

INTENTION TO VISIT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATIONS AFTER COVID- 19 PANDEMIC

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INTENTION TO VISIT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATIONS AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the antecedents of environmental attitude and its influence on the intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations, which is moderated by individual green values. A purposive sampling method was used to collect the data from 370 respondents. The data were analyzed using a structural equation model. Out of the four antecedents, environmental identity and enjoyment of nature positively influence environmental attitude that leads to intention to