

Sustainable Coastal Tourism and Green Hotel Management Practices: Balancing Environmental Conservation, Visitor Experience, and Local Economic Development

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ABSTRACT:

Sustainable coastal tourism requires tourism-sector establishments to protect environmental resources while maintaining visitor satisfaction and supporting local economies. This study examined the relationships among integrated green management and environmental conservation, visitor experience, and local economic development using a cross-sectional secondary analysis of an open-access dataset comprising 320 tourism-sector establishments and 44 sustainability indicators. Composite constructs were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure, Bartlett's test, correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, and bootstrap mediation with 5,000 resamples. The integrated green management and environmental conservation construct showed excellent reliability ($\alpha=0.912$), as did visitor experience ($\alpha=0.909$), while local economic development showed good reliability ($\alpha=0.815$). Green management and environmental conservation were positively associated with visitor experience ($r=0.234$, $p<0.001$), and visitor experience was positively associated with local economic development ($r=0.310$, $p<0.001$). The integrated green management construct was not significantly associated with local economic development after adjustment ($\beta=0.067$, $p=0.235$). Visitor experience remained significantly

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associated with local economic development ($\beta=0.301$, $p<0.001$), and bootstrap analysis identified a significant indirect association through visitor experience (indirect $\beta=0.068$, 95% CI 0.030-0.111). These findings suggest that the relationship between environmental practices and reported local economic outcomes may operate mainly through visitor experience. Coastal tourism policies should integrate credible green operations, guest communication, local employment, and ecosystem protection. The findings should be considered transferable to coastal tourism rather than direct coastal evidence because the original establishments were located in an inland tourism setting.

Keywords: Sustainable coastal tourism, green hotel management, environmental conservation, visitor experience, local economic development

1. Introduction

The visit economy is a significant component of coastal tourism, and its expansion is putting a strain on vulnerable coastlines, marine ecosystems, water supplies, waste infrastructure, and local communities. The accommodation sector is a key area of this challenge as it has an impact on energy use, water needs, material use, waste generation, employment, local procurement, and visitor experience. Green hotel management has thus gone beyond an environmental-only programme and turned into a strategy that combines operating efficiency with stakeholders' needs and demands, service quality, destination resilience, and economic results. Studies on Sustainable Hotel Management have demonstrated that successful sustainable hotel management requires collaboration between all stakeholders: owners, employees, guests, suppliers, regulators, and local communities, and leads to better results when the environment-related actions of the hotel are integrated into the systems of the hotel, not just seen as separate activities [1].

Consciousness of environmental responsibility is influencing the behaviour of visitors. People can assess accommodations based on their physical actions to recycle, save energy, use local providers, decrease plastic use, and support the environment, in addition to their cost, comfort, and service. Several studies regarding green hotels have shown that people's approach behavior and willingness to act sustainably can be affected by their values for the environment, perceived benefits, and trust in green claims [2]. The outcomes are particularly relevant in developing destinations where awareness of sustainability might not be uniform, and management systems may be limited by lack of finance, poor infrastructure, and lack of institutional

support. Research studies conducted at hotels in developing countries suggest that cultural norms, management commitment, and employee consciousness are the factors that can either facilitate or challenge the integration of the tenets of sustainability into the hotel's day-to-day operations.

Sustainability and the relationship between sustainability and hospitality performance are not limited to operational savings. Environmental activities have the potential to influence the significance of the brand, authenticity, and trust. When guests are convinced that a hotel's sustainability claims are legitimate and match its brand personality, the advantages of adopting a green positioning are greater, but if the degree of integrity is low, the value of green positioning can be diminished [4]. Evidence from the environment has also demonstrated that there is a way to have high-quality hospitality while at the same time being resource efficient, reducing waste, engaging with the local people, and being sensitive to biodiversity [5]. Cognitive and affective hotel image can be further enhanced using the green strategies, thereby generating positive pre-service perceptions [6].

