



1

ANTECEDENTS OF ETHICAL VISITOR BEHAVIOUR: THE CASE OF A NATURAL WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract: Visitors to natural heritage sites are increasingly being encouraged to behave in a more ethical way to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the host community and the environment. As such, several ways of encouraging visitors to behave ethically have been proposed in literature. Despite literature suggesting a wide range of ways of encouraging ethical behaviour in different tourism settings, relatively few studies have probed the significance of aspects of ethical tourism (ET) on ethical visitor behaviour (EVB). This paper proposes ET aspects outlined by Speed (2008) in the ET model as determinants of EVB. Based on a quantitative survey of 323 respondents who visited iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) during the period in which the study was conducted, eleven aspects of ET were empirically confirmed and validated. Research results reveal that the ET aspects and their related guidelines inspire visitors to behave appropriately. Improved insight into the respondents' perceptions of ET aspects as determining factors of EVB may equip site managers with strategies of mitigating visitors' deviant behaviour.

Keywords: *ethical tourism, ethical visitor behaviour, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, visitor behaviour, world heritage site*

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of tourism as an industry gave many people around the world, including South Africans, hope that their lives would improve markedly. As the tourism industry was envisioned to be a smokeless industry, it was hoped that it would contribute to the upliftment of the economic well-being of many societies (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013). However, the sheer scope and scale at which the tourism industry grew in past decades saw it being linked to an array of social, economic, and environmental illnesses (Hall & Lew, 2009). The illnesses include, among others, cultural commodification, environmental pollution, overuse of natural resources, graffiti, and economic leakages (Albrecht, 2017). Some of these illnesses have been precipitated by visitors' inappropriate behaviours. Such behaviour and their associated negative impacts meant that a profound reflection on visitor behaviour at tourism sites was necessary.

To minimise the negative impacts of inapt visitor behaviour, there have been increased calls for those coming to create memorable experience with tourism resources to use them responsibly (Cozzio *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, a raft of interferences has been suggested to entice visitors to behave in more ethical ways. Some of the interventions include changing infrastructure (Kallbekken & Sælen, 2013), changing defaults (Dolnicar, Knežević Cvelbar & Grün, 2019), rewarding desired behaviour (Dolnicar *et al.*, 2020), leveraging social norms (Gössling, Araña & Aguiar-Quintana, 2019), and raising awareness of environmental benefits (Araña & León, 2016; León & Araña, 2020). However, it is not prudent for the interventions to convince visitors to be mindful and behave ethically. Most of the visitors to these sites are inherently pleasure-seekers whose motives are maximisation of personal values (hedonistic) and short-term goals of escaping daily monotony routines (Muzeza, Hermann & Khunou, 2018) rather than the long-term societal needs of preserving tourism resources (Páskova, 2012; Zelenka, 2012; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2016). Considering this, destination authorities are required to fashion environments that are capable of seducing emotional empathy to trigger specific visitor ethical behaviour in the destinations visited.

To create tourism environments that are conducive to enticing ethical emotions and reducing visitor non-compliance, tourism practitioners and developers have invented diverse tourism frameworks that not only en-