Antecedents of Environmentally Responsible Behavior:
A Gen Z Analysis

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Abstract

Environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB) is essential for the sustainable development of our planet. Eco-tourism destinations are vital for fostering such behaviour. Eco-tourism destinations are characterized by their commitment to preserving and protecting the natural environment, often in fragile and pristine ecosystems. Visitors to these destinations are encouraged to engage in activities that have minimal negative impact on the environment while promoting conservation efforts. The research explores the ERB of young tourists involved in ecotourism. The study proposes a behavioural model indicating that a tourist's environmentally responsible actions are shaped by their perceived value of the eco-travel experience, their satisfaction, and their level of engagement in activities. The paper also examines whether the degree of environmentally responsible behaviour varies based on education level and gender during eco-friendly travel experiences. Researchers collected and analysed 265 valid questionnaires from college students in Kerala. The results indicate that the participation of young people in eco-travel activities significantly influences their environmentally responsible behaviour. Therefore, the initial step in a series of actions to promote stronger environmentally responsible behaviour involves enhancing the perception of tourists regarding eco-friendly travel activities, thereby increasing the involvement and satisfaction levels of eco-tourists.

Keywords: Environmental Responsible Behaviour, Activity involvement, Perceived value

1. Introduction

Responsible behavior, also known as ERB or Ecotourism Responsible Behavior, is a crucial practice that seeks to maximize benefits while minimizing the negative effect on the environment (Poudel and Nyaupane, 2017). This behavior can take various forms, including reuse, energy management, and environmental preservationist (Chiu et al., 2014; Cheung et al.,

2017). In the context of green tourism, ERB demonstrates tourists' awareness of their impact on the environment and their dedication to preserving it (Ng et al., 2018). A study by Gronhoj and Thogersen (2017) on the pro-environmental behavior of adolescents found that those with higher levels of motivation were more actively engaged in ERB, which included recycling, energy saving, and purchasing green products. Similarly, Kerstetter et al. (2004) examined the behavior of ecotourists in Taiwan and discovered that individuals with higher levels of education and holistic motivation were more likely to engage in responsible behaviors. These behaviors included refraining from troubling plants and animals, following rules in protected areas, and maintaining the quality of the local environment.

Eco- friendly tourism, a form of sustainable tourism, aims to promote responsible travel to natural areas while conserving the environment and supporting the well-being of local communities. It provides a low-impact alternative to mass tourism, offering small-scale travel experiences that educate travellers, support ecological conservation, and encourage respect for diverse cultures and human rights (Bjork, 2000).

Examining the factors that promote responsible behavior among young people is crucial in promoting positive behavior. It is important to identify the key components contributing to responsible conduct and understand the potential outcomes resulting from it. This analysis aims to delve into the antecedents of responsible behavior among young people and their implications. Such an examination can improve academic performance, improve social skills, and enhance overall well-being. Limited academic research explores the connection between young tourists' perception of ecotourism sites and their environmentally responsible behavior. Most studies that do exist consider environmentally responsible behavior as a general trait. This study introduces a new paradigm explaining the relationship between perceived value, activity involvement, satisfaction, and ecologically conscious behavior among Generation Z ecotourists.

2. Theoretical background

This investigation uses the value-attitude-behaviour designs to understand ecologically responsible behavior. The framework considers the cognitive aspects of attitude, which are perceived value and activity involvement, as well as the emotional component of attitude, which is measured by satisfaction with the eco-travel experience.

2.1 Constructs used in the study

Perceived value

When buying goods or services, consumers get a sense of perceived value as a result of assessing the input and output they receive (Zeithaml, 1988). The product or service obtained as well as the transaction process are both considered in the perception of value (AI-Sabbahy, Ekinci, & Riley, 2004). Perceived value in the tourism sector is commonly characterized as an individual's assessment of the features of travel products, including service quality, cost, feelings, and social aspects (Petrick, 2004). These elements establish the value of a product and have a big influence on how satisfied customers are after their trip (Chen & Tasi, 2007).

Activity involvement

The degree to which someone views something as significant is reflected in their level of involvement. The marketing definition of engagement is "the perceived relevance of an object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). Additionally, Reid and Crompton (1993) contend that participation is a key factor in leisure behavior. People who love to travel, for example, might pay closer attention to information about travel. As a result, involvement describes how interested tourists are in the features and categories of leisure activities they partake in, leading to varying interpretations. In summary, when it comes to selecting travel activities, travellers prioritize involvement.

Satisfaction

Oliver (1977) defined satisfaction as the discrepancy between a customer's expectations and what they actually receive after completing a transaction. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1994), a customer's level of satisfaction is influenced by the calibre of the product, the level of service, and the cost of the transaction. According to Tain-Cole and Crompton (2003), contentment is a psychological result of having a good travel experience. According to Davis, Le, and Coy (2011), protective ecological behavior might result from a favourable experience with the environment.

