

Tourist Engagement to Develop Ecotourism With Nature Relatedness as a Moderating Variable on Behavioral Intention at Kaligua Tea Plantation, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the interplay between tourist engagement, perception, perceived value, and nature relatedness on tourists' behavioral intentions towards pro-environmental actions at Kaligua Tea Plantation, Indonesia. Emphasizing the role of nature relatedness as a moderating variable, this research seeks to identify the complex relationships these factors share in promoting sustainable tourism practices. Tourist engagement involves active and emotional participation, which has been found to enhance the tourist's connection to the destination, thereby influencing their pro-environmental intentions. Tourist perception, which encompasses views on authenticity, environmental quality, and alignment with ecotourism principles, directly impacts the sustainability and reputation of the destination. Meanwhile, perceived value—which tourists ascribe based on the economic, social, and environmental benefits received—further influences their commitment to sustainable practices. The study utilizes a quantitative approach with a Likert scale to measure responses from 350 purposively sampled visitors, revealing that nature relatedness not only strengthens the positive effects of tourist engagement and perceived value but also serves as a critical factor in fostering a deeper environmental commitment among tourists. This research contributes to ecotourism literature by providing nuanced insights into how ecotourism operators can enhance tourist experiences and satisfaction, ultimately leading to more sustained and effective conservation efforts.

Keywords: ecotourism, tourist engagement, tourist perception, perceived value, nature relatedness, behavioral intention.

1. Introduction

Ecotourism is recognized as a sustainable tourism model that integrates economic development with conservation efforts, aiming to generate funds for ecological preservation while providing socio-economic benefits to local communities (Sukuryadi et al., 2020). It emphasizes the importance of managing visitor numbers to prevent environmental degradation and ensure the sustainability of protected areas (Sobhani et al., 2022). Effective ecotourism practices involve local community participation, which can enhance environmental awareness and promote cultural heritage (Rule et al., 2022). Research indicates that ecotourism can lead to conflicts between local needs and conservation goals, particularly in areas with high human-wildlife interactions (Rule et al., 2022). Additionally, the concept of carrying capacity is crucial in ecotourism, as it helps determine the maximum number of visitors that can be accommodated without damaging the environment (Sukuryadi et al., 2020). Overall, ecotourism is viewed as a pathway to sustainable development, balancing ecological integrity with economic opportunities for local residents (Rule et al., 2022; Sobhani et al., 2022).

Agrotourism, a manifestation of ecotourism, integrates agricultural activities with tourism, allowing tourists to participate directly in farming activities, understand food production processes, and interact with rural environments and local communities. Agrotourism not only offers a unique educational and recreational experience for tourists but also supports the sustainability of agriculture, preservation of local culture, and economic enhancement for rural

communities. Through this approach, agrotourism contributes to the preservation of natural environments and agricultural resources while providing opportunities for local communities to share their knowledge and skills, strengthening the relationship between humans and nature in a sustainable context.

Tourist engagement is a multifaceted concept increasingly explored in recent years, especially within the contexts of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Our current understanding of tourist engagement includes its role in enhancing perceived value, destination loyalty, and satisfaction. It is characterized by an interactive and co-creative psychological state, involving dimensions such as social interaction, employee-tourist interaction, connectedness, and activity-based engagement (Paul & Roy, 2023). Engagement is known to positively influence perceived value, which includes emotional, functional, and social values, thus affecting tourists' experiences and their loyalty to destinations (Zhou & Yu, 2022). The engagement-value-evaluation/behavior chain highlights how engagement directly influences destination loyalty and indirectly impacts satisfaction through the creation of functional and emotional value (Zhou & Yu, 2022). Additionally, the emergence of social media and online travel agents (OTAs) has reinforced tourist engagement, with tourists increasingly relying on these platforms for information sharing and experiences, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these insights, significant gaps remain in our understanding. The direct relationship between engagement and perceived value dimensions is not fully explored, and the indirect effects of engagement on social value and satisfaction are not significant, indicating areas for further research. Moreover, while the importance of ecological awareness and sustainable tourism is recognized, the implementation and effectiveness of policies promoting these aspects in various contexts, such as national parks, require further investigation. The potential for ecotourism in specific areas, like NTLNP, remains under-researched, presenting opportunities for future studies to assess and develop sustainable tourism strategies that balance ecological conservation with economic development. Additionally, emerging trends in tourist engagement, such as increased interest in destination engagement and the roles of authenticity and place attachment, indicate the need for deeper exploration into how these factors contribute to trust, loyalty, and co-creation among tourists. Overall, although significant progress has been made in understanding tourist engagement, there is a clear need for more comprehensive research to address these gaps and enhance the effectiveness of engagement strategies in promoting sustainable tourism and enriching tourists' experiences.