Communication is a key determinant in making environmental practices 'visitor responses'. If sustainability measures are not clearly understood, staffed to show how they are implemented, and are not being exaggerated by the hotel, guests probably won't recognize them. The environmental communication has been linked to increased behavioral intentions regarding sustainable lodging choices, along with the guests' concern for the environment [7]. In addition, environmentally responsible practices

can foster green satisfaction that can motivate customer citizenship behaviours like cooperation, positive word of mouth, and voluntary support of the hotel's sustainability programmes [8]. Visitor experience can consequently be seen as a vehicle with which green management can impact business performance and destination-level benefits.

These interactions are heightened in the coastal context. Small-island and shoreline communities may have restricted waste-disposal facilities, a need for marine resources, sensitivity to biodiversity, seasonal overcrowding, and climate change risks. Studies of public perceptions on the islands illustrate that both residents and visitors are aware of the economic benefits of tourism as well as the environmental drawbacks, especially when the environment and infrastructure are stressed by tourism [9]. Several studies on nautical tourism and green coastal infrastructure have focused on the coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and other natural resources as ecological systems and pillars of the competitiveness of the tourism system [10]. If tourism development is beyond environmental capacity, it can reduce the resources on which the attractiveness of a tourism destination depends, and that is why integrated approaches to sustainability are necessary when considering a balance between tourism development and conservation [11].

Local economic development is a key factor of this balance as well. A sustainable tourism that is more defensible, when the benefits are kept within the host community by employment, local purchasing, the participation of small businesses, cultural preservation, and community participation. The experience of tourism as a social enterprise has already been proven to be possible in the community-based tourism research conducted in coastal areas, where the actors of the local community are involved in both ownership and profit sharing as well as the protection of the environment [12]. This current research investigated the relationships between the green hotel management practices, the conservation of the environment, the experience of the visitors, and the conservation of the local economy. It was intended to find out if there was such a correlation between sustainable accommodation practice and greater visitor outcomes, and whether the visitor experience was a 'bridge' between the environmental management and broader socio-economic and economic gains.

Objectives of the study:

- 1.To assess green hotel management and environmental conservation practices across tourism accommodation establishments.
- 2.To examine the relationship between green

management practices and visitor experience.

- 3.To determine whether visitor experience mediated the association between green management and local economic development.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design and Data Source

The study was based on an open-access and cross-sectional secondary data set that consisted of 320 tourism businesses located in seven municipalities in Santander, Colombia, gathered from February to July 2025 [13]. The unit of analysis in the unit was the individual establishment. The data consisted of 44 sustainability indicators, descriptive variables, a codebook, a bilingual questionnaire, and data files in CSV and Excel format. The measured domains were thought to be relevant to coastal tourism, although the establishments were not situated in coastal areas. Coastal interpretation was hence not considered empirical but rather indirect.

2.2 Study Population and Eligibility Criteria

Establishments were considered as representative of the tourism sector if they had an owner, manager, administrator, or other knowledgeable individual representing them. Hotels, hostels, apartments, glamping sites, tourism operators, and travel agencies were included in the establishments. Records were eligible if they had valid answers that were necessary to construct composite scores. Duplicate records, invalid responses, missing data, and incomplete data were removed. There were 320 records, which all met the requirement for inclusion and were retained.

2.3 Variables and Operational Definitions

The construct of the integrated green management and environment conservation consisted of sustainable mobility, waste recycling, use of renewable energy, and biodiversity protection, the second of which served as the independent variable. The proposed construct for management only did not remain due to a lack of internal consistency. Visitor experience was measured as a 3-item mediating construct, and local economic development was measured by 7 economic and community-related indicators, with the primary outcome being local economic development. Establishment category and number of years in operation were considered as covariates, and Municipality as a group comparison. Retained items are used to construct composite scores, and higher scores represent better performance.

