

Perceptions of tourism business managers towards the impacts of climate change in selected tourist sites in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Climate change remains a significant challenge, which threatens the tourism sector in Zimbabwe. This study employs the destination sustainability theory to examine the perceptions of tourism business managers on the impacts of climate change on tourism activities in selected tourist centres in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research approach was adopted in which in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 managerial employees selected through purposive and snow ball sampling strategies. Participants were drawn from multiple study sites, namely Nyanga and Chimanimani; Hwange, Victoria Falls, and Binga; Kariba, Lake Chivero, Mana pools; and Gonarezhou. Findings showed that the perception of tourism facilities managers towards climate change were varied, with managers mostly concerned about climate change induced risk of flooding, shortened tourists vacation time, delayed opening of facilities, damage to supportive tourism infrastructure, loss of biodiversity and reduced capacity utilisation. Additionally, findings reveal that tourism is highly sensitive and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change in the selected study sites due to mediating variables encompassing over-dependence on tourism resources sensitive to climate change, an undiversified tourism market base, and reliance on outdoor tourist activities, coupled with other site specific variables. Overall, tourist sites lack adaptive capacity to recover from the impacts of climate change, hence the adoption of a wide range of smart climate change proofing strategies, notably sinking of boreholes to alleviate water shortages, translocation of wildlife, clearing blocked roads, rehabilitating damaged bridges, investing in energy saving appliances, and green energy. The findings of the study underscore the need for tourism facilities managers to adopt a climate change centric approach when developing climate change proofing strategies to enhance the sustainability and resilience of the sector.

Keywords: Climate change, Destination sustainability framework, Nature-based tourism, Perception, Resilience, Vulnerability