

Assessing key satisfiers and sustainable ecolodge experience management through profile accumulation techniques

Abstrak

The paper presents a pioneering investigation of qualitative empirical findings of experiential responses to ecolodge accommodation as a place of experience consumption from the guest perspective. It identifies the key satisfying experiential dimensions; and subsequently to recommend strategies for developing sustainable quality ecolodge experience strategies that arise from the key experiential dimensions identified within the study. The profile accumulation technique (PAT) developed by Johns and Lee-Ross (1997) as a novel research tool, was extended to investigate ecolodge service experiences, which are deemed to offer a more valid and rounded methodology, shifting away from quantifying the types of satisfying dimensions. A total of fifty-three PAT survey forms were completed by guests who stayed in ecolodges in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia. Four key satisfying experiential consumption dimensions are seen to be important in describing and evaluating ecolodge experiences: ecolodge location/landscape; pristine natural environment and peaceful atmosphere; novelty in experiences and eco-recreation-based activities. Guest satisfying experiences are largely dependent upon ecolodge external environmental aspects - surrounding natural environment and attractions (wildlife and pristine landscape), eco-activities and the emotive aspects of the guests. Experiential consumption offered by ecolodge accommodation seems to be attributed to guest emotions more than the cognitive aspects of ecolodge service performance, which differs from that provided by other traditional and specialist types of accommodation. The findings have significant implications for managing and operating an ecolodge as a place of quality experiences consumption. Significant attention is needed to conserve and preserve the ecolodge's natural and environmental attraction as these elements are attributed to the satisfying dimensions and thus, significantly affect guest satisfaction. Ecolodge operators should capitalize on these satisfying experiential dimensions as part of their marketing and

selling strategy as well as sustainable development quality ecolodge experiences. The satisfying experiential dimensions add to the existing tourist experience literature and the ecolodge experiences. Sustainable ecolodge management need to focus on guest satisfying key experiential consumption dimensions rather than on service quality dimensions.