2.4 Data Preparation and Quality Assessment

Duplicate and missing records, inconsistencies in

coding, and invalid responses were checked for in the data set. The codes were validated with the variable labels and reverse-coded when necessary. Descriptive statistics and graphical methods were used to examine distributions, and the standardized score and interquartile range were used to determine outliers. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess the sampling adequacy and construct suitability. Items that measure items within reliable constructs were used to generate composite scores.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

Categorical variables were summarized as frequencies and percentages, and continuous variables as means and standard deviations. Composite scores were compared across establishment categories and municipalities using one-way ANOVA with eta-squared effect sizes. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression assessed unadjusted and adjusted relationships, controlling for establishment category and years of operation. Bootstrap mediation with 5,000 resamples tested the indirect association between integrated green management and local economic development

through visitor experience. Indirect effects were significant when the 95% bootstrap confidence interval excluded zero. Analyses were performed in Python, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant.

3. Results

3.1 Data Completeness and Sample Characteristics

The number of records retained for analysis was 320 out of all of the 320 records. There were no duplicate observations, missing values, or responses outside of the 7-point scale. Hotels (36.6%) were the most common type of accommodation, followed by hostels (21.9%), apartments (13.8%), glamping establishments (12.2%), tourism operators (9.4%), and travel agencies (6.3%). San Gil (30.9%), Barichara (24.7%), and Socorro (20.9%) had the highest percentage of establishments. In terms of operating time, 26.6% operated for 5-8 years, and 20.3% operated for over 8 years. The sample and operational characteristics of the tourism establishments are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics of the accommodation establishments

Characteristic	n	%
Total sample	320	100.0
Hotels	117	36.6
Hostels	70	21.9
Apartments	44	13.8
Glamping establishments	39	12.2
Tourism operators	30	9.4
Travel agencies	20	6.3
San Gil	99	30.9
Barichara	79	24.7
Socorro	67	20.9
Curití	34	10.6
Valle de San José	17	5.3
Charalá	14	4.4
Pinchote	10	3.1
Less than 1 year in operation	89	27.8
1–4 years in operation	81	25.3
5–8 years in operation	85	26.6
More than 8 years in operation	65	20.3

3.2 Reliability and Construct Validity

The proposed six-item management-only construct was not used in the main analysis because of poor

internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.363$). The integrated construct of green management and environmental conservation, which consisted of

four items (sustainable mobility, waste recycling, utilization of renewable energy, and protection of biodiversity), was retained. The internal consistency of this construct was good (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.912$). The reliability of the constructs of the visitor experience and local economic development was

also very good (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.909$ and 0.815 , respectively). All constructs that were retained had Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin values of 0.736 – 0.856 and Bartlett's tests of sphericity that were statistically significant. The reliability and construct-validity statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability and construct-validity statistics

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	KMO	Bartlett χ^2	df	p
Proposed management-only construct	6	0.363	N/A	N/A	N / A	N/A
Green management and environmental conservation	4	0.912	0.856	877.44	6	<0.001
Visitor experience	3	0.909	0.736	665.87	3	<0.001
Local economic development	7	0.815	0.815	1588.83	21	<0.001

3.3 Descriptive Statistics of the Sustainability Domains

The mean green, management, and environmental conservation score was 4.14 ± 0.78 . The highest item score was for waste recycling, and the lowest was for biodiversity protection. The mean of the visitor experience score was 4.92 ± 0.89 , and the tourist satisfaction had the highest individual mean. The

highest Composite score (5.14 ± 0.59) was for local economic development. In this domain, the mean score for the variables of occupancy stability or improvement was the highest, and the lowest was support for cultural events. The mean scores of the three main sustainability domains are shown in Figure 1, and descriptive statistics are in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the principal constructs and indicators

Variable	Mean	SD
Green management and environmental conservation composite	4.14	0.78
Sustainable mobility	4.36	0.99
Waste recycling	4.44	0.85
Renewable energy use	3.99	0.90
Biodiversity protection	3.78	0.75
Visitor experience composite	4.92	0.89
Environmental certification	4.57	0.91
Tourist satisfaction	5.32	1.02
Repeat visitation or recommendation	4.88	0.96
Local economic development composite	5.14	0.59
Local economic contribution	5.21	0.93
Direct local employment	5.42	0.88
Occupancy stability or improvement	5.79	0.94
Resident satisfaction	5.53	0.84
Support for cultural events	4.62	0.79

