

The Influence of Ecotourism Performance on Quality Tourism Experience and Sustainable Consciousness

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Abstract

Keywords

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Purpose of the study: This study aimed to investigate the influence of ecotourism performance on quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness.

Methodology: Adopted survey questionnaires were given to a sample of 400 tourists in the tourism sector in Davao City. This study employed a non-experimental design utilizing a descriptive correlation technique. The statistical tools used were frequency, mean, Pearson r, and Sobel test.

Main Findings: It was found that the level of quality tourism experiences, sustainable consciousness, and ecotourism performance of tourists in Davao City are strongly agreed upon. The correlation between quality tourism experience, sustainable consciousness, and ecotourism performance has a weak but positive relationship, whilst ecotourism performance and sustainable consciousness have a very positive relationship.

Implications: This study implies that to have a quality tourism experience and improve ecotourism for everyone, every visitor must be conscious of sustainability in the areas of attitude, behavior, and knowledge. This can be done in that the host must publish educational awareness to be responsible tourists such as campaign posters, innovative digital promotional branding strategies, and the like.

Novelty: This study is covering important aspects of quality tourism experience with special reference to Davao City.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent ecotourism locations in the Philippines is Davao City. The Ecotourism Society defines Ecotourism as deliberate travel to natural areas to learn about the history and culture of the surroundings while taking care not to compromise the ecosystem's integrity and creating economic opportunities that benefit the local population by promoting the conservation of natural resources (Lian, 2020). According to Teves, Sola, Pintor, and Ang (2016), suggesting to pass a resolution of the issues regarding illegal and unauthorized trekking, camping, and climbing activities in one of the eco-tourism spots in Davao, particularly Mt. Talomo.

Sustainable consciousness must observe the tourist and the locals while preserving and enhancing the opportunities for the benefit of future generations (UNWTO, 2015). The sector has great potential to drive growth in tourist destinations. As a result, there is a need for alternative and more environmentally and host-friendly practices in development, planning, and policies. Tourism and other tourism-related industries play an essential role in economic activities worldwide (Manzoor, Wei, Asif, Haq & Rehman, 2019).

According to the results of reference tracing and early observations, a sort of tourism focused on the natural environment or Ecotourism, yet cultural tourism remains dominant. Ecotourism has a weak correlation with destination competitiveness but a substantial correlation with efforts to build sustainable tourism, according to research on the Empowerment of Cultural Tourism and Ecotourism (Wardana, Utama, & Astawa, 2018). The low correlation between ecotourism and destination competitiveness is attributed to poor ecotourism development management in terms of planning, stakeholder participation, local community involvement, and oversight components. Wardana et al., (2018) discovered that local community support moderates the association between Ecotourism and sustainable tourist development.

This study aims to examine the influence of ecotourism performance on tourism experience and sustainable consciousness in Davao City. Moreover, this study was guided by the following objectives: To measure the level of quality tourism experience; To assess the level of sustainable consciousness; To ascertain the level of ecotourism performance; To determine the significant relationship in terms of the following; quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness, quality tourism experience and ecotourism performance, and ecotourism performance and sustainable consciousness; and To evaluate the influence of ecotourism performance on quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness in Davao City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality Tourism Experience

The subjective personal responses and sentiments linked to tourism activities are referred to as customer experience in the tourism industry (Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). It is a key idea in marketing and a crucial idea in the travel and tourism sector. The secret to tourism businesses' ability to draw in and keep customers is creating exceptional tourist experiences. (Kandampully, Juwaheer, & Hu, 2011; Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019).

The concept of a tourism experience is intricate and challenging to define given its diversity. Its subjective and individual nature makes it difficult to observe, even though there are objective variables, which makes its definition challenging (Seyfi, Hall & Rasoolimanesh, 2020). The concept of a tourism experience is broad, and research on its elements and dimensions varies greatly (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Due to the varying backgrounds, values, attitudes, and beliefs that each person brings to the place in which they travel and experience throughout time, they each have a unique tourist experience. The subjective mental state that participants experience while interacting with a service is known as the tourist experience as espoused by Seyfi (2020).

