

Chapter 10

Emerging Trends and Challenges in Reducing and Disposing of Food Waste Through Sustainable Tourism Practices at Tourist Destinations

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to navigate through the multifaceted challenges associated with mitigating food waste in tourism destinations, offering valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of waste reduction. The study is based on a conceptual research framework and relies on secondary data, which encompasses a broad spectrum of sources, examining various facets such as the environmental impact of food waste in tourism, current waste management practices, and the socio-economic implications of sustainable disposal methods. The chapter underscores the pressing need for effective waste reduction strategies, particularly in the context of burgeoning tourism activities that contribute significantly to the generation of food waste. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and researchers, fostering a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in achieving sustainable food waste practices in the context of tourism destinations.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2181-2.ch010

1. INTRODUCTION: FOOD WASTE AND ITS REASONS

Globally, approximately 13% of food is lost between harvest and retail, with an additional 17% wasted in households, food service, and retail combined, contributing to 38% of total energy usage in the global food system, while between 691 and 783 million people faced hunger in 2022 (United Nations). The global scale of this challenge is staggering, with approximately one-third of food—1.3 billion tons annually—being lost or wasted globally, valued at over US\$680 billion in industrialized countries and US\$310 billion in developing ones (Bharucha, 2018).

In the context of tourism, this translates into a substantial impact, with India alone facing a significant proportion of this challenge—around 67 million tons of food worth over US\$14 billion annually, particularly prevalent in the restaurant sector (Bharucha, 2018). Furthermore, beyond individual behaviours and cultural aspects, food waste is intricately tied to economic risks within the tourism industry. The influence of global policies, neoliberal reforms, unequal economic distribution, and market dynamics contributes to the intricate web of challenges that perpetuate food waste in the tourism sector (Gille, 2012). Thus, comprehending the multifaceted nature of food waste requires a holistic examination that considers supply chain dynamics, consumer-level factors, and the broader economic context to formulate effective management strategies within the tourism industry.

In unravelling the complexities of food waste within the tourism sector, it becomes imperative to trace the journey of a typical food item through its supply chain, spanning growers, processors, retailers, and ultimately consumers. At each stage, certain portions of food are lost, contributing to what is widely recognized as food loss in the supply chain (Bellemare et al., 2017). This issue, however, extends beyond the logistical intricacies of the supply chain and delves into the realm of consumer behaviour. At the consumer level, factors such as poor planning, time constraints, and a prevailing culture of abundance play pivotal roles in fostering over-purchasing and inadequate food management practices (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2015). Moreover, the mindset of consumers, shaped by upbringing and cultural norms, significantly influences individual perceptions regarding food waste. It is not merely about what people do, but also about what they think and feel about wasting food, where beliefs and societal opinions become determining factors in the choice to either minimize or contribute to food waste (Stancu et al., 2016).

2. FOOD WASTE IN TOURISM

Food is vital for tourism, but its mishandling has significant economic, social, and environmental impacts, exacerbating global challenges. Addressing food waste is crucial for tourism organizations to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, mitigate environmental impact, and support food security. Tourism businesses, involved in various food management stages, play a key role in advancing sustainable practices and reducing food waste.

As per UNWTO, In 2019, an estimated 80 billion meals were served to tourists, with the food service sector, including tourism, contributing significantly to consumption-related food waste, accounting for 26%; the global cost of annual food waste in the hospitality and food service industries is estimated to surpass USD 100 billion. Addressing food waste in the tourism sector offers opportunities for tourism organizations to enhance business efficiency, reduce operational costs, and improve environmental sustainability by serving as a climate action strategy to decrease value chain greenhouse gas emissions.

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