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Minseong Kim
University of Florida

Svetlana Stepchenkova
University of Florida

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The Impact of Personal Values and Attitudes on Responsible Behavior toward the Environment

Introduction

With the volume of tourists increased in almost all geographical regions (Cheng and Wu, 2015; Han, 2015), environmental problems have gained attention from tourism scholars and destination management organizations (DMOs). One of the ways of resolving environmental issues is to encourage residents and tourists to behave pro-environmentally toward a host destination (Fulton et al. 2015). In consumer behavior literature, much research has been conducted using the value-belief-norm theory (Stern and Dirtz 1994) to predict the environmentally responsible and ethical behaviors of consumers (e.g., green buying and recycling) (Jung, Kim, and Oh 2016; Lee, Kim, Kim, and Choi 2014). A person's values are defined as "a desirable trans-situational goal varying in importance, which serves as a guiding principle in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz 1992, p. 21). Because a person's values are central to his or her cognitive system, they are considered drivers of travelers' pro-environmental behaviors in various contexts (e.g., green lodging for Han 2015; leisure/recreation for Ho, Liao, Huang, and Chen 2015). Furthermore, research indicates that personal values can act as predictors of destination loyalty among tourists exhibiting commitments to revisit and recommend the place (Lee and Chang 2012). Understanding how tourists' personal values influence their environmentally responsible behavior and destination loyalty can help DMOs sustain destination environmentally while developing it economically (Chiu, Lee, and Chen 2014). Tourists' environmentally responsible behavior is especially important for the nature-based destinations which rely on the use of undeveloped natural areas' resources (Lee, 2009). In addition, destination loyalty provides a travel destination with direct and indirect economic benefits via revisits and first-time arrivals (Horng, Liu, Chou, and Tsai 2012). Especially, a nature-based destination needs to generate economic benefits for conservation and protection of its natural resources (Gale and Hill 2009). Despite the importance of the economic aspects of nature-based tourism, prior studies have mainly focused on tourists' environmentally responsible behavior toward a destination (Chen and Wu 2015; Gronau 2017; Han 2015; Ho et al. 2015). Thus, this research attempts to fill the gap in the nature-based tourism literature by proposing a research model which integrates the impact of personal values and attitudes on tourists' environmentally responsible behavior as well as destination loyalty and positive word-of-mouth about eco-travel designed to emphasize the nature-based destination's environmental attributes for attracting tourists.

Value-belief-norm theory is based on a hierarchical order ranging from value and belief (or attitude) to behavior (Lee et al. 2014; Stern and Dirtz 1994). This theory is based on the notion that an individual's personal values form his or her attitude toward an object, which in turn influence his or her general tendency to behave (Stern 2000). Some empirical studies consider attitudinal variables, such as attitudes toward the environment, mediators of the causal relationship between personal values and environmentally responsible behavior by applying the theory to a green consumer behavior context (Lee et al. 2015; Pickett-Baker and Ozako 2008). Therefore, this study develops a research model with three determinants of nature-based tourists' behavior and loyalty: altruistic value and two dimensions of attitude (i.e., attitude toward eco-travel and attitude toward the destination). By empirically testing the research model, this study contributes to the existing nature-based tourism literature by integrating an environmental perspective (i.e., tourists' environmentally responsible behavior) with economic insight (i.e., destination loyalty). Empirical

findings of this study will be especially important to DMOs for enhancing their nature-based destination's environmental and economic advantages.

Literature Review

Value-belief-norm theory is based on a causal chain of altruistic values, beliefs, and personal norms for environmentally responsible behavior. Moreover, personal values activate a person's favorable attitude toward the environment (Stern 2000). In the tourism context, personal values also determine tourists' destination selection and attitudes toward a destination since they want to express personal values through the destination selection and attitudes (Nyaupane, Paris, and Teye 2011). Value-belief-norm theory also emphasizes the role of altruistic value on a tourist's environmentally responsible behavior since altruistic value cares about the welfare of human-being and biosphere (de Groot and Steg 2010; Jansson, Marell, and Nordlund 2010). More specifically, individuals make decisions affecting the natural environment based on the costs/benefits to others, whether the decisions affect the biosphere (e.g., are beneficial to the environment) and/or society (e.g., are beneficial to next generation) (Lee et al. 2014). Based on the theory, prior research has suggested that individuals giving altruistic value priority have a greater tendency to possess strong attitudes toward the environment than others (Gärling, Fujii, Gärling, and Jakobsson 2003; Lee et al. 2014).