Sustainable Consciousness

The experience or understanding of sustainability phenomena is then referred to as sustainability consciousness where the idea of sustainable development has gained importance among policymakers everywhere as emphasized by Gericke, Boeve-de Pauw, Berglund & Olsson. (2018). However, in a psychological study, the term "consciousness" has several various interpretations. There are three main referents, according to Velmans (2009) and as underlined by Gericke (2019). First, the term "consciousness" is frequently used to refer to the act of separating oneself from the environment. Second, the word consciousness is employed to describe a wakeful condition. Third, knowledge is sometimes equated with awareness in the sense that if one is aware of something, they are also knowledgeable about it. But knowledge is not always conscious, and knowledge is not always a part of consciousness. Thus, the experience itself can be used to define consciousness, and anything that we can see or experience can serve as an example of consciousness. (Velmans, 2009; Gericke (2019) concerning knowingness, attitude, and behavior (Olsson, Gericke, Boeve-de Pauw, Berglund & Chang (2019).

All firms, as key players in the economy, are concerned about sustainable development, regardless of the sector in which they operate. Sustainable development satisfies present requirements without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2019).

Ecotourism Performance

Ecotourism is thought to encompass more than merely natural tourism. The features of ecotourism and how much it differs from other forms of tourism, however, are not covered by any definition of ecotourism that is more widely accepted. (Setini, Wardana, Sukaatmadja, Ekawati, Yasa & Astawa, 2021). According to Setini et al., (2021), the core criteria of ecotourism include: ecotourism is nature-based; a dimension of sustainability in which ecotourism is seen from a conservation perspective; a dimension of human sustainability in the form of local participation and benefits; learning and education as part of the ecotourism experience; and obligation to behave ethically. Furthermore, It was highlighted by Setini et al., (2021) emphasized that the indicators of ecotourism consist of protection of the natural environment, sources of income, education, quality tourism, and participation of local communities.

Ecotourism refers to outdoor recreational activities. Tourists visit a location for a variety of reasons, such as surfing, unwinding, renewing their bodies, avoiding crowds, and participating in local activities (Lubis, Sibarani, Lubis & Azhari, 2022). Therefore, ecotourism is a strategy to promote conservation, generate revenue, and provide jobs for locals that live close to protected regions, as emphasized by Seteni et al (2021).

Correlation Between Measures

Studies from the past show that ecotourism is also growing more important because it significantly improves the tourist's sustainable consciousness and quality tourism experience (Wondirad, Tolkach & King, 2020). Therefore, the development of ecotourism as a substitute for tourism is a must to guarantee that tourists are conscious of sustainability and have a quality tourism experience. (Setini et al., 2021). Additionally, community support greatly modifies the relationship between ecotourism performance and sustainable consciousness, according to Wardana et al. (2018). This demonstrates that the community's spirit and awareness are still strong in terms of creating high-quality tourism for visitors.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the quantitative research design to associate the influence of ecotourism performance on the quality of tourism experience and sustainable consciousness. In the field of descriptive research, information on current circumstances is gathered for description and interpretation (Olivar, Ubaldo, Espinosa & Gutierrez, 2023). Correlational analysis, a non-experimental design, investigates the relationship between two or more variables in a natural setting without the use of manipulation or control (Olivar, Ocio & Sitier, 2022).

The respondents of this study were coming from the 400 tourists of Davao City. The primary purpose of this research is to determine the mediating effect of ecotourism performance on the relationship between quality tourism experience and sustainable tourism. The data distribution for gender, age, civil status, education level, and economic level is shown in

Table 1. Most of the responders were females between the ages of 18 and 24, single, college-educated, and middle-class. In this study, instead of focusing on the ecotourism tourist alone, we decided to generalize, and also that is where the point where we randomly choose the tourist around Davao City as our research respondents.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

Provide all results with tables, graphs, and images in their original form. Tables/Figures should be placed in the text soon after the point where they are referenced and should be consistent with the main text. Always provide a correct legend for images, tables, and graphs. If it is taken from an outer source, then the source must be cited properly. The researcher has used an adapted questionnaire from Wardana, Sukaatmadja, Ekawati, Nyoman, Astawa, and [Setini \(2021\)](#) for the ecotourism performance, and quality tourism experience, whilst sustainable consciousness from the study of [Gericke, Boeve-De Pauw, Berglund & Olsson \(2019\)](#) was modified to suit the context of the study and presented to the panel experts for validation. This study contributes information as a basis on what ecotourism and sustainability could contribute to tourism in our country. It shows that in the result of the survey, since we used 5 points Likert scale 5 - Strongly Agree, 4 - Agree, 3 - Moderately Agree, 2 - Disagree, 1 - Strongly Agree.

