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Understanding Pro-Environmental Behaviours of National Park Visitors

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A Brief Executive Summary of the Research

Encouraging individuals' pro-environmental behaviours (PEB) is considered one of the key elements in maintaining and improving an area's ecological and biological resources.

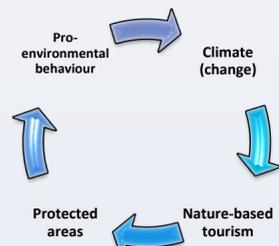


Fig 1. Linkages between climate, tourism, parks and pro-environmental behaviour (Source: the author)

➤ These ecological and biological resources are often the main factors of tourism products developed in nature-based destinations.



Fig 2. Visitors at John Forest National Park (Source: The author)

Yet, visitors' inappropriate behaviour (e.g. littering) will impact nature-based tourism sites such as National Parks which play critical roles in mitigating climate change.



Fig 3. Used can at Yellagonga Regional Park (Source: The Author)



Fig 4. Loch Lomond Regional Park (Source: <http://www.thenational.scot>)

As such, reducing the extent to which visitation adversely impacts the environment is highly significant. Many tourism researchers have suggested **fostering pro-environmentally behaviour** of tourists as one of the best practices in developing sustainable tourism of an area. Yet, what factors influence this behaviour still remained controversial. Further, little is known about the differences between individualistic nations (i.e. Australia) and collectivistic nations (Iran) in terms of pro-environmental behaviour. Given this significance, these questions are proposed:

Basic Research Questions

- What are the antecedents of national park visitors' pro-environmental behaviours?
- Is there any difference between individualistic and collectivistic nations in terms of PEB amongst national park visitors?

Study Sites



Fig 5. Yanchep National Park (Australia)

Yanchep National Park located 51 km from the north of Perth is a popular tourist site noted for its native flora and fauna and limestone caves. Many people choose this park to go picnicking, bushwalking, birdwatching and camping.



Fig 6. Sorkh-e-hesar National Park (Iran)

Sorkh-e-hesar National Park located near to Tehran, the capital city of Iran. The park is represented by many endemic species such as wild goat, leopard, wildcat. The park is also habitat for migratory birds in winter. Many people choose this park to enjoy nature and engage in recreational activities.

Developing the Research Model

Pervious research reveals the efforts of researchers in the development of a number of socio-psychological theories to explain an individual's pro-environmental behaviour including:

- ✓ Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975),
- ✓ Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991),
- ✓ Norm Activation Model (Schwartz, 1968, 1977),
- ✓ Value-Belief-Norm (Stern et al. 1999)
- ✓ Model of pro-environmental behaviour (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002)
- ✓ Goal-Framing Theory (Steg et al. 2014)

The above examples imply that **using one single theory** is probably **unlikely to be sufficient** for explaining pro-environmental behaviour problems. Hence, this study proposes "An Integrated Pro-environmental personal norms Model (IPM) as the proposed research model based on Schwartz's NAM (See Fig 7 & 8).

- The main core of the proposed model (Fig 8) is based on moral obligations approach drawing from Schwartz's (1975) Norm Activation Model (NAM). The NAM is used for predicting pro-social behaviours. In this study, it is proposed that pro-environmental behaviour is similar to a pro-social activity such as helping others.

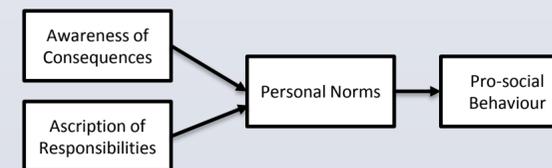


Fig 7. Norm Activation Model (NAM) (Schwartz, 1975)

Integrated Pro-Environmental Personal Norms Model (IPM)

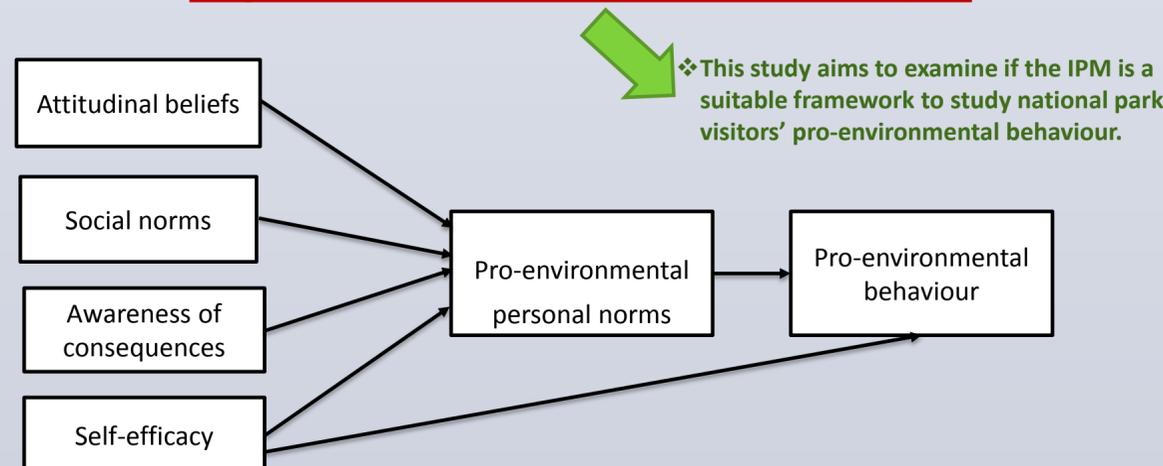


Fig 8. The Proposed Research Model (IPM)

Methods

- A cross-sectional research design will be used with a sample of approximately 400 visitors to Yanchep National Park in Australia and 400 visitors to Sorkh-e-hesar National Park in Iran.
- The purposeful random sampling method is chosen to obtain a better representative sample of visitors to the sites
- For the purpose of this study namely the cross-cultural approach, only visitors aged 18 or above born in Australia and Iran will be surveyed in the respective countries to enable to an effective comparison of the data sets.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) will be conducted to test the measurement model employing AMOS18.0 with covariance matrix and maximum-likelihood estimation.

Expected Results

- Contributing to the existing theories of pro-environmental behaviour by developing and testing an integrated model.
- Helping protected managers to design effective strategies to promote nature-based tourists' pro-environmental behaviours.
- Improving a park manager's understanding of visitors' motivations in pro-environmental behaviours in nature-based tourism activities.



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