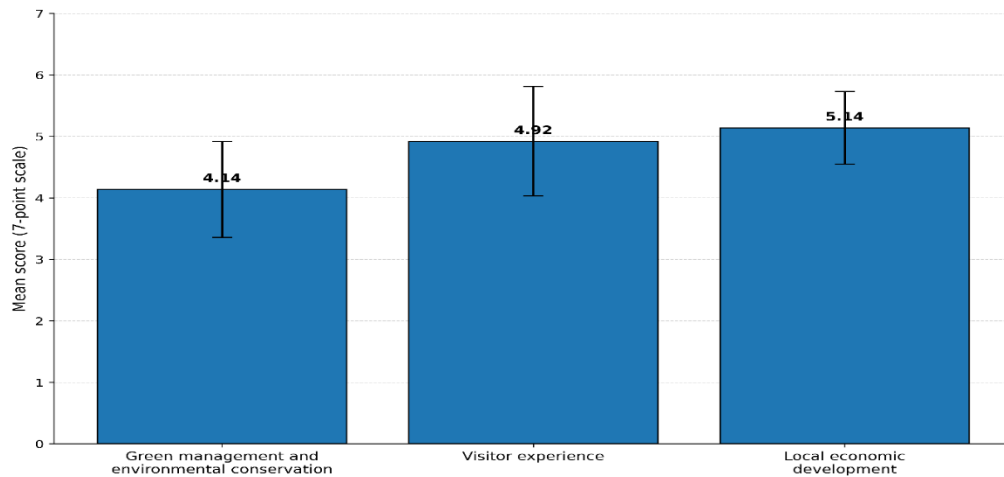


Figure 1. Mean Scores of the Principal Sustainability Domains

3.4 Correlation Analysis

Visitor experience and green management/environmental conservation were positively correlated ($r=0.234$, $p<0.001$). Local economic development was also correlated with the experience that visitors had, with $r=0.310$, $p<0.001$.

The correlation between green management and the environment and local economic development was insignificant, low, and not significant ($r=0.072$, $p=0.198$). There is a correlation pattern between the eight sustainability indicators, as shown in Figure 2.