Table 1: The characteristics of 400 respondents were included in the survey

| Profile Variables | Group | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender | Male | 166 | 41.5 |
| | Female | 234 | 58.5 |
| Civil Status | Single | 263 | 65.8 |
| | Married | 122 | 30.5 |
| | Widow | 15 | 3.8 |
| Age | Under 18 | 47 | 11.8 |
| | 18-24 | 176 | 44.0 |
| | 25-34 | 114 | 28.5 |
| | 35-44 | 29 | 7.2 |
| | 45-54 | 29 | 7.2 |
| | 55-64 | 5 | 1.3 |
| Education Level | College Level | 211 | 52.8 |
| | Bachelors' Degree | 151 | 37.8 |
| | Masters' Degree | 26 | 6.5 |
| | Doctorate | 12 | 3.0 |
| Economy Level | Lower Class | 0 | 0.0 |
| | Lower-Middle Class | 116 | 29.0 |
| | Middle Class | 247 | 61.8 |
| | Upper Middle Class | 37 | 9.3 |
| | Upper Class | 0 | 0.0 |

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Quality Tourism Experience

Table 2 displays the data output of the quality of the tourism experience in Davao City.

Table 2: Level of quality tourism experience in Davao City

| Items | Mean | Std. Deviation | Descriptive Level |
|---|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. There are conservation efforts with the mission of protecting nature. | 4.70 | 0.51 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. There are tourist attractions that allow local people to interact with tourists. | 4.67 | 0.56 | Strongly Agree |
| 3. Tourism activities and environmental preservation support the quality of life of tourists and the community. | 4.44 | 0.65 | Strongly Agree |
| 4. Tourism activities in the village benefit tourists and the community in material and non-material terms. | 4.49 | 0.66 | Strongly Agree |
| 5. The community offers a variety of uniqueness, both the natural beauty of culture and craft art so that it becomes a beautiful experience for tourists. | 4.47 | 0.70 | Strongly Agree |
| Overall | 4.55 | 0.39 | Strongly Agree |

Strongly agree or very much observed is the total mean score for the level of quality tourism experiences, which is 4.55 with a standard deviation of 0.39. All items were found to strongly agree on the level of quality tourism experience. Based on the findings authors have asserted that quality tourism is a subjective personal response and sentiments linked to tourism activities experienced by the customer (Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). Since, the development, provision, and consumption of experiences are the heart of tourism. The goal of tourism studies is to comprehend the nature of the tourist experience, how it relates to travel motivations, and how places may produce memorable experiences that fulfill the varied needs of visitors.

Sustainable Consciousness

Table 3 shows the sustainable consciousness level in Davao City's tourism industry. The overall mean score for sustainable consciousness is 3.91 with a standard deviation of 0.39, which is described as agreeing, this means that sustainable consciousness is much observed. In examining the data, it revealed that the two indicators; sustainability behavior and sustainability attitudes show slight differences in the mean and standard deviation scores. Both are categorized as strongly agree. The sustainability knowingness shows its mean and deviation which describes moderately agree. Sustainable behavior obtained the highest mean score of 4.45 with a standard deviation of 0.40. The sustainability attitude follows the highest means score which obtains 4.31 with the standard deviation of 0.43. Sustainability knowingness obtained the lowest mean score of 2.98 with a standard deviation of 0.31.

Table 3: Level of sustainable consciousness in Davao City

| Indicators | Mean | Std. Deviation | Descriptive Level |
|----------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Sustainability Behavior | 4.45 | 0.40 | Strongly Agree |
| Sustainability Attitudes | 4.31 | 0.43 | Strongly Agree |
| Sustainability Knowingness | 2.98 | 0.31 | Moderately Agree |
| Overall | 3.91 | 0.34 | Agree |

The finding supported the study by Gericke, Boeve-de Pauw, Berglund & Olsson (2019) on sustainability consciousness where the idea of sustainable development has gained importance among policymakers everywhere. Thus, the experience itself can be used to define consciousness, and anything that we can see, or experience can serve as an example of consciousness. (Velmans, 2009; Gericke (2018) concerning knowingness, attitude, and behavior (Olsson, Gericke, Boeve-de Pauw, Berglund & Chang (2019)). This can be done on understands the importance of tourism, acknowledging their role in tourism, and their participation in decision-making regarding sustainability. Also, by bringing attention to the environmental problems, we may work to protect these threatened species and safeguard the earth's natural resources for future generations. Being more environmentally conscious could also lessen some of the effects of climate change and our impact on the environment.