ERB

According to Cottrell and Graefe's (1997) research, an individual's ecological knowledge, dedication, and environmental concern are all components of environmental responsibility. According to Iwata (2001), there are several ways to exhibit environmentally conscious behavior, including energy conservation and garbage recycling. According to Puhakka (2011), visitors that engage in ecotourism demonstrate environmentally conscious behavior by being aware of how their actions affect the ecosystem and by following the rules of the eco site.

2.2 Conceptual Framework
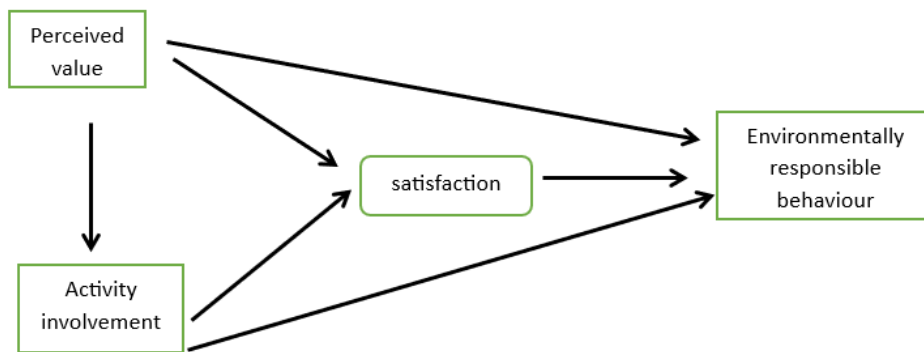
3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sample design and data collection

The study utilized a questionnaire survey to gather data from tourists aged 17 to 23 who had visited eco-tourism destinations. The study targeted Keralite college students both undergraduate and postgraduate as the population. The questionnaire is administered over 4 months, from July 2023 to December 2023 among eco-tourists. The questionnaire was developed after a thorough literature review and underwent a pre-test with a sample of 80 to eliminate any redundant scale items. The questionnaire's content and face validity were confirmed through a thorough literature review and expert feedback. Based on respondents' feedback, some questions' wording was changed to improve clarity. The items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement, 3 indicating neutrality, and 5 indicating strong agreement. Tourists who participated in the survey were given a

questionnaire to complete after their eco-tour. Out of 273 questionnaires distributed, 265 were valid after removing incomplete ones.

3.2 Demographics.

The study collects demographic data like age, gender, and education level to enhance its comprehensiveness.

3.3 Measures.

The study questionnaire comprises five sections, which are explained below. Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) work utilized four items to measure perceived value: quality, price, emotions, and social value. Activity involvement was evaluated using Havitz and Dimanche's (1997) attraction, enjoyment, and centrality in life, and Okello and Yerian's (2009) satisfaction scale, including ecological environment maintenance, tour guide interpretation, experience, and wildlife appreciation. To evaluate environmentally responsible behaviour, seven items were selected and modified from the works of Kerstetter et al. (2004) and Thapa (2010).

4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using IBM SPSS 24 software, and reliability alpha values were calculated to ensure consistency in each domain, and correlation matrix to find the relationship between the factors identified. The mean difference of constructs with demographic factors is investigated using an independent t-test.

4.1 Demographic Features

Table 1 Demographic profile

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	153	57.7
Female	112	42.3
Qualification		
Graduates	159	60
Post Graduates	106	40
Age		
17-20	135	50.9
21-23	130	49.1

4.2 Reliability

The Reliability Alpha values were calculated to ensure consistency in measuring the Reliability construct, describing the close relationship of each item to a specific group. The scores for Perceived Value, Activity Involvement, Satisfaction, and Environmental Responsible Behavior are .752, .683, .832, and .865, respectively. These reliability scores have exceeded the threshold of 0.60, as initially proposed by Allen and Yen (1979).

4.3 correlation

Correlation investigates the relation between perceived value, Activity Involvement, satisfaction and environmentally responsible behaviour

H1: There exists a strong correlation between perceived value, activity involvement, satisfaction, and environmentally responsible behavior.

Table 2 Interconstruct Correlation Matrix

	PV	AI	SAT	ERB
PV	1			
AI	.273	1		
SAT	.380	.494	1	
ERB	.373	.429	.448	1

**Correlation is significance at the 0.01level for 2 tailed.

Result

Pearson's product correlation was moderately positive and statistically significant (r = +0.3, p < .001). The relationship between perceived value and activity involvement was weak and positive, as it is below 0.3. This shows that an increase in activity involvement, and satisfaction would lead to a higher environmentally responsible behaviour.

4.4 T-TEST

4.4.1 Test whether there is a significant difference between qualification with regards to factors of perceived value, Activity Involvement, satisfaction and ERB

(a)   H1a: there is a considerable difference in perceived value between graduates and post-graduates

(b)   H1b: there is a considerable difference in satisfaction between graduates and post-graduates

(c)   H1c: there is a considerable difference in activity involvement between graduates and post-graduates

(d)   H1d: there is a considerable difference in environmentally responsible behaviour between graduates and post-graduates

Table 3 Differences between qualification with ERB and antecedents

Factors	Graduate		Postgraduate		T value	P value
	Mean	SD	mean	SD		
Perceived value	3.99	.726	3.85	.796	1.272	.205
Satisfaction	3.98	.657	3.88	.781	.1.123	.263
Activity involvement	4.18	.679	4.07	.799	1.238	.217
ERB	4.09	.572	3.99	.703	1.272	.205

Result of independent sample t-test

A rigorous independent samples t-test was performed to comprehensively compare the perceived value, satisfaction, activity involvement, and ERB between graduates and postgraduates. There were no significant differences (as per Levene's test t values (95%),p >.05) in scores for graduates (Mean value ranges 3.99 to 4.18, SD from .572 to .726) and for postgraduates (Mean values 3.85 to 4.07, and SD from .703 to .799). The mean difference (0.100 to 0.145, 95% CI) was very small, so H1 is not supported.