As an outcome of altruistic value, attitude is defined as an individual's sense of feeling, sustainable evaluation, and intention to dislike or like a particular idea or object (Kotler 2003). Attitude is also considered a psychological tendency exhibited by evaluating a certain entity with some level of disfavor or favor (Eagly and Chaiken 1995). This study proposes that tourists participating in eco-travel may engage in a transferring procedure by associating the eco-travel destination's image and/or attitude with a lesser-known host destination based on trust transfer theory. In other words, attitude toward a nature-based destination's eco-travel can be transferred to attitude toward the destination among tourists. According to Strub and Priest (1976), more specifically, if the person exhibiting trust has little experience with an object, his or her trust can be transferred from the trust's source to its target. This theory implies that a certain image and/or attitude will also be transferred if a trustor perceives two objects are associated. In other words, when evaluating a certain unfamiliar object, people have a tendency to depend on the source of their trust and associate its image and/or attitude toward a lesser-trusted target, creating an association between the target and source (Lee, Kim, Lee, and Kim 2014).

In addition to the causal relationship between attitudes, it has been indicated that attitude can cause an individual to change his or her behavioral intention and possess a consistently unfavorable or favorable response to a particular object (Ajzen 2005; Bagozzi and Warshaw 1992). Hansen (2008) contends that if an individual's attitude toward an object is favorable, he or she is more likely to engage in positive behavior toward the object. Within nature-based tourism, positive attitudes toward eco-travel and the destination may result in tourists' favorable behaviors toward the eco-travel and the destination, such environmentally responsible behavior, recommendation, and positive word-of-mouth. A tourist's environmentally responsible behavior has been examined in terms of both general actions (i.e., discussing environmental issues with other tourists and/or residents and trying to find ways of solving environmental issues) and specific actions (i.e., reporting any environmental destruction or pollution and trying not to disrupt the flora and fauna)

toward a nature-based destination (Chiu et al. 2014). In addition, destination loyalty has been considered a significant factor influencing a destination's long-term viability by leading to competitive advantages (Sun, Chi, and Xu 2013). This is because destination loyalty is expressed as a tourist's positive word-of-mouth and recommendation of a preferred destination and/or its tourism products to others (Han 2015). Also, loyalty is expressed by a tourist's deeply held commitment to consistently revisit a preferred destination and/or repurchase its tourism products in the future despite competitors' marketing efforts and situational influences encouraging switching behavior (Sun et al 2013). Thus, based on the aforementioned principles, the following hypotheses are noted (see Figure 1):

H1: Altruistic value has a positive influence on attitude toward eco-travel.

H2: Altruistic value has a positive influence on attitude toward the destination.

H3: Attitude toward eco-travel has a positive influence on attitude toward the destination.

H4: Attitude toward eco-travel has a positive influence on destination loyalty.

H5: Attitude toward eco-travel has a positive influence on environmentally responsible behavior.

H6: Attitude toward eco-travel has a positive influence on positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel.

H7: Attitude toward the destination has a positive influence on destination loyalty.

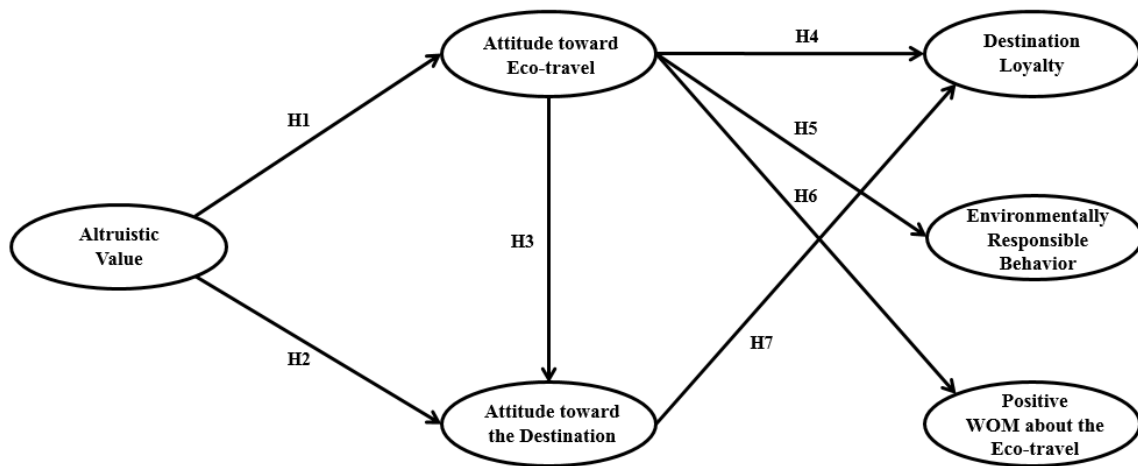


Figure 1. A Proposed Model

Methodology

The research used a cross-sectional survey of South Korean tourists who purchased and consumed an eco-travel package to Jeju Island, South Korea, provided by South Koreans travel agencies. Since the island has become a popular nature-based destination among domestic tourists (Kim and