Ecotourism Performance

Table 4 shows the level of ecotourism performance in Davao City. Strongly agree is the overall total mean score for Ecotourism performance in Davao City, which indicates a mean of 4.49 with a standard deviation of 0.38. All of the indicators are constructed to strongly agree on the level of ecotourism performance in Davao City. Examining the data shows close differences in the mean score and deviation. Environmental education and community involvement obtained the highest mean score of 4.53 with a 0.51 standard deviation in environmental education and 0.52 in community involvement. The controlling follows the highest mean score of 4.52 and with a standard deviation of 0.49. The economic development and infrastructure follow with a 4.51 mean score and obtained 0.47 standard deviations. The revenue creation obtained a 4.46 mean score and 0.50 standard deviation. The ecotourism performance and conservation obtained a 4.45 mean score and has the same standard deviation of 0.51. The service obtained the lowest mean score of 4.44 with a standard deviation of 0.51.

Table 4: Level of ecotourism performance in Davao City

| Indicators | Mean | Std. Deviation | Descriptive Level |
|---|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Environmental Education | 4.53 | 0.51 | Strongly Agree |
| Community Involvement | 4.53 | 0.52 | Strongly Agree |
| Controlling | 4.52 | 0.49 | Strongly Agree |
| Economic Development and Infrastructure | 4.51 | 0.47 | Strongly Agree |
| Revenue Creation | 4.46 | 0.50 | Strongly Agree |
| Ecotourism Performance | 4.45 | 0.51 | Strongly Agree |
| Conservation | 4.45 | 0.51 | Strongly Agree |
| Service | 4.44 | 0.51 | Strongly Agree |
| Overall | 4.49 | 0.38 | Strongly Agree |

Authors asserted that ecotourism performance is a dimension of sustainability in which ecotourism is seen from a conservation perspective; a dimension of human sustainability in the form of local participation and benefits; learning and education as part of the ecotourism experience; and obligation to behave ethically (Setini et al., 2021). Because ecotourism encourages the care of natural and cultural resources and helps conserve and preserve the environment. The local

population gains social and economic benefits, which contributes to the long-term success of the project. Environmental and cultural education are both incorporated into ecotourism.

Correlation of the Three Variables

Table 5 shows the correlation between Quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness, Quality tourism experience and ecotourism performance, and Ecotourism performance and sustainable consciousness. It can be concluded that quality tourism experience correlated to sustainable consciousness has $r=0.205^{**}$ and ecotourism performance has $r=0.238^{**}$ which is found to be a weak positive relationship whilst ecotourism performance correlated to sustainable consciousness has $r=0.878^{**}$ which results in a very positive relationship. All associated variables exhibit a substantial and positive association.

Table 5: Correlation between variables

| Variables Correlated | <i>r</i> -value | Verbal Description | df (n-2) | <i>p</i> -value | Decision |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| Quality Tourism Experience vs Sustainable Consciousness | 0.205** | Weak Positive Relationship | 398 | 0.000 | Ho is rejected |
| Quality Tourism Experience vs Ecotourism Performance | 0.238** | Weak Positive Relationship | 398 | 0.000 | Ho is rejected |
| Ecotourism Performance vs Sustainable Consciousness | 0.878** | Very Strong Positive Relationship | 398 | 0.000 | Ho is rejected |

Mediation of the Three Variables

The result of the mediation is displayed in Figure 1. The Sobel test yielded a *z*-value of 4.8904 with a *p*-value of 0.000, which is significant at a 0.05 level. This means that the full mediation results generated by MedGraph tell us that the indirect effect between quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness via ecotourism performance is statistically significant (*p*-value < 0.05). The indirect effect between quality tourism experience to sustainable consciousness of the tourism industry in Davao City via ecotourism performance is statistically significant. This means that the actions being rendered towards the locality towards the travelers affect ecotourism and the knowledge in terms of sustainability of the travelers concerning the environment is very much needed in a way that the ecotourism performance in Davao City should be able to continue and alleviate the existing conservation practices. With the help of the responses of the travelers and local involvement, the ecotourism performance will be managed.