2. Literature review

Tourist Engagement

Tourist engagement is a concept that describes the extent to which tourists are actively and emotionally involved with the destinations they visit. In the context of ecotourism, this involvement includes tourist participation in activities that promote environmental conservation and the empowerment of local communities. Tourists who are intensely engaged with their experiences tend to develop a deeper connection with the destination, which can enhance their commitment to sustainable practices. Additionally, tourist engagement can potentially improve the experiences they gain, which in turn can encourage behaviors that support environmental preservation. However, despite the recognized importance of tourist engagement, little research has explored how this engagement is influenced by moderating factors, such as nature relatedness, in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions.

Tourist Perception

Tourist perception refers to how tourists view and evaluate the destinations they visit. This perception can include views about authenticity, uniqueness, environmental quality, and alignment with ecotourism principles. A positive perception of an ecotourism destination can encourage intentions to revisit or recommend the destination to others. In ecotourism, tourist perception is crucial as it can affect the sustainability and reputation of the destination. However, research on how tourist perception is influenced by their connection with nature remains limited. There is a need to understand more deeply how these perceptions are formed and how nature relatedness can moderate the relationship between tourist perceptions and their behavioral intentions in supporting ecotourism initiatives.

Perceived Value

Perceived value is a tourist's overall evaluation of the benefits they gain from a travel experience, which can include economic, social, and environmental aspects. This perceived value is a key factor in determining tourist satisfaction and loyalty. In the context of ecotourism, perceived value is often associated with environmental benefits and the

unique experiences offered by the destination. The higher the perceived value, the more likely tourists are to have intentions to support or repeat their visits. However, similar to tourist engagement and perception, the role of nature relatedness as a moderating variable in the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intentions remains underexplored. This study will attempt to fill this gap by exploring how nature relatedness moderates the influence of perceived value on tourists' behavioral intentions in the context of ecotourism.

Nature Relatedness as a Moderating Variable

Nature relatedness is a concept that reflects the extent to which individuals feel connected to the natural environment. This connection plays a crucial role in influencing how tourists interact with ecotourism destinations and how they evaluate their experiences. As a moderating variable, nature relatedness can strengthen or weaken the influence of "tourist engagement," "tourist perception," and "perceived value" on tourists' behavioral intentions. For example, tourists with a high degree of nature relatedness may be more responsive to experiences involving environmental conservation, thereby enhancing their intentions to engage in pro-environmental behaviors. Conversely, for those with low nature relatedness, the impact of these variables may be less significant. Therefore, this study will thoroughly examine how nature relatedness functions as a moderating variable in this complex relationship, providing new insights for the development of more effective ecotourism strategies.

3. Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach, utilizing a Likert scale with scores ranging from 1 to 10 to analyze the roles of the variables Tourist Perception, Tourist Engagement, Perceived Value, Nature Relatedness, and Behavioral Intention Towards Proenvironmental Actions in the context of sustainable agrotourism at Kaligua Tea Plantation, Brebes. This scale will help assess the extent to which respondents agree or engage with the given statements, where 1 means "Strongly Disagree/Not Engaged" and 10 means "Strongly Agree/Highly Engaged." Using a survey method, this research will involve 350 respondents selected through purposive sampling from visitors to the agrotourism site over the last 12 months.