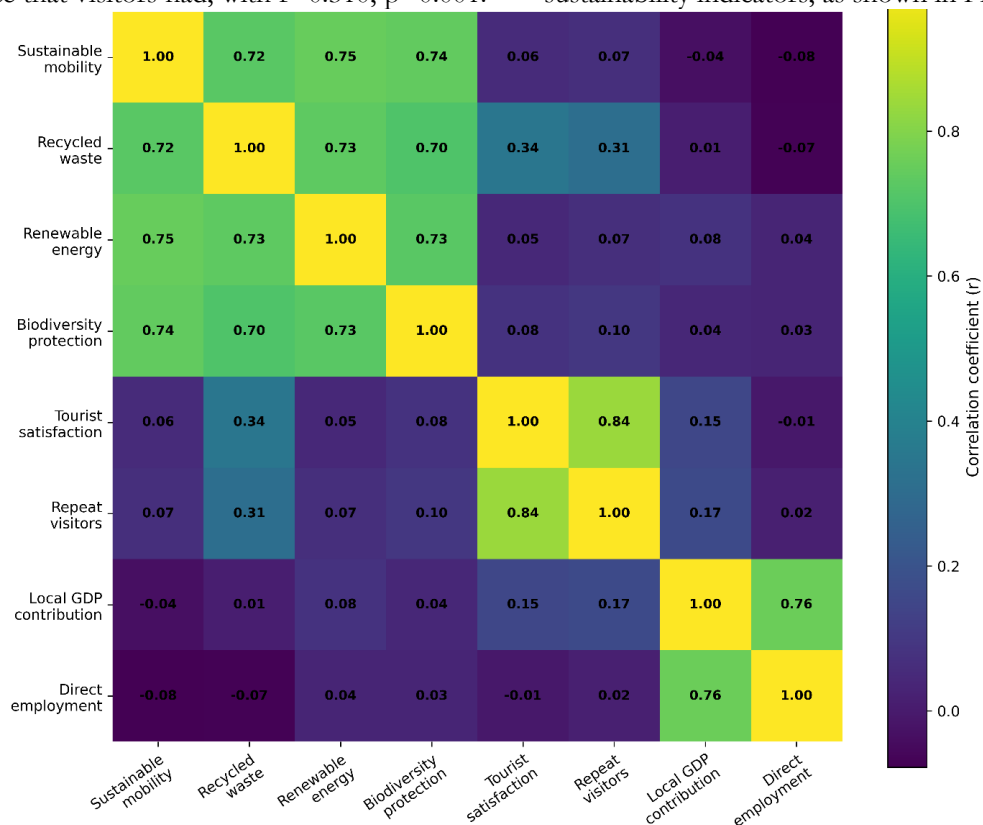


Figure 2. Correlation Heatmap of Eight Key Sustainability Variables

3.5 Regression and Mediation Analysis

Green Management and Environmental Conservation had a significant impact on visitor experience after adjustment for establishment category and years of operation ($\beta=0.225$, 95% CI: 0.118–0.332, $p<0.001$). Visitor experience was also

greatly associated with hotel status ($\beta=0.276$, $p=0.015$), but not with years of operation ($\beta=0.040$, $p=0.460$). The model accounted for 7.5% of the variance of visitors' experience. In the adjusted model, green management and environmental conservation had a negative

association with local economic development, but it was not significant ($\beta = -0.067$, 95% CI: -0.177 to 0.044 , $p = 0.235$). Visitor experience was no longer statistically significant when added to the model ($\beta = -0.001$, 95% CI: -0.109 to 0.107 , $p = 0.986$), but local economic development was still statistically significant ($\beta = 0.301$, 95% CI: 0.192 – 0.410 , $p < 0.001$). The observed variance in local economic development was accounted for by the final model, which explained 10.1% of the variance. The 5,000 re-sampling bootstrap mediation analysis revealed that the relationship between green management and environmental conservation on local economic

development was indirect, with a significant indirect effect pathway from green management to visitor experience (via green management) to environmental conservation (via visitor experience) ($\beta = 0.068$, 95% bootstrap CI: 0.030 – 0.111). The confidence interval did not contain zero, which indicated a mediation pattern of indirect only. The overall and direct effects were not significant. The standardized direct and indirect effects are shown in Figure 3, and the regression and mediation results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression and mediation results

Outcome or effect	β	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	p	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Green management → visitor experience	0.225	0.118	0.332	<0.001	0.075	0.066
Hotel status → visitor experience	0.276	Not reported	Not reported	0.015	N/A	N/A
Years in operation → visitor experience	0.040	Not reported	Not reported	0.460	N/A	N/A
Green management → local economic development	0.067	-0.044	0.177	0.235	0.017	0.007
Visitor experience → local economic development	0.301	0.192	0.410	<0.001	0.101	0.089
Green management direct effect after mediation	-0.001	-0.109	0.107	0.986	N/A	N/A
Green management total effect	0.067	Not reported	Not reported	0.235	N/A	N/A
Indirect effect through visitor experience	0.068	0.030	0.111	<0.05	N/A	N/A

