Abstract

This thesis seeks to approach the management of wildlife tourism from an integrated perspective and conceptualizes on the notion of viewing wildlife tourism as a system. It is essentially guided by a fundamental question: what factors are attributable towards effectively managing wildlife tourism? It makes an attempt to understand the factors contributing towards effective management of wildlife tourism and for that matter considers the four elements of wildlife tourism system viz., the visitors, the local communities, the park management, and the tour operators in an integrated manner. It offers an argument as to why an integrated approach seems to be an effective way of managing wildlife tourism, and makes an assertion that this integrated approach centers on the visitor experience, rests on local community control/empowerment, explicitly employs the park management agency’s competence, and ensures tour operators’ commitment. This implies that the effectiveness in management of wildlife tourism include four main components: (i) understanding the nature of visitor experience; (ii) augmenting local community control/empowerment; (iii) improving the competence of park management agency; and (iv) focusing on greater commitment from tour operators. This research pursues a multi-paradigm approach in addressing its research objectives. In that respect, it shuns the two conflicting paradigms of positivism and interpretivism, and adopts a pragmatic approach that contains the elements of both the paradigms resulting in a mixed epistemological position addressing the issues of both objectivism and constructivism. The pragmatic stance taken in this study rendered it necessary to employ a mixed methodology combining the elements of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Although this research acknowledges the central role of certain prior theory in its design and follows a dominant hypothetico-deductive theory testing approach, some amount of inductive investigation was required in the initial stage of the qualitative phase of the study since previous research on some aspects or dimensions was scarce. Thus the inductive approach at the initial stage led to the refinement of the conceptual framework and generating some more hypotheses that were later tested using the hypothetico-deductive approach in the quantitative phase of the study. The deductive approach associated with the quantitative methodology was considered essential for addressing the research objectives so as to come out with the integrated model for effective management of wildlife tourism in national parks.