

Institution

HOW ECO-TOURISM REDUCES CLIMATE CHANGE

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How Eco-Tourism Reduces Climate Change

Abstract

Climate change is a global-based phenomenon that has over the years caused and promised very detrimental impacts on the humanity and other life forms. Therefore, the core purpose of this proposal is to devise a new way to address the problem of climate change successfully. The research focuses of ecotourism as a mechanism for addressing the problem. Notably, the ecotourism encourages locally based travels to enjoy the beauty of nature, which is associated with learning, and personal growth (Gurung & Seeland 2009, p.349). The paper unveils that ecotourism fosters the sustainable development, which is imperative to address the problem of climate change (Honey 2008, p. 78). The research will use both secondary and primary data sources. Online interviews and administration of questionnaires will serve as the tools to collect the data. The study will use a mixed research strategy with a sequential exploratory design. Empirically, the aim of the study is to provide a deeper understanding of how ecotourism could be used to tackle the issues of climate change successfully. In sum, the study will implicitly reveal how ecotourism enhances social responsiveness, awareness, and empowerment of the local community to avoid or limit environmental degradation.

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INTRODUCTION

Background Study

Climate change is a global phenomenon that has over the years caused and promised very detrimental impacts to the humanity and other life forms (Dimento & Doughman 2007, p. 32). As such, many scientists, climatologists, geographers, meteorologists, and other relevant entities have strived to devise and adopt new and better mechanisms to avoid the phenomenon. One of the strategic mechanisms of reducing climate change is adopting the practice of ecotourism. Descriptively, ecotourism often viewed as a contemporary form of tourism that entails visiting of pristine, fragile, and areas that are relatively undisturbed. The core aim of ecotourism is to educate the travellers or tourists, most of whom are local, to embrace ecological conservation (Zhou, Buesching, Newman, Kaneko, Xie, & Macdonald 2013, p. 21). Notably, ecotourism is pegged on three main facets that contribute to the overall reduction in the chances or events of climate change. The idea of the ecotourism is to promote personal growth, environmental sustainability and uphold the social responsibility of the local tourists (Baromey 2008, p. 96). As opposed to the conventional tourism that depends on the foreign visitors, ecotourism mainly supports and encourage the local communities to see treasure in their natural resources and emphasize on environmental conservation (Schmidt & Wolfe 2009, p. 103).

Therefore, this proposal is focused on unveiling how ecotourism can be used as a practice to mitigate or reduce climate change. The study is built on the precept that climate change is a global phenomenon that is catastrophic, and every country has an integral role to play, particularly through adopting ecotourism (Nelson 2009, p. 156). According to Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, and Schelhas (2003, p. 382), ecotourism is continually growing as a new plausible practice that significantly contributes to the environmental conservation through local engagements. The local community plays a crucial role in ensuring that the ecological systems and patterns are maintained while enjoying or getting fun from nature (Eubanks, Stoll, & Ditton 2004, p. 156). As Yacob, Radam, and Rawi (2009, p. 14) pointed out, ecotourism opens a new window for the local communities or citizens within a country to become socially, economically, and culturally responsible for their surroundings.

Problem Statement

Over the years, the current and potential consequences of climate change have threatened the well-being of human beings and other life forms. The natural and markedly human-induced phenomenon calls for new approaches that can help to reduce or evade the expected negative impacts (Dowling 2005, p. 136). As a result, ecotourism has been viewed as a new mechanism for addressing the problem; however, little efforts and researches have been brought on board to explain how the practice can help in mitigating climate change (Dimento & Doughman 2007, p. 37). The study, therefore, goes a notch higher to explain how ecotourism helps to reduce the climate change phenomenon. In particular, the research focuses on how the ecotourism fosters community empowerment and enlightenment about climate change (Afenyo & Amuquandoh 2014, p.182). Notably, the study is framed from the precept that ecotourism encourages the local population to engage in a socially responsible tourism expedition. As opposed to the international tourists, ecotourism encourages the local community to be cognitive and sensitive of environmental matters (Ballantyne, & Packer (2013, p. 47). In addition to facilitating nation-based appreciation of nature, the practice promotes ecological conservation and responsiveness to climate parameters (Perkins 2011, p. 33). Undoubtedly, the research introduces a new view of curbing or reducing climate change through promoting local awareness and responsiveness (Dowling 2005, p. 139). In summary, the research gap of the study is to unravel how ecotourism enhances personal development and community awareness and alertness on the need to conserve nature, which cumulatively contributes to reduction of climate change (Gurung & Seeland 2009, p.354).