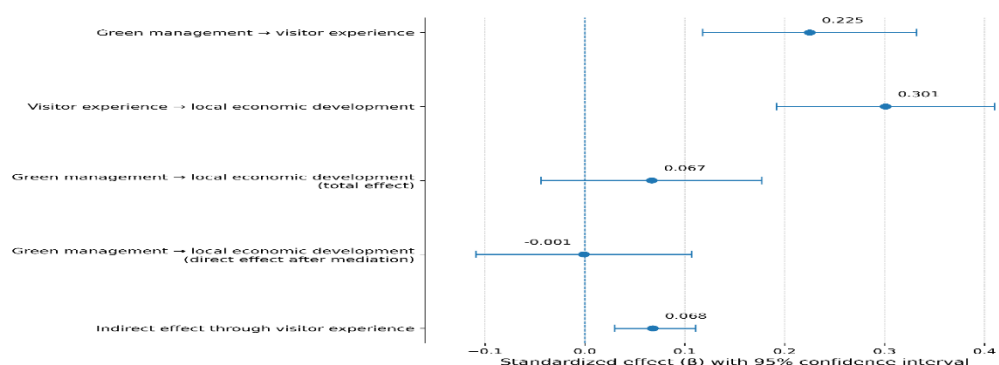


Figure 3. Standardized Regression and Mediation Effects Linking Green Management, Visitor Experience, and Local Economic Development

3.6 Group Comparisons and Principal Findings

There was no significant difference among the establishment categories in the scores for green management and environmental conservation, $F(5,314) = 0.75$, $p = 0.590$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. The category of

establishment did not significantly differ in local economic development either, $F(5,314) = 0.77$, $p = 0.575$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. While small, there were significant differences in the visitors' experiences by establishment categories, $F(5, 314) = 2.47$, p

= 0.033, $\eta^2 = 0.038$. There were no significant differences found between municipalities in terms of green management and environmental conservation ($F(6,313) = 0.52$, $p = 0.795$), visitor experience ($F(6,313) = 0.68$, $p = 0.669$), or local economic development ($F(6,313) = 1.28$, $p = 0.266$). The results point to an indirect relationship between green management and local economic development via experience with the area, rather than a strong direct relationship.

4. Discussion

The following analysis uncovered an indirect sustainability link between green hotel management and environmental conservation and local economic development via visitor experience. Visitor experience was found to be positively related to green management and environmental conservation, and was the independent predictor for local economic development. However, it was not found that there is a direct link between green management and economic development after introducing the variable of visitor experience in the model; the direct link was not statistically significant. This pattern suggested that there might be economic value created by the use of environmental practices if these are acknowledged, appreciated, and reacted to by visitors. Although the effects of green certificates on purchasing decisions will rely on the awareness and trust of the customers in the certification systems, the certificates could serve to give tangible and visible information about the credibility of environmental claims.

The integrated green management and environmental conservation were very reliable, and had sustainable mobility, waste recycling, renewable energy use, and protection of biodiversity as part of them. The highest mean score was for waste recycling, while the lowest mean score was for biodiversity protection. The distribution implies that the practices of the accommodation establishments could be implemented with lower operational effort and therefore would be preferable to other practices that need external coordination, specialized knowledge, and long-term planning of the ecosystems. While the benefits of greening can be efficiency, reputation, and market differentiation, these can be dependent on, and can lead to, operational flexibility, working together with suppliers, government bodies, community groups, and other tourism bodies [15]. Notably, there was no significant difference between the categories of establishments either, suggesting that sustainability issues did not only pose a challenge for one type of accommodation.

The low correlation between the concepts of green

management and local economic development does not imply that environmental practices are not relevant to the economy. There are interdependencies and lag times between tourism and environmental systems. The investment in the environment could lead to higher initial costs, but benefits could be gained from destination image, tourist loyalty, lower consumption of resources, and a better relationship with stakeholders. The experience of other regions has revealed that there is a tendency for the growth of tourism and environmental quality to be uneven in the absence of coordinated tourism governance, infrastructure, and environmental capacity at the regional level [16]. Surprisingly, variation in local economic development due to environmental management was not the predominant factor in this study, given this interpretation.

The mediating mechanism that arose as a central theme was visitor experience. The higher the level of sustainability practices, the greater the level of tourist satisfaction, repeat visitation, recommendations, and certification results. The results of the visitors' experience showed a positive association with the occupancy, employment, tourist spending, resident satisfaction, and cultural benefits. Tourism can be a source of economic growth and can lead to environmental degradation if it is not accompanied by policies and measures that are resource-efficient and include environmental protection [17]. Based on the present results, it can be concluded that the tension can be mitigated by embedding environmental responsibility in the business service experience instead of considering it as an administrative task in the business.

