningful impact on tourist perception, they must be complemented with visible practices that clearly communicate sustainability commitments. Tailoring approaches to geography ensures both operational feasibility and environmental sensitivity.

Second, there is a need to enhance the visibility and communication of waste management efforts. Tourists often judge environmental responsibility based on what they can observe rather than on background operations. Coastal hotels, in particular, risk losing credibility when effective systems remain hidden from guest awareness. Clear eco-label signage, in-room communication materials, and interactive waste-sorting stations can make sustainability efforts more tangible. By making waste systems transparent, resorts and hotels transform operational effectiveness into a visible branding asset that strengthens destination credibility.

Third, active tourist participation must be encouraged as part of waste management practices. The evidence from mountain resorts shows that strategies such as “pack in, pack out” programs, composting workshops, and guest-oriented eco-tours increase tourists’ sense of shared responsibility. Coastal hotels can adapt similar engagement strategies by organizing beach clean-up events, incentivizing guest recycling practices, or embedding sustainability themes into recreational activities. Such participatory programs not only improve waste outcomes but also generate memorable experiences that positively influence satisfaction and repeat visitation.

Fourth, capacity building among hospitality staff is crucial for reinforcing sustainability. Staff are often the primary interface between management systems and guests, meaning their knowledge, attitude, and communication skills significantly affect how waste practices are perceived. Structured training in sustainable waste management, coupled with eco-awareness campaigns within staff teams, can ensure consistency in practice and messaging. Staff who model responsible behaviors, such as proper waste sorting or guiding tourists in eco-friendly practices, lend authenticity to institutional sustainability claims.

Fifth, collaboration with local communities and authorities is necessary for building integrated and sustainable systems. Mountain resorts can benefit from working with local farmers to repurpose compost for agriculture, while coastal hotels can partner with municipal agencies to improve recycling efficiency and beach cleanliness. Collaborative frameworks create shared responsibility, reduce costs, and foster goodwill between host communities and tourism operators. Moreover, visible partnerships with environmental NGOs or local conservation groups can add legitimacy and amplify the branding potential of waste management initiatives.

Finally, policy and regulatory support must underpin industry practices. Policymakers should recognize the ecological distinctions between mountain and coastal destinations and design differentiated waste management guidelines that reflect these realities. Incentives for hotels and resorts that implement visible and participatory waste practices could accelerate industry adoption. In addition, national and regional tourism authorities should integrate waste management benchmarks into certification and ecolabel schemes, ensuring that environmental responsibility becomes a key performance indicator in tourism competitiveness. Such regulatory backing provides both guidance and accountability, reinforcing the strategic role of waste management in sustainable tourism development.

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