4.4.2 Test whether there is a considerable difference between genders with regard to factors of perceived value, Activity Involvement, satisfaction, and ERB

(a)   H2a: there is a considerable difference in perceived value between gender

(b)   H2b: there is a considerable difference in satisfaction between gender

(c)   H2c: there is a considerable difference in activity involvement between gender

(d)   H2d: there is a considerable difference in environmentally responsible behaviour between gender

Table 4 Independent sample t- test

	Gender	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
ERB	F	4.15	.569	4.59	0.033				0.169	0.078	0.016	0.322
	M	3.98	.661			2.231	256.015	0.027	0.169	0.076	0.02	0.318
PV	F	4.01	.697	4.318	0.039				0.134	0.094	-0.051	0.319
	M	3.88	.795			1.46	254.612	0.146	0.134	0.092	-0.047	0.316
AI	F	4.28	.525	11.251	0.001				0.242	0.09	0.065	0.419
	M	4.03	.836			2.885	257.581	0.004	0.242	0.084	0.077	0.407
ST	F	4.00	.624	7.495	0.007				0.101	0.088	-0.073	0.274
	M	3.90	.765			1.178	259.941	0.24	0.101	0.085	-0.068	0.269

Result

An .independent samples t-test was conducted to compare perceived value, satisfaction, Activity involvement, and ERB for females and males. There were no significant discrepancies in perceived value and satisfaction (t values =1.46&1.178 (95%), p >.05) in the scores for females (Mean = 4.01 & 4.00, SD = .697 & .624) and for Males (Mean = 3.88& 3.90, and SD = .795 & .765). The differences in the mean (mean difference = .134 &.101, 95% Confidence Interval) were small. Hence H2a and H2b are not supported.

Concerning Activity involvement and ERB, there were large differences (t 2.885&2.231 (257.581), p < .05) in the scores for female (Mean = 4.28 & 4.15, SD = .525 & .569) was higher than for Male (Mean = 4.03& 3.98, and SD = .836 & .661). The extent of the mean differences

(mean difference = .242 &.169, 95% Confidence Interval are positives) was significant. Hence H2c and H2d are supported.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This research aims to investigate how Environmentally Responsible Behavior (ERB) and its antecedents influence young people. The study's findings indicate that greater satisfaction and active participation can foster ERB at ecological sites, thereby minimizing environmental damage. To promote positive behaviour among young people, it is crucial to examine the factors that contribute to responsible behaviour and the possible outcomes that result from it. Although perceived value, is a key predictor of satisfaction (Chen and Tasi, 2007), does not show significant differences between youth genders and education levels. In this context, Tourist satisfaction with eco-travel experiences is influenced by both travel attributes and affection. Studies suggest that when tourists feel the benefits of participating in eco-travel activities, they identify with the environment, promoting environmental concern and sensitivity, ultimately shaping environmentally responsible behavior. This satisfaction is crucial in evaluating these experiences.

6. Theoretical and Managerial implication

The study, unlike other empirical studies, is context-specific and examines the mediating role of loyalty in the product place image and equity relationship. It identifies a literature gap in understanding the relationship between the denomination of origin image and creating brand equity, finding that loyalty plays a higher role in building this equity.

The development of eco-tourism destinations can provide engaging and educational experiences for young people. Such experiences may include guided eco-tours, workshops on environmental conservation, and hands-on activities like tree planting. Environmental problems are a major issue that is frequently debated today. The conservation of the environment is crucial, as all living beings rely on various environmental factors for survival. Unfortunately, many young people today are more focused on technology than the environment. However, we all have a responsibility to protect the environment. Highlighting a destination's sustainability efforts, such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and wildlife preservation, can resonate with environmentally conscious young people.

7. Limitations and future research directions

In the same manner as any other study, our study on responsible behaviour among young people has certain limitations. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the various societal, cultural, and environmental factors that influence the development of positive conduct. By doing so, we can promote responsible behaviour among youths and reap the benefits connected with it, such as improved academic performance, better social skills, and enhanced overall well-being. It is worth noting that our study was done only in Kerala, and cultural differences may have a major impact on identifying the constructs. Future studies should thus focus on additional locations to get a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Our study mainly focuses on the environmentally responsible behaviour of young people, which is a crucial step towards sustainability. Further studies can be carried out subsequently to look into how sustainability, reputation, word-of-mouth, and other elements affect responsible behaviour.

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