4. Results

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

Karakteristik	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
- Male	166	47,4%
- Female	184	52,6%
Age		
- < 21 yo	96	27,4%
- 21-30 yo	87	24,9%
- 31-40 yo	75	21,4%
- > 40 yo	92	26,3%
Education		
- Elementary School	66	18,9%
- Junior High School	70	20,0%
- Senior High School	76	21,7%
- Diploma	63	18,0%
- Bachelor's Degree	75	21,4%
Occupation:		
- Civil Servant/Military/Police	86	24,6%
- Private Sector Employee	102	29,1%
- Self-Employed	141	40,3%
- Other	21	6,0%
Visit Frequency:		
- First time	136	38,9%
- 2-3 times	214	61,1%

- More than 3 times	-	-
Place of Origin:		
- Brebes	57	16,3%
- Tegal	63	18,0%
- Pemalang	59	16,9%
- Pekalongan	68	19,4%
- Cirebon	48	13,7%
- Others	55	15,7%

Source: Output SPSS, 2024

From the 350 respondents participating in the survey, the gender distribution shows that the majority were women, totaling 184 individuals (52.6%), while male respondents numbered 166 (47.4%). In terms of age, the largest age group was under 21 years old with 96 respondents (27.4%), followed by the 21-30 year age group with 87 respondents (24.9%), the 31-40 year age group with 75 respondents (21.4%), and those over 40 years old with 92 respondents (26.3%).

Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents had completed high school with 76 individuals (21.7%), followed by elementary school graduates with 66 people (18.9%), junior high school graduates with 70 people (20.0%), those with a diploma with 63 people (18.0%), and bachelor's degree holders with 75 people (21.4%). In terms of employment, the largest group of respondents were self-employed, numbering 141 people (40.3%), followed by private sector employees with 102 people (29.1%), government/military/police personnel with 86 people (24.6%), and other occupations with 21 people (6.0%).

The frequency of visits to Kaligua Tea Plantation showed that the majority of respondents had visited 2-3 times, amounting to 214 individuals (61.1%), followed by those who had visited only once, totaling 136 people (38.9%). Based on the area of residence, the majority of respondents were from Brebes with 57 people (16.3%), followed by Tegal with 63 people (18.0%), Pemalang with 59 people (16.9%), Pekalongan with 68 people (19.4%), Cirebon with 48 people (13.7%), and from other areas with 55 people (15.7%).

From this data, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents were female, ages varied with almost equal proportions in each age group, most had a high school education, many were self-employed, and most had visited the Kaligua Tea Plantation more than once. Respondents came from various regions, with a fairly even distribution in the surrounding area.

Validity and Reliability Testing

1. Tourist Perception

Table: Validity and Reliability Test for the Tourist Perception Variable

No	Statements	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Kaligua Tea Garden appears safe for visitors.	0.857	0.847
2	Kaligua Tea Garden offers a unique experience that I cannot find elsewhere.	0.780	
3	The facilities available at Kaligua Tea Garden are adequate.	0.765	
4	Information about Kaligua Tea Garden is easily accessible and understandable..	0.742	
5	Kaligua Tea Garden is clean and well-maintained..	0.662	
6	Kaligua Tea Garden is worth the price I paid.	0.626	
7	The service at Kaligua Tea Garden is satisfying.	0.445	
8	I feel comfortable and satisfied during my visit to Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.848	
9	I feel that Kaligua Tea Garden offers something valuable.	0.808	

Based on the table above, the validity and reliability tests indicate that the variable Tourist Perception, which consists of 9 statements, has good measurement quality. The validity values for each statement range from 0.445 to 0.857. Some statements have very high validity, while there is one statement with relatively low validity. Nevertheless, the overall reliability of the variable remains high with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.847, indicating the instrument's consistency and reliability in measuring tourist perceptions.

