

Conceptualization of ecotourism service experiences framework from the dimensions of motivation and quality of experiences: Four realms of experience approach

ABSTRACT

The paper explored ecotourism service experience dimensions from the ecotourists' motivations and quality of experiences. Based on these empirical dimensions, an ecotourism service experience framework is conceptualized and guided by the four realms of experiences. A total of 51 international ecotourists were interviewed at the ecolodges. Motivation responses and quality of experiences were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings of motivation dimensions were cross-checked with the dimensions of quality of experiences. Consistent findings revealed that tangible – wildlife and nature/environment, learning, being away from workplace/home (escapism), aesthetic (amusing scenery) and entertainment experiences driven from river boat cruise, cultural performance and viewing wildlife are key dimensions of ecotourism service experiences. Suggested ecotourism service experience dimensions can be interpreted as educational, aesthetics, escapism, and entertainment, similar to the four realms of experiences and fit well with the experience economy model of Pine and Gilmore (1999). A novel approach to explore and interpret ecotourism service experience, which is subjective, individualistic and interpretive. An ecotourism service experience framework encapsulating the core ecotourism service dimensions is proposed. It serves as a beneficial guide for ecotourism operators and destination managers to offer quality ecotourism experiences. Findings have implications for the management and marketing of ecotourism destinations and experiences.