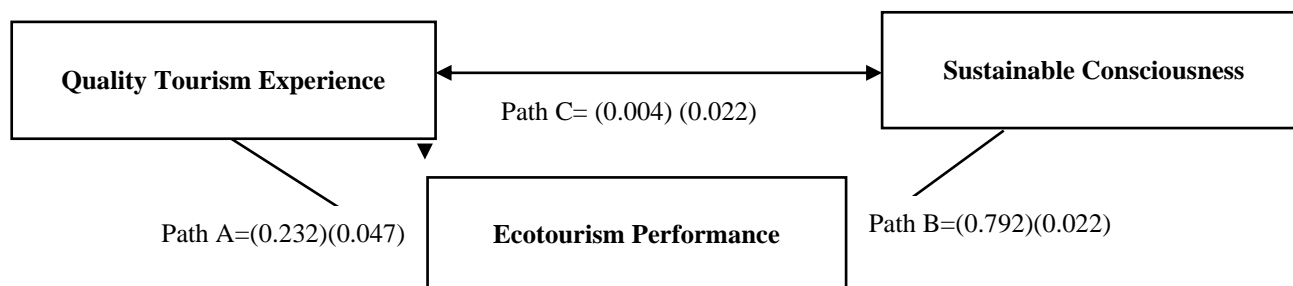


Figure 1: The mediating role of ecotourism performance on quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness

In addition, the causal relationship between quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness has been reduced from a significant beta coefficient value of 0.004 to 0.022, which is significant with the inclusion of ecotourism performance as a mediator variable. Also, the indirect effect between quality tourism experience to sustainable consciousness of the tourism industry in Davao City via ecotourism performance is statistically significant.

The authors' findings suggest that ecotourism is also becoming more relevant because it greatly raises tourists' consciousness about sustainability and provides them with a quality tourism experience (Wondirad, Tolkach & King, 2020). To ensure that travelers become conscious of sustainability and have a quality tourism experience, ecotourism performance as an alternative to tourism is significant. (Setini et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Wardana et al., (2018) community support significantly affects the relationship between ecotourism performance and sustainable consciousness. This shows that the locals are still committed to providing guests with a quality tourism experience and that they still have a strong sense of community.

CONCLUSION

In determining the level of quality tourism experiences of the tourist in Davao City concerning conservation, environmental preservation, and promoting cultural heritage was found to be very much observed or strongly agree. Since, the development, provision, and consumption of experiences are the heart of tourism.

The level of sustainable consciousness of the tourism industry in Davao City with relation to sustainable behavior, sustainable attitudes, and sustainable knowingness was described as the sustainable tourism consciousness is much observed or described as agree. The sustainable consciousness of the tourist is important because those indicators reflect the actions and behavior of the tourist in tourism.

The results revealed that the sequel of Ecotourism performance in Davao City, from environmental education, community involvement, controlling, economic development and infrastructure, revenue creation, ecotourism performance, conservation, and up to service was found to be more strongly agreed. Therefore, all the indicators in the level of tourism performance in Davao City are very much observed by the tourists.

The correlation of quality tourism experience, sustainable consciousness, and ecotourism performance has a weak positive relationship whilst ecotourism performance correlated, and sustainable consciousness have a very positive relationship. Thus, all associated variables exhibit a substantial and positive association.

Lastly, it is found that a full mediation result generated by MedGraph tells us that the indirect effect between quality tourism experience and sustainable consciousness via ecotourism performance is statistically significant.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the researchers come up with the limitations of this study:

The researcher therefore recommended to continue and alleviate the quality experiences of the tourist this can be done by getting feedback from the tourist experiences. With that being said, it will assess the things that need to be improved and areas to take action. Also, this feedback will serve as a measurement to understand the needs and wants of the tourist and to make it a more memorable experience that will lead to revisiting intention.

Also, the sustainability consciousness must improve its knowingness. Since sustainability improves the quality of our lives, protects our ecosystem, and preserves natural resources for future generations. In the corporate world, sustainability is associated with an organization's holistic approach, taking into account everything, from manufacturing to logistics to customer service through gradually altering the methods we create and use technologies, sustainable development constantly motivates us to protect and improve our natural resources.

Similarly, the ecotourism performance will continue to extend and maintain its conservation, service, control, economic development and infrastructure, revenue creation, environmental education, and community involvement. Through continuing collaboration with stakeholders such as residents, media, tourism developers, government, and tourists.

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