2. Tourist Engagement

Table: Validity and Reliability Test for the Tourist Engagement Variable

No	Statements	Validity	Cronbach's Alpha
1	I felt highly emotionally engaged during the visit.	0.818	0,808
2	I used a guide or an app to enhance my visit experience.	0.796	
3	I took many photos as souvenirs from the visit.	0.725	
4	I visited a significant number of important places in Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.724	
5	I tried local food and drinks while at Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.479	
6	I spent a lot of time exploring Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.827	
7	I actively participated in activities offered by Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.802	
8	I am interested in learning more about the local history and culture.	0.796	
9	I interacted with local residents during the visit.	0.469	

Source: Output SPSS, 2024

The table above is a validity and reliability test table that shows the variable Tourist Engagement, consisting of 9 statements, has good measurement quality. Some statements have very high validity, while there are two statements with relatively low validity. Nevertheless, the overall reliability of the variable remains high with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.808, indicating the instrument's consistency and reliability in measuring tourist engagement.

3. Perceived Value

Table: Validity and Reliability Test for the Perceived Value Variable

No	Pernyataan	Validitas	Cronbach's Alpha
1	The facilities and services at Kaligua Tea Garden provide significant added value.	0.750	0.683
2	I am willing to pay more for an experience like this in the future.	0.736	
3	I received a rich cultural experience that I highly value.	0.729	
4	I feel this experience provided significant educational benefits.	0.720	
5	I feel this experience has enriched my personal life.	0.673	
6	I am satisfied with the overall quality and value of this experience.	0.643	
7	The experience I gained here is worth more than I expected.	0.836	
8	I received good value for the money I spent at Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.816	

Source: Output SPSS, 2024

The validity and reliability test results, based on the table above, show that the variable Perceived Value, which consists of 8 statements, has fairly good measurement quality. Some statements exhibit very high validity, indicating that they are highly effective in measuring the perceived value among tourists. The overall reliability of the variable, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.683, suggests that the instrument is reasonably consistent in measuring the perceived value by tourists at Kaligua Tea Plantation.

4. Nature Relatedness

Table: Validity and Reliability Test for the Nature Relatedness Variable

No	Pernyataan	Validitas	Cronbach's Alpha
1	The facilities and services at Kaligua Tea Garden provide significant added value.	0.772	0.825
2	I am willing to pay more for an experience like this in the future	0.764	
3	I received a rich cultural experience that I highly value.	0.709	
4	I feel this experience provided significant educational benefits.	0.690	
5	I feel this experience has enriched my personal life.	0.655	
6	I am satisfied with the overall quality and value of this experience.	0.655	
7	I prefer Kaligua Tea Garden because it has plenty of green open spaces.	0.564	
8	I appreciate the conservation and nature protection efforts at Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.555	

Sumber: Output SPSS, 2024

The validity and reliability tests based on the table above indicate that the variable Nature Relatedness, which consists of 8 statements, has good measurement quality. Some statements exhibit very high validity, especially in measuring the intent to visit and the connection with nature. The overall reliability of the variable, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.825, demonstrates that the instrument is highly consistent and reliable in measuring tourists' connectedness with nature at Kaligua Tea Plantation.

5. Behavioral Intention

Table: Validity and Reliability Test for the Behavioral Intention Variable

No	Pernyataan	Validitas	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	I plan to return here in the near future.	0.777	0.787
2.	I will remember this visit as one of my best experiences.	0.690	
3.	I will share my positive experiences here on social media.	0.684	
4.	I plan to participate in more activities if I return.	0.679	
5.	I will definitely recommend Kaligua Tea Garden to others.	0.676	
6.	My experience here has exceeded my expectations.	0.632	
7.	I will bring friends and family to visit Kaligua Tea Garden.	0.489	

Sumber: Output SPSS, 2024

Based on the table above, the validity and reliability tests indicate that the variable Behavioral Intention, consisting of 7 statements, has good measurement quality. Some statements have very high validity, particularly in measuring the intent to return and share experiences. The overall reliability of the variable, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.787, shows that the instrument is sufficiently consistent and reliable in measuring tourists' behavioral intentions at Kaligua Tea Plantation.