Aim of the Study

The aim of the research is to reveal how ecotourism encourages sustainable and social responsiveness to the environment. That is, the study objects to unveil a new perspective that supports that ecotourism can be used to mitigate climate change through encouraging sustainable utilization of the natural resources (Zhou et al., 2013, p. 21). In this case, the utilization entails visiting or viewing the natural resources for not only a pleasure but also conservation principles. The overall objectives of the study are outlined as below:

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how ecotourism encourages sustainable utilization of the natural resources

2. To assess and evaluate the ecological benefits of ecotourism that contribute to reduction of climate change phenomenon
3. To examine how ecotourism fosters personal and community development and empowerment and how it affects sensitivity and responsiveness to the environment
4. To critically understand and evaluate how climate change can be successfully addressed through the adoption of ecotourism as opposed to the conventional international tourism.

Research Questions

1. What is the difference between international tourism and ecotourism in relation to climate change?
2. How can ecotourism be used to address the problem of climate change successfully?
3. Is there any link between ecotourism and personal or community development and empowerment, which in turn reduces the problem of climate change?

Research Hypothesis

1. H1: Ecotourism leads to personal and community empowerment and awareness of environmental conservation measures that help address the problem of climate change
2. H0: Ecotourism does not lead to personal and community empowerment and awareness of environmental conservation measures that help address the problem of climate change

Significance of the Study

Cumulatively, the study is very significant and imperative in the current context that is associated with detrimental impacts of climate change. That is, the research provides a new avenue that could be used to address the challenge of climate change (Perkins 2011, p. 94). The study aims to inform policymakers, scientists, climatologists, geographers, and other relevant entities on the application of ecotourism as a new way to reduce climate change (Schmidt & Wolfe 2009, p. 56). In particular, the study purports to link ecotourism to the fostering local awareness and empowerments in an ecologically responsive manner (Prasetyo2013, p. 214). In summary, the study provides a new perspective of applying the practice of ecotourism to address the global problem of climate change.

Research Structure

The proposal is structured into four main sections. First, the introduction section provides the conceptual foundation of the study and gives the rationale and aim of the research. The chapter informs the researcher why the research is necessary and how it contributes to new knowledge in addressing climate change. Secondly, the literature review provides the theoretical and detailed conceptual background of the study. The review of the prior and related literature provides evidence to measure the consistency of the study and to identify the research gap. Third, the methodology chapter provides how the research was conducted; particularly, the research strategy, design, instruments, sampling techniques, and other imperative measurements and tests. The paper also gives the expected data analysis and results that inform the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism is not exactly a new practice, but its promotion to address climate change is up and coming. Afenyo and Amuquandoh (2014, p.188) noted that ecotourism allows the local community to support conservation of the natural resources based on improved awareness and empowerment. According to World Ecotourism Summit 2002 (2002, p. 208), ecotourism is a responsible travel or visit to natural areas which promote environmental conservation through sustaining the well-being of the local population, and involving education and interpretation. That is, the local people are actively involved in addressing climate change by enhancing responsiveness and local sensitivity to environmental issues (Sharpley 2006, p. 17). One of the key contributors to climate change is a lack of awareness and responsiveness that encourages the local people to adopt sustainable measures that spur environmental conservation (Font, Sanabria & Skinner 2003, p. 214). According to Stem and colleagues (2003, p. 382), ecotourism is a subset of sustainable tourism that aims at reducing environmental degradation, particularly through climate change. The system is perceived as a way of adopting sustainable development that integrates appropriate utilization of environmental resources (Ballantyne, & Packer (2013, p. 53).

The concept of ecotourism started in the 1970s when there was a growing need for encouraging the local people to travel within their countries to visit and conserve nature (Font, Sanabria & Skinner 2003, p. 214-216). The sector of eco-tourism grew further in the 1990s due to the influence of the global environmental movement. The movement was particularly started to facilitate responsible traveling that minimizes the negative environmental impacts (Font, Sanabria & Skinner 2003, p. 213). The primary aim of ecotourism is to counteract and avoid the negative effects or impacts of human development. People in cities may choose to travel to pristine jungles, beaches and mountains to enjoy and interact with the beauty of nature (Honey 2008, p. 81). Such visits encourage the local community to engage in environmentally friendly activities that sustain the benefits derived from nature (Eubanks, Stoll, & Ditton 2004, p. 156).