Stepchenkova 2017), this study selected it as a research context in order to effectively explain their environmentally responsible behavior toward the destination. Using the island's natural resources, the eco-travel package provides tourists with an array of outdoor activities including organic gardening, wildlife habitat tours, farm apprenticeship, etc. For sampling, a marketing research company was hired and delivered 35 copies of the survey to ten travel agencies agreeing to participate in this research (i.e. 350 copies total). The copies of the survey were distributed to domestic tourists who had purchased and participated in the ecotourism package during September and October 2015. Consequently, 289 valid samples were used for data analyses, representing a usable response rate of 82.6%.

Participants were asked to rate each of the eight items "as a guiding principle in my life" on an importance scale ranging from "1 = not important at all" to "7 = extremely important." For instance, participants rated the importance of "a world at peace." The eight items measured both the biospheric (4 items) and social (4 items) aspects of altruistic value orientation (Lee et al. 2014). A 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at "1 = strongly disagree" and "7 = strong agree" was employed to measure participants' attitude toward eco-travel, attitudes toward the destination, destination loyalty, environmentally responsible behavior, and positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel. Attitude toward eco-travel was operationalized with five measures (e.g., *The eco-travel was enjoyable*) (Huang and Hsu 2009). Attitude toward the destination was operationalized with four items (e.g., *As a tourism destination, I think that Jeju Island is very bad/very good*) (Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, and Manzari 2012). Destination loyalty was measured with four items (e.g., *I will encourage other people to visit Jeju Island*) (Sun et al., 2013). Environmentally responsible behavior was operationalized with four measures (e.g., *I try not to disrupt the fauna and flora during my travel*) (Chiu et al. 2014). Finally, positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel was measured with three items (e.g., *I say positive things about the eco-travel to other people*) (Ng, David, and Dagger 2011).

Results

The reliability of each construct was assessed with Cronbach's alpha coefficients (i.e., altruistic value = 0.869; attitude toward eco-travel = 0.840; attitude toward the destination = 0.926; destination loyalty = 0.884; environmentally responsible behavior = 0.852; positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel = 0.922), exceeding the acceptable level of reliability in the social science field recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1992) (i.e., 0.70). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then performed to assess the discriminant and convergent validity of each construct. After five items with standardized factor loadings lower than 0.50 were dropped from the overall measurement model, all standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.5 and satisfying levels of fit indices were indicated: $\chi^2 = 426.642$, d.f.=195 (χ^2 /d.f.=2.188), $p < 0.001$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.953, normed fit index (NFI) = 0.917, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.944, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.064. The measurement model was assessed by structural equation modeling (SEM) following CFA. Its fit indices were $\chi^2 = 508.58$, d.f. = 200 (χ^2 /d.f. = 2.543), $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.937, NFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.927, RMSEA = 0.073. All fit indices exceeded recommended levels of the goodness of fit of the measurement model: CFI > 0.90; NFI > 0.90; TLI > 0.90; RMSEA < 0.10 (Chau 1997).

As indicated in Table 1, the empirical findings indicated that altruistic value significantly influenced attitude toward eco-travel (coefficient = 0.794, t-value = 12.181, $p < 0.01$) while its impact on attitude toward the destination was not statistically significant, supporting only H1. The

findings also confirmed that attitude toward eco-travel significantly affected attitude toward the destination (coefficient = 0.754, t-value = 6.662, $p < 0.01$), destination loyalty (coefficient = 0.342, t-value = 4.066, $p < 0.01$), environmentally responsible behavior (coefficient = 0.336, t-value = 4.900, $p < 0.01$), and positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel (coefficient = 0.475, t-value = 7.227, $p < 0.01$), supporting H3, H4, H5, and H6. Lastly, attitude toward the destination had a significant impact on destination loyalty (coefficient = 0.438, t-value = 5.255, $p < 0.01$), supporting H7.