Structural Equation Model

Tabel. Hasil uji Regression Weight

Kausalitas			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1 :	Tourist Perception	→ Behavioral Intention	-,042	,063	-,676	,499
H2 :	Tourist Perception	→ Nature Relatedness	-,332	,137	-2,427	,015
H3 :	Tourist Engagement	→ Nature Relatedness	,423	,149	2,845	,004
H4 :	Perceived Value	→ Nature Relatedness	,773	,123	6,311	***
H5 :	Perceived Value	→ Behavioral Intention	,364	,127	2,855	,004
H6 :	Nature Relatedness	→ Behavioral Intention	,428	,138	3,110	,002

Sumber: Output Amos, 2024

Based on the model fit results from the AMOS output, several relationships between the variables in this model can be interpreted as follows. First, tourist perception does not have a significant impact on behavioral intention, with an estimate value of -0.042 and a p-value of 0.499. This indicates that tourists' perceptions of Kaligua Tea Garden do not directly relate to their intentions to engage in specific actions. Second, tourist perception has a significant negative relationship with nature relatedness, with an estimate value of -0.332 and a p-value of 0.015, suggesting that higher perceptions correlate with a lower connection to nature.

The variable tourist engagement shows a significant positive influence on nature relatedness, with an estimate value of 0.423 and a p-value of 0.004. This means that the higher the tourist engagement, the stronger their connection with nature. Similarly, perceived value has a very significant positive impact on nature relatedness, with an estimate value of 0.773 and a very low p-value (***). This indicates that the higher the value perceived by tourists, the stronger their connection with nature. Moreover, perceived value also has a significant positive influence on behavioral intention, with an estimate value of 0.364 and a p-value of 0.004, suggesting that a higher perception of value enhances tourists' positive behavioral intentions. Lastly, nature relatedness has a significant positive impact on behavioral intention, with an estimate value of 0.428 and a p-value of 0.002. This shows that a stronger connection with nature increases tourists' positive behavioral intentions.

Overall, these results suggest that to enhance tourists' positive behavioral intentions, the primary focus should be on increasing tourist engagement and perceived value, as well as strengthening their connection with nature. Tourist perceptions need to be effectively managed to prevent them from diminishing their connection with nature.

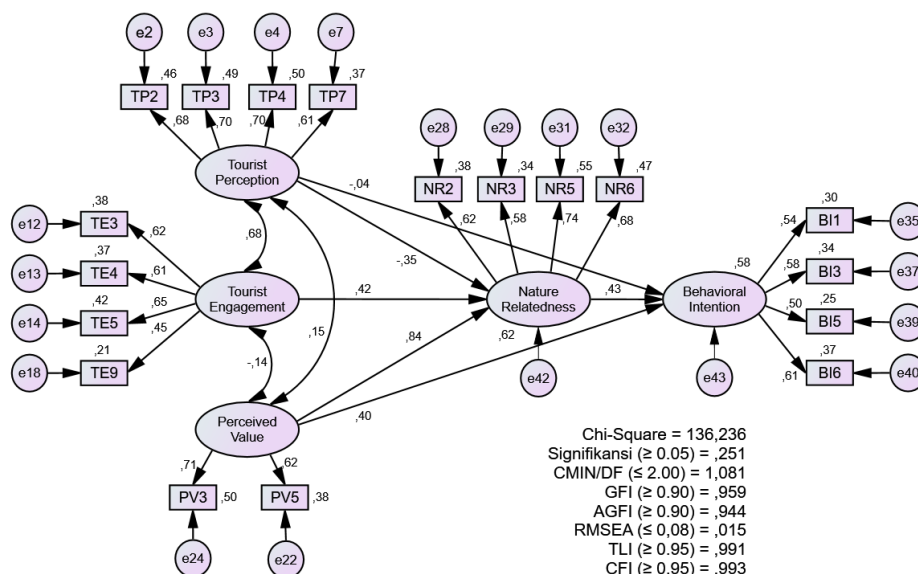


Figure 1: Complete Structural Equation Model

The SEM model in the image above indicates that the proposed model fits very well with the existing data. This means that the relationships identified in previous interpretations, such as the significant influence of tourist engagement, perceived value, and nature relatedness on tourists' behavioral intentions, are supported by a well-fitting model. Additionally, tourist perception has a significant negative relationship with nature relatedness.

