

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CONSUMERS' PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS IN THE TOURISM CONTEXT

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Abstract: *The paper carries out an analysis of the literature that takes into account consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours, with emphasis on the particular situation of the consumption of tourist services. The study of the bibliographic materials reveals the existence of significant differences between the consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at home and on vacation, as well as the increase in their preference for "green" hotels. Among the methods of studying the interrelationship between pro-environmental attitude and behaviour, the present paper describes the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the most commonly used one.*

Key words: *attitudes, pro-environmental behaviour, Theory of Planned Behaviour, tourism, "green" hotel.*

1. Introduction

Recognizing the seriousness of the problems caused by excessive use of energy and non-renewable natural resources, rich offerings of products, production processes that are unfriendly with the environment and natural disasters, a growing number of individuals are aware of environmental issues and recognize that our natural resources are limited and the environment is more fragile than once thought [20], [30], [35].

This awareness for the environment among the public determines a positive attitude towards eco-friendly activities and encourages people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours in everyday life [30], [36].

Dunlap [19] argued that the public concern towards the environment has increased over the recent decades. Some studies have reported a growing public participation in eco-friendly activities, such as donating some amounts of money for environmental issues, the purchase of environmentally friendly products, buying organic foods and increasing involvement in recycling activities [33]. Most consumers express their concern for the environment in general, and understand the impact of their own behaviour on the environment. However, caring for the environment is indispensable, but insufficient for a sustainable consumption [31].

The literature indicates a high number of studies, most of them from the consumption perspective, which

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investigate the pro-environmental attitudes of individuals, but also the link between them and pro-environmental behaviours in the context of products and services consumption. This paper proposes an analysis of the literature in this area, with particular emphasis on the tourist services consumption and the identification of differences in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at home and on vacation.

2. Consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours

Environmental attitude is defined as a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating the natural environment with a certain degree of approval or disapproval [44]. According to Schultz et al. [55], environmental attitude means the collection of beliefs, affect and behavioural intentions that a person has about activities related to the environment. Being a taught predisposition resulting from the values system, environmental attitude exerts an influence on the consumer's response towards the environment [50].

The "pro-environmental" term [56] indicates the concern for the physical environment (air, earth, water). The phrase "pro-environmental attitude" has been used by Bohlen et al. [10] as a one-dimensional scale representing consumers' concern over the quality of the environment and reflects the attitude towards environmental issues.

Other studies reveal that pro-environmental attitudes include four dimensions, i.e.: (1) the perceived seriousness of environmental issues, (2) the disadvantage of being friendly to the environment, (3) the importance of being friendly to the environment and (4) the perceived level of the corporate responsibility to be eco-friendly, the last one stating the beliefs of individuals that firms should be concerned about the

environment and try to be responsible towards the environment [36], [41], [52].

Pro-environmental attitude represents a critical factor influencing the behavioural intention to act pro-environmentally [54], [57], although there are still discussions about the extent to which it is a direct predictor [29] or an important antecedent to other predictors [39], [34], [51]. According to the same authors, individuals with low pro-environmental attitudes have a lower probability to express willingness to change behaviour, as compared to those who have stronger attitudes.

Ellen [21] observed that a positive attitude towards the environment is a significant predictor of recycling, and other authors have confirmed that pro-environmental attitude is considered to be the most important predictor of consumers' green consciousness [10], [49], [53] or willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products [36].

Analyzing the demographic, psychological and behavioural profiles of "green" consumers, Laroche et al. [36] have found that pro-environmental attitudes of consumers are strongly related to the positive intention of paying more for a „green" product. Roberts [52] has shown that consumer attitudes towards the environment are significant predictors of ecological behaviours. His results have showed that individuals with environmental consciousness have a higher likelihood to engage in eco-friendly behaviours, and individuals who believe that their environmental activities can cause positive change have a higher probability to have "green" behaviours.

3. Consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at home and on vacation

The feeling of moral obligation is a strong predictor of pro-environmental

behaviour [29], [32], [6]. Moral obligation seems to be the only variable with great predictive power versus a range of attitudinal or socio-demographic variables.

Dolnicar and Leisch [16] have investigated the extent to which individuals who feel morally obliged to behave in a friendly manner with the environment are useful target segments for the management of destination that aims to improve the environmental sustainability of the local tourism industry. The results of the study conducted by Dolnicar and Leisch [16] have shown that there are significant differences between the pro-environmental behaviours at home and in the tourist destination of the investigated consumer segments. In the same context, Dolnicar [18] has investigated the extent to which a range of demographic, economic, cultural and attitudinal variables exerts a significant influence on the pro-environmental behaviour at home and on holiday. The results of this research among consumers (as residents and tourists) have shown that caring for the environment, the level of income, moral obligation to behave in a friendly manner with the environment, age and regional identity are the best predictors of pro-environmental behaviour. Differences between the two situations mentioned above are due to the fact that, at home, people can create the infrastructure required to behave in a friendly manner with the environment. On vacation, they have to adapt the infrastructure, which can act as a barrier for a pro-environmental behaviour. The author refers to those tourists who are interested in ecotourism activities, who enjoy and care for nature, and expects them to act in a friendly manner with the environment.

