

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN CO-CREATION OF ECOTOURISM EXPERIENCES: A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR DUNGA BEACH AS A PLACE DESTINATION

ABSTRACT

Involving stakeholders in co-creating tourism experiences is crucial in securing tourists satisfaction when they visit a particular destination. Grounded on the System Thinking Theory, Service-Dominant Logic, Theory of Planned Behavior and Stakeholder Theory, this study set to establish: 1) the relationship between experience co-creation, tourist satisfaction and subjective wellbeing, 2) assess different mental models of stakeholders constituting ecotourism system in Dunga, and 3) explored co-creation of experiences by tourists in Dunga. The study used a Case Study Approach that employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. For quantitative data, the study targeted 3,700 student tourists that visit Dunga a month (DECTA, 2012). Criterion sampling was used to identify two days in a week; the target of 5 school buses per day with a capacity 51 students and picking on every second vehicle. A total of 3000 questionnaires administered, with a total of 2655 responding to the survey. However, only 312 questionnaires were usable having met all the questionnaires were usable having met all the screening questions. For qualitative analysis Causal Loop Diagrams and the conceptual tourism model for Dunga was developed through participation of key stakeholders in a workshop, test tours, interviews and personal journals were used to conduct an in-depth exploration of how tourists co-create experiences. Questionnaires were used to collect data to establish the relationship between experience co-creation, tourist satisfaction and wellbeing. Structuring Equation Modeling using AMOS 22.0 was used to determine the relationships among variables (experience co-creation, tourist satisfaction and tourist wellbeing) and to test the hypotheses. The findings indicated interconnection of different components that affect tourism system in Dunga. Tourism economy, natural resources and social demography are the key components closely linked in determining sustainability of tourism in Dunga. The findings further show that tourists co-create in different packages that can develop different co-creation strategies and opportunities. The results indicate a statistically positive relationship between co-creation and subjective well-being (t-value = 8.495, $p > .05$), and a statistically positive relationship between satisfaction and subjective well-being (t-value of 8.495, $p > .05$). The study identified ways to co-create experience and product packages as well as a deeper understanding among stakeholders of the Dunga tourism System and its associated components. Consequently, the results of this study should form a basis of improving other destinations. It is recommended that tourists should be involved in planning for their visit and in development of tourist products, detailed profiling of tourists backgrounds to identify their expectations, capacity building among stakeholders to enhance deep understanding of the tourism system and development of a strategic plan that addresses objectives that further enhance stakeholder involvement.