The model fit test shows the following results: Chi-Square = 136.236, Significance (p-value) = 0.251, CMIN/DF = 1.081, GFI = 0.959, AGFI = 0.944, RMSEA = 0.015, TLI = 0.991, and CFI = 0.993. These values indicate that the model has a very good fit with the data: a CMIN/DF less than 2 indicates a very good fit, GFI and AGFI above 0.90 indicate a good fit, RMSEA below 0.08 indicates a good fit, and TLI and CFI above 0.95 indicate an excellent fit.

With this well-fitting model, we can confidently say that to enhance tourists' positive behavioral intentions at Kaligua Tea Garden, the focus should be on increasing tourist engagement and perceived value, as well as strengthening tourists' connection with nature. These efforts will help ensure a more satisfying tourist experience and increase the likelihood of their returning and recommending Kaligua Tea Garden to others. The above interpretation can be summarized in the following table which shows the model fit test results.

Tabel. Goodness of Fit Test

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut-off Value	Result	Evaluation Model
Chi-square	< 146,567	136,236	Good
Probability	≥ 0,05	0,251	Good
CMIN/DF	≤ 2,00	1,081	Good
GFI	≥ 0,90	0,959	Good
AGFI	≥ 0,90	0,944	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,015	Good
TLI	≥ 0,95	0,991	Good
CFI	≥ 0,95	0,993	Good

Source: Output Amos, 2024

5. Discussion

This study aims to explore the influence of several key variables, namely Tourist Engagement, Tourist Perception, Perceived Value, and Nature Relatedness, on pro-environmental Behavioral Intentions in the context of Kaligua Tea Plantation. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how each factor might affect tourists' tendencies to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors during and after their visits to this ecotourism destination. Tourist Engagement refers to the level of participation and interaction tourists experience during their visits. The study delves into how tourists who actively engage in activities at Kaligua Tea Plantation have higher environmental awareness and responsibility. Here, tourists' perceptions of the environment are crucial. Their perceptions include their views and judgments about the natural beauty, authenticity of the environment, and how natural resource management is conducted at the destination. Furthermore, Perceived Value involves tourists' evaluations of the benefits or experiences gained relative to the costs incurred, whether in terms of money or time. If tourists feel that they receive adequate or exceeding value from their experiences, they are more likely to behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

This research also explores how Nature Relatedness, or the degree to which tourists feel emotionally and psychologically connected to nature, moderates the relationship between tourist engagement and pro-environmental behavioral intentions. Nature Relatedness reflects how much tourists feel connected to nature, which in turn influences their tendencies to act responsibly towards the environment. According to the study findings, both tourist engagement and perceived value have a significant impact on pro-environmental behavioral intentions, with nature relatedness strengthening this effect. These findings provide important theoretical contributions to ecotourism literature and practical implications for developing more effective destination management strategies.

Impact of Tourist Engagement and Perceived Value on Behavioral Intention

This study's findings indicate that tourist engagement significantly influences pro-environmental behavioral intentions. Tourist engagement includes the level of participation in various activities offered at the ecotourism

destination. The more tourists engage in activities involving interaction with nature and environmental conservation, the greater their tendency to act proactively in supporting environmental sustainability. This aligns with previous research by Snyman (2016), which emphasized that when tourists actively participate in ecotourism activities, they not only enjoy the travel experience but also increase their awareness of the importance of environmental preservation. Snyman also noted that tourists involved in activities that promote environmental awareness also help drive the local economy, such as through direct contributions to local communities and supporting local businesses focused on nature conservation (Snyman, 2017).