Other studies highlight and compare the indicators that can be used to differentiate tourists who behave in a friendly manner and those who do not behave in this way.

To examine the independent variables that are associated with consumers' pro-environmental behaviour when they go on vacation, Dolnicar and Leisch [16] have performed a regression analysis, noting that moral obligation, sex and age have a predictive power on the pro-environmental behaviour. Another study, conducted by Dolnicar and Grün [17], has investigated the heterogeneity analysis of the pro-environmental behaviour patterns. It has been demonstrated that there is such heterogeneity, and it has been found that the level of pro-environmental behaviour on vacation is low compared to that of the attitude at home, situational factors playing a significant role, even when people are motivated to behave in a way that does not harm the environment.

The lower pro-environmental behaviour from the tourism destination is determined by: 1. the fact that other issues are more important [5], [11], [37]; 2. The use of relaxation and escape as an excuse for omitting environmental issues [59]; 3. The fact that tourists do not have the necessary information to choose travel services at a low environmental cost [28]; 4. People are too busy to change their behaviour [37]; 5. Their trust that technological solutions will solve the problems of the environment [37], [23]; 6. The denial of the responsibility [23]; 7. The argumentation that there is a negligible impact of individual behaviour on the environment [37], [23].

3.1. Pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours in the tourism context

Because of their purpose, in order to provide services designed to satisfy the tourists' need for convenience (hot water, food, beverages, linen, towels, light, air conditioned, limousine, swimming pools etc.), hotels consume large amounts of water, energy, non-recyclable goods and

natural resources, thus affecting the natural environment directly or indirectly [9], [12], [15], [48].

As more and more regulations related to the environment appear and the environmental awareness of individuals grows, consumers are seeking more and more eco-friendly hotels, to the detriment of conventional ones. For this reason, many hotels are starting to implement innovative ways to increase the environmental level of their operations [15], [40], [60].

Used by an increasing number of researchers, the term “green” refers to “actions that reduce environmental impacts, such as eco-buying or recycling” [60, p. 209]. In a similar approach, “the green hotel” is defined as an eco-friendly hotel that uses practices/ environment friendly programs, such as saving water/ energy, the use of eco-friendly purchasing policies and emission reduction/ elimination of waste in order to protect the natural environment and reduce operational costs [61]. With the growing number of customers seeking green operations, being a green hotel can provide a basis for good marketing strategies in that its environmental friendly practices may help position it differently in the competitive arena. In addition to gaining a competitive edge, differentiating themselves from similar, but non-green operations, and fulfilling customers’ needs for environmentally friendly hotels, green hotels eventually bring various benefits to the operation (e.g., reductions in energy consumption and operational costs, enhancement of the company’s image, coping with government regulation, and positive public attention) [25].

Han et al. [26] have examined the extent to which consumers’ eco-friendly attitudes affect their intentions to visit a “green” hotel, to transmit by word of mouth information about it and to pay more for

such a hotel. The results revealed that consumers’ “green” attitudes are, in general, significantly associated with their expressed intentions to visit a green hotel, to transmit information about it by word of mouth and pay more. It was also observed that there are differences between women and men in terms of behavioural intentions, and these intentions have been influenced by their past experience with a green hotel.

4. Measuring pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours. The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours were analyzed in different studies based on a number of theories and models such as: the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Social Cognitive Theory, the Value-Beliefs-Norms Theory, the New Environmental Paradigm Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory etc.

The most popular theory linking attitudes and behaviours belongs to Ajzen [2] and is called Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB); it was built starting from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which belongs to Fishbein and Ajzen [22]. Across a number of publications, they developed and explicated the TRA in order to account for mechanisms of human behaviours in decision processes. The TRA was specifically designed to predict human behaviours under complete volitional control. That is, this theory assumed that most of individuals’ decisions/ behaviours are derived from the intensity of volitional efforts for the specific decisions/ behaviours. According to this theory, individuals are rational and motivation-based in their decision-making processes, and make a reasoned choice among various alternatives [24].