Ecotourism's viewed as an effective mechanism for promoting sustainable development, particularly in the developing countries (Garrod 2003, p. 37). Such countries have deemed it worthwhile to adopt the practice since it integrates both conservation strategies and economic development (Sharpley 2006, p. 35). World Ecotourism Summit 2002 (2002, p. 210) argued

that ecotourism is an alternative to tourism, which entails visiting natural areas so as to learn, study, and embrace environmentally friendly activities. Eubanks, Stoll, and Ditton (2004, p. 156) also mentioned that ecotourism is appropriate when involving the local communities as part of the stakeholders that contribute to the protection of environment from degrading impacts. Therefore, as Nelson (2009, p. 159) pointed out, the concept of ecotourism empowers the local communities both economically and socially, and helps them adhere to the principles of environmental protection.

For the last two decades, ecotourism has been debated upon, in theory, and in practice as a way to address climate change. As Yacob, Radam, and Rawi (2009, p. 18) observed, the practice aims at changing the real-world and conventional operations in the tourism sector. In hindsight, ecotourism inculcates the idea of environmentalism that is based on raised awareness and provision of incentives that foster environmental protection (Kerr 2002, p.30). For example, in Smith, Klein, & Huq 2003, p. 112) research, it was observed that application of ecotourism results in responsible exploitations and utilization of the environmental resources. Dowling (2002, p. 83) used a mixed research design and found out that ecotourism encourages responsible travel and permits the local communities to cooperate and engage with tourists so as to build-up and sustain the economies. Local communities frequently rely on tourism as the primary source of employment and income; thus they become obliged to protecting their source of livelihood (Leasa 2007, p. 123).

METHODOLOGY

Research Strategy

The research will be conducted using a research strategy that combines both qualitative and quantitative studies. The mixed method will provide an essential approach since it allows detailed theoretical qualification of concepts that are backed by quantitative data (Bryman 2012, p. 22). Abstractly, a qualitative method is relevant when providing the theories, perspectives, and opinions of people regarding ecotourism. For instance, the qualitative study will help to provide a deeper understanding of ecotourism so as to identify the variables for the subsequent quantitative study. According to Jasso (2012, p. 217), combining qualitative and quantitative studies allows detailed conceptualization of concepts that are statistically backed. In summary, the research will combine both qualitative and quantitative methodologies so as to allow comprehensive collection and analysis of data. As Bernard (2011, p. 68) explained, a mixed research strategy permits connection, embedment, and relation to different data sources and analytical approaches.

Research Design

The research will adopt a sequential exploratory design, where a qualitative study precedes a quantitative study. First, the review of the previous literature will be used to form the basis of the qualitative study that will be conducted through interviewing focus groups. The focus groups that contain at most eight members will be interviewed by asking them open-ended questions on ecotourism. They will provide their opinions, perceptions, and views on how ecotourism can be used to address successfully the problem of climate change (Bryman 2012, p. 35). Such study shall form the foundation for the succeeding quantitative study that will involve the gathering of statistical data and conducting statistical analysis. Markedly, the ordinal scale will be used to code the possible responses so as to provide a statistical perspective to data collection and analysis (Maxfield & Babbie 2012, p. 22).

First, the sampled group will be contacted prior through a pilot study to make them aware of how the study will be conducted. Then, a reminder will be sent to the different focus groups, and the interview dates set prior to avoid inconveniences. The groups will then be interviewed, where each group will require a minimum of 30 minutes for the interview. The qualitative data will then serve as a prerequisite to the quantitative study, which will involve online administering of the questionnaires. Every participant will be given a three days period

to fill and remit the form, which will also require a reminder call or email on the second day after administering the questionnaires.