Moreover, the study shows that the perceived value tourists assign to their experiences plays a crucial role in shaping their intentions to behave environmentally. Perceived Value refers to the extent to which tourists feel that the experiences they gain at an ecotourism destination are equivalent to or exceed the costs and efforts expended. Tourists who feel that they derive significant benefits, whether in terms of education, relaxation, or connection with nature, tend to have greater intentions to support future environmental preservation initiatives. Other research supports this finding, as reported in the *International Journal of Advanced Research* (2023), which affirms that the higher the perceived value tourists place on an ecotourism destination, the more likely they are to exhibit pro-environmental behaviors (Dzhandzhugazova et al., 2019; Monge Poltronieri, 2023).

Overall, these results underscore the importance of active engagement and perceived value in promoting tourists' pro-environmental behavior. These findings offer valuable insights for ecotourism destination managers in designing experiences that are not only economically appealing but also encourage tourists to act as agents of environmental conservation.

Role of Nature Relatedness as a Moderator

The study also finds that Nature Relatedness acts as a moderator that strengthens the relationship between tourist engagement and pro-environmental behavioral intentions. In this context, Nature Relatedness refers to the extent to which tourists feel emotionally, mentally, and spiritually connected to the nature around them. Tourists with higher levels of nature relatedness tend to feel a personal responsibility to care for and preserve the environments they visit. This enhances the impact of their involvement in tourism activities on their intentions to behave environmentally, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and supporting nature conservation initiatives. This result is supported by several prior studies that state that tourists with a strong connection to nature are more likely to exhibit behaviors that support environmental conservation. The International Ecotourism Society emphasizes that the principles of ecotourism involve raising environmental awareness through deep experiences with nature, which in turn encourages environmentally friendly behavior (Bricker, 2017). The research suggests that tourists who feel connected to nature are more easily motivated to support conservation and act responsibly during their visits.

Further, research by Zacarias (2017) also highlights the importance of emotional connectedness with nature in influencing tourists' attitudes and behaviors. They found that tourists with a strong emotional relationship with nature tend to feel a moral responsibility to protect the natural ecosystems they visit. These tourists are more likely to engage in activities that support conservation and are likely to extend the positive impact of their experiences even after their visits end. This underlines the importance of creating experiences that allow tourists to feel closer to nature, whether through environmental interpretation, education, or active participation in conservation activities. These findings suggest that to enhance tourists' pro-environmental behavioral intentions, it is important to not only increase their engagement in tourism activities but also strengthen their connection to nature. This strategy can help create more meaningful experiences and encourage tourists to be more committed to environmental conservation.

Theoretical and Practical Implications Theoretically

This study reinforces the fundamental concepts of ecotourism that emphasize a balance between environmental conservation, local community engagement, and the tourist experience. Ecotourism is not just about enjoying natural beauty but also about how tourists can contribute to environmental preservation and enhance the well-being of local communities. This aligns with the long-standing principles of ecotourism put forth by The International Ecotourism Society, where environmental preservation and active local community engagement are two main pillars in developing sustainable tourism (Hussain, 2022; Khanra et al., 2021). Tourists involved in ecotourism not only act as consumers of experiences but also as actors who actively participate in maintaining and protecting the ecosystems

they visit. In this regard, local community involvement is crucial, as they hold local knowledge and access to sustainably manage natural resources.

This research is also highly relevant to the concept of sustainable tourism discussed by Khanra et al. (2020), which emphasizes the importance of local community support in creating sustainable ecotourism. According to Khanra et al., tourism sustainability cannot be achieved without the active role of local communities involved in managing tourist destinations. Local communities not only contribute to environmental conservation but can also play a vital role in enriching tourists' experiences through cultural interactions, environmental education, and conservation practices they implement. Practically, the findings indicate that agrotourism management strategies need to be holistically designed, where natural attractions are no longer the sole focus. Instead, efforts should be made to encourage active tourist engagement in activities that support the preservation of the environment and local culture. For example, programs such as tree planting, participation in conservation activities, or introductions to local culture and traditions can enrich tourists' experiences while ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems and cultural heritage at the destination (Sangpikul, 2017; Kia, 2021). In this way, ecotourism can provide balanced economic, environmental, and social benefits, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations.

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