In accordance with TRA, most human behaviours are predictable based on

intention, whereas such behaviours are volitional and under the control of intention [1]. This means that people, in the decision-making process, have a high degree of volitional control and can make reasoned choices among several alternatives. In accordance with TRA, behavioural intention is a function of two factors: attitudes towards behaviour and towards subjective norm [1], [22]. These two predictors of behavioural intention are associated with behavioural and normative beliefs. The applicability of TRA was questioned because, under certain circumstances, a person's behaviour can also be determined by non-volitional factors (e.g. resources) [2], [46]. In such situations, TRA is not sufficient for predicting the individual's behaviour/intention.

While the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) solely focuses on volitional personal/ social factors when explaining individual's intention formation, TPB, a more comprehensive version of the TRA, allows us to examine the influence of personal determinants and social surroundings as well as non-volitional determinants on intention. In particular, it could contribute to improving our prediction of customers' intention to choose a product [25].

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TPB is an extension of TRA [2-3]. TPB assumed that the attitude towards behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control are three conceptually independent determinants of behavioural intention. The major difference between the two models is that TPB incorporates an additional dimension of perceived

behavioural control as a determinant of behavioural intention. This dimension is linked to control beliefs. TPB expands the boundaries of TRA, by adding the volitional control. It also includes a belief factor that takes into account the possession of indispensable resources and opportunities that underlie a particular behaviour [38]. TPB was used as a basis to investigate sustainable behaviour in general and sustainable tourist behaviour, in particular [24-25], [45].

Critics of TPB argue that behavioural intentions do not translate into behaviour, and a few empirical studies have shown that this link is really quite poor [7-8], [42-43]. Prillwitz and Barr [47] have found that "green" attitudes have not influenced tourist trip significantly.

a. Attitude

In accordance with Ajzen and Fishbein [1], attitude toward behaviour refers to the level of positive or negative assessment of the evolution of behaviour. This attitude is based on the dominant behavioural beliefs and evaluations of results. Behavioural beliefs refer to the individual's perceived probability of a result expected by engaging in certain behaviour, and the outcome assessment involves evaluating the possible consequences of a specific behaviour [1]. The individual's positive attitude towards a particular behaviour strengthens his/ her intention to have such behaviour [3].

b. Subjective norm

In the model of TPB, subjective norm is postulated as a second determinant of behavioural intention. Subjective norm represents the perceived views of some important people that can influence an individual's decision (relatives, close friends, colleagues, business partners) [27]. Subjective norm is a function of the normative beliefs of a person about what the acquaintances think that he/ she should do (or not do), and the motivation to

comply with them [1]. In other words, this concept takes into account the likelihood that important people may approve or disapprove the individual's behaviour.

c. Perceived behavioural control

In the model of TPB, perceived behavioural control is postulated as a third determinant of behavioural intention. Perceived behavioural control can be described as the perceived ease or difficulty to performing the behaviour [1]. In particular, perceived behavioural control assesses the perception of how well one can control factors that may facilitate/constrain the actions needed to deal with a specific situation [25]. The perceived behavioural control should be greater when the individual possesses significant resources and opportunities [38].

Several studies have demonstrated that the individual's intention/behaviour is influenced positively by the confidence in his/her own ability to have a certain behaviour [4], [13-14], [58]. Research in this area indicates that, when an individual has a low control on a particular behaviour due to the lack of availability of necessary resources (time or cost), his/her behavioural intention will be lower, despite the fact that he/she has a positive attitude/subjective norm against behaviour.

The TPB is, in principle, open to modification by altering the paths in the TPB and including additional predictors if it can be shown that they capture a greater proportion of the variance in intention/behaviour after the original TPB constructs have been taken into account. Based on the assumption that a theoretical mechanism of the TPB is better understood by altering the paths to be more adequate in a particular context and by including significant antecedents for a possible increase in the ability to predict an intention/behaviour, the TPB has been revised in various contexts. Researchers' efforts to expand the theory have

considerably enhanced the ability to predict human behaviour in a given context, capturing a greater proportion of the variance in intention/behaviour not sufficiently accounted for by the original TBP [24].

5. Conclusions

The present paper aimed to carry out a review of the literature in the field of consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours. It intended to describe these variables both in the context of the consumption of products and services in general, and the consumption of goods and services in the context of tourism, in particular.

We presented a series of comparisons between the consumers' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at home and on vacation, studies in the field highlighting the existence of significant differences between the two cases. It was found that, as a general rule, individuals with pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at home significantly tend to behave differently on vacation, the care for the environment being placed, in this case, on a secondary place. In the same context, we highlighted the consumers' increasing preference for "green" hotels as a result of the increase in their concerns for the environment.

The interdependences between the pro-environmental attitude and behaviour have been measured by various specialists on the basis of a number of theories and models. Among them, the Theory of Planned Behaviour plays an important role, as it connects attitudes to behaviours. However, the application of this method has shown that pro-environmental attitudes are not an important predictor for pro-environmental behaviours.

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