Sampling Technique

The research will use a random or probability sampling so as to improve the reliability and validity of the results (Bryman 2012, p. 42). From a sample frame that lists all the possible research participants, a sample size of 112 participants will be selected. The sample frame will be derived from the websites of the tourism industry, particularly those that deal with ecotourism. All eligible participants will have to meet criteria that he/she must have involved in ecotourism as a visitor or the host (Sedgwick 2011, p. 1537). The respondent must also have knowledge of climate change and be able to relate the event to ecotourism.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data sources will be used to provide evidence for the study. Books and journals will provide the bulk of the secondary sources of data so as to review past literature. The review will help to identify the research gap and to reveal if the research is consistent with the previous ones. The primary data collection will be conducted through the use of questionnaires and interviews. Online interviews of the focus groups will help to herald information about how people perceive ecotourism in relation to climate change. Additionally, online administered questionnaires will be used to gather information from the selected responses, particularly to collect the quantitative information.

Validity and Reliability Measurements

The validity measures the extent to which the study interventions measure what the research intends. Markedly, this research will adhere to three main types of validity called internal, external, and construct validity. Construct validity tests the operational measures to ensure consistency between the theory and defined construct. Bernard (2011, p. 72) argued that most operational studies lack construct validity because subjective judgments may manipulate the data. Providentially, this study will minimize the problem by acquiring the data from reliable sources. The internal validity will also be ensured by maintaining a consistent ordinal coding of the scales used in the quantitative collection and analysis data. Moreover, external validity measures the degree to which the findings represent the target population, which will be assured through application of probability sampling and improving representativeness of the sample size (Maxfield & Babbie 2012, p. 16). Similarly, reliability measures how or the

extent to which data collection and analysis provide consistent findings. To enhance reliability, the raw data will be treated with critical considerations and analyzed based on different contexts.

Limitations of the research method

Timescale may be limited because the research could require integration of two study approaches. The small sample size may also reduce external validity and generalizability of the findings and limit accurately interpolation and extrapolation of the results (Maxfield & Babbie 2012, p. 12). The sequential explorative design may be complicated and require more resources. The study will demand a lot of perspectives, skills, material resources, and time.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are guiding principles used when conducting research. Therefore, the study will adhere to the principle of confidentiality, safety, security, privacy, inform-consent, honesty, and non-coercion. According to Jasso (2012, p. 219) or the research ethics aim to create a good relationship between the researcher and the respondent. As such, the study will be based on openness, honesty, and assure all the participants of their confidentiality so as to spur confidence interactions. Likewise, professional ethics like mentoring professional relationships and adhering to the intellectual property will have to be considered.

Expected data Analysis and Results

Notably, the data will be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis will involve detailed assessment and evaluation of the theories and concept. Diagrammatical illustrations such as charts, tables, and figures will be used to provide a visual view of the concepts and theories. Most importantly, the study will require testing of the hypothesis so as to elicit a quantitative analysis. MINITAB software will be used to carry out an analysis of variance ANOVA so to reject or fail to reject the null hypothesis (Rutherford 2011, p. 42). Statistically, it will be necessary to test the hypothesis, but first, collective statistical model will be used to analyze the distribution and variation of the data. ANOVA will be used to determine whether the group means will be the same or differ. Rutherford (2011, p. 42) stated that ANOVA generalizes the t-test when more than two samples are used so as to avoid type 1 error. The error elicits a false positive conclusion. Hence, to avoid the error, the measurement will be done using t-test on the samples. The aim of the research test will be to reject the null hypothesis through f statistics Rutherford (2011, p. 43-15).

Bernard (2011, p. 67) argued that data is variable naturally; thus the ANOVA helps to partition the variance within and between the samples (Rutherford 2011, p 67). Critically, the statistical method will be used to relate the f statistics (F) with the critical function (F_{crit}). If f is greater than F_{crit} ($F > F_{crit}$), the null hypothesis is rejected. Also, p-value will be used by relating the p-value of the research to the p at the significant level ($p=0.05$). If the $P < 0.05$, the null hypothesis will be rejected.

Conclusion

Climate change is majorly a man-made phenomenon. Therefore, to avoid its detrimental impacts, human being have devised various ways to deal with the problem. Undoubtedly, many mechanisms have been used to help in addressing the issue of climate change. This proposal focuses on how ecotourism can be used to address the problem of climate change. The proposal is projected using a precepts that ecotourism facilitates community engagement, awareness creation and integrates the idea of sustainable development. As such, the sustainable development coupled with personal and community development have integral roles in reducing the impacts of climate change. That is, the study expects that if the concept of sustainable development is inculcated into people, awareness and empowerment makes them reduce the overall carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

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