The relationship between environmental management and the visitors' experience was positive but weak, as it was just a part of the visitors' evaluation. Other factors such as service quality and accessibility, comfort, price, authenticity, and destination characteristics may also impact satisfaction and loyalty. Green practices can be more powerful if they are visible to guests, and if they are transparent and actually believed to be the "right thing to do." The evidence from green hotels has demonstrated that the psychological assessment and the set of green characteristics can be used to foster customer loyalty, rather than only one green characteristic [18]. Hotels should clearly convey the initiatives that are being pursued in the environment and tie them to real benefits for guest satisfaction, amenities in the destination,

and the community.

The strong indirect effect was consistent with the hypothesis that one's perceptions of sustainability can be a driver of increased guest loyalty and economic value creation via repeat visitation and positive referrals. This result aligns with previous studies that indicate the inclusion of sustainability at the core of the hospitality experience can enhance guest loyalty perception towards sustainability [19]. Environmental programmes should therefore have measurable outcomes, involve staff, communicate to visitors, and provide ways to get visitors' feedback. It may be useful to certify before implementing, even though there is no clear implementation, but effective environmental practices could increase satisfaction and intentions to act.

The results are useful for coastal tourism, which takes place in an ecologically sensitive environment, and are also dependent on the beaches, marine diversity, water quality, and attractiveness of the landscape. Coastal areas are subjected to heavy tourist demand, heavy seasonal demand for resources, leakages of waste, pressure on habitat, and climate vulnerability. Research on tourist carrying capacity has shown that the available tourist facilities and services should be harmonised with the limits of the coastal destinations' ecosystems and with the governance of the destination [20]. The relatively low biodiversity-protection score obtained in this study suggests that the area needs more attention when applied to coastal applications, such as hotels that are close to mangroves, wetlands, coral reefs, dunes, and protected shorelines.

This should be considered in relation to local economic development as well. When local people's enjoyment of the site is accompanied by congestion, cost increases, resource competition, or ecosystem degradation, high numbers of visitors and spending of cash are not sustainable development. The carrying-capacity assessment can be used to evaluate the suitability of a certain intensity of tourism for the environmental quality, the welfare of residents, and the availability of the infrastructure [21]. Hotel policies should thus be based on renewable energy and water saving, recycling, local employment, engagement of suppliers, environmental certification, and protection of biodiversity.

The cross-sectional nature of the study, the reporting on the establishment level, and the empirical setting of the study were some limitations. The management

perceptions of their visitors' experience and economic outcomes were measured, not directly through the visitors' responses, nor by audited financial records. There were no causal relationships that could be drawn. The results, however, did yield an integrated model which suggested that green management can be a facilitating factor for local economic development, mainly if it enhances the guests' experience. This pathway needs to be confirmed with longitudinal economic data, environmental measures, and coastal hotel and tourist data.

5. Conclusion

The strong relationship between the hospitality sector and the development of the area was found to be related to the visitors' experience associated with green hotel management and environmental conservation practices. An environment-friendly, manageable construct was formed of sustainable mobility, recycling, and the use of renewable energy, with a relatively low level of biodiversity protection. Visitor experience was identified as the key link between environmental practices and the other variables of occupancy, jobs, tourism spending, resident satisfaction, and cultural benefits. There was no strong relationship between the direct economic impact of green practices and the value generated, implying that value creation may be achieved only if the green practices are made visible, credible, and part of the guest experience. The results of this analysis reinforce, for coastal tourism destinations, the concepts of integrated management strategies that integrate resource efficiency, environmental certification, waste reduction, employment, community participation, and ecosystem protection. Planning for sustainability should be integrated with communication and benefit-sharing mechanisms for visitors in hotels and the individual destination authorities. The cross-sectional and establishment-reported nature of the data, and also because the data is not collected on the coast, restricts causal and geographic interpretation. The validity of the model needs to be verified in coastal hotels through further research using the responses of tourists, community data, environmental indicators, and the financial results of an organization in the long run.

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