Table 1. Standardized Parameter Estimates

Path	Standardized Estimates	Standardized error	t-value
Altruistic value → Attitude toward eco-travel	0.794	0.053	12.181
Altruistic value → Attitude toward the destination	-0.018	0.092	-0.179
Attitude toward eco-travel → Attitude toward the destination	0.754	0.127	6.662
Attitude toward eco-travel → Destination loyalty	0.342	0.085	4.066
Attitude toward eco-travel → Environmentally responsible behavior	0.336	0.111	4.900
Attitude toward eco-travel → Positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel	0.475	0.096	7.227
Attitude toward the destination → Destination loyalty	0.438	0.075	5.225

Conclusion and Discussion

This research examined the impact of altruistic value on attitudes toward a nature-based destination's eco-travel and the destination and their influences on environmentally responsible behavior and destination loyalty as well as positive word-of-mouth about the eco-travel among domestic tourists who visited Jeju Island, a popular nature-based destination in South Korea. The results indicated that tourists with a high level of altruistic value are more likely to have positive attitudes toward eco-travel. Tourists with a high level of altruistic value, in other words, viewed eco-travel as worthwhile. This finding responds to Lee et al. (2014), who contended that based on value-belief-norm theory individuals' altruistic values influence pro-environmental actions indirectly via more specific attitudes toward a particular object or topic. This theory was used as the starting point of this study and the hierarchical model where tourists' altruistic value directly affects attitudes, and consequently the attitudes influence their favorable behaviors toward a nature-based destination and its eco-travel was formulated. Furthermore, this study indicated that attitude and loyalty toward the destination are formed by attitude toward the destination's eco-travel. The conceptual model of this study showed the importance of a nature-based destination's eco-travel to engage in environmentally responsible behavior and loyalty toward the host destination and its eco-travel.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study may be the first to formulate and empirically test a research model which determines destination loyalty, environmentally responsible behavior, and positive word-of-mouth about eco-travel in a nature-based destination context. In particular, tourists' loyalty toward a destination and the destination's eco-travel as well as environmentally responsible behavior toward the destination are critical factors enhancing the destination's potential economic and environmental advantages (Gronau 2017). However, prior research in the nature-based context has been mainly conducted to investigate antecedents of tourists' environmentally responsible behavior toward a destination (Chen and Wu 2015; Chiu et al. 2014;

Lee and Jan 2015). Importantly, tourists' loyalty (e.g., recommendation and revisit intention) should be considered when conducting research on sustainable tourism because the tourists' loyalty-based behaviors bring potential economic benefits to a destination (Sun et al. 2013). The economic benefits may result in investments in environmental protection and education about environmental protection to visitors and residents at a host destination (Gale and Hill 2009). In line with this notion, the current study determined that tourists' altruistic value and attitudes are important drivers of environmentally responsible behavior as well as loyalty toward a nature-based destination for sustainable tourism.

Second, by expanding on previous studies (Lee et al. 2014), the current study indicated that tourists' attitude toward a nature-based destination's eco-travel can be transferred to their attitude toward the destination from a trust transfer theory perspective. A nature-based destination provides an array of eco-travel to tourists to both generate profits and conserve its natural resources. This study tested and supported a proposition that tourists' attitude to eco-travel influences their perception and behavior toward the eco-travel and the host destination. Thus, this study may help scholars to predict tourists' loyalty and environmental responsible behavior toward a nature-based destination from the trust transfer theory perspective.

The model may help DMOs develop and maintain eco-travel in a sustainable manner. More specifically, DMOs may need to target altruistically oriented tourists since these tourists have a greater tendency to consider eco-travel to be worthwhile. Developing eco-travel that focuses on the well-being of both society and the environment be the most effective way to attract tourists. In addition, an effort to instill both social and biospheric values (i.e., altruistic aspects) in the tourists participating in eco-travel may cause them to have favorable attitudes toward a host destination and its eco-travel as well as favorably behave toward the destination (e.g., protecting and preserving the environment). Practically, DMOs may have to emphasize how eco-travel positively contributes to the host destination's society and natural environment. However, according to the existing literature on green consumer behavior, personal values alone may not encourage individuals to participate in behavioral intention and actual behavior (Lee et al. 2014). Therefore, the proposed model of this research emphasizes the roles of two aspects of attitude in predicting destination loyalty and positive word-of-mouth leading to potential economic benefits as well as environmentally responsible behavior resulting in environmental benefits in the nature-based destination context.

Although this research provides several theoretical and practical implications, it has some limitations that should be considered when examining the empirical findings. First, types of eco-travel (e.g., land-based or water-based) might moderate the relationship between tourists' attitude toward eco-travel and its outcome variables. Since ways to pro-environmentally behave toward water-based attractions may differ from those toward land-based attractions, additional comparative analyses between types of eco-travel need to be conducted to appropriately predict tourists' behavior and loyalty. Second, this study considered mainly environmental benefits for a nature-based destination. A socio-cultural perspective should also be considered by future research for achieving the three bottom lines of sustainable tourism (i.e., economic, environmental, and socio-cultural). Last, the hypotheses this study formulated should be replicated from an international tourist's perspective to encompass all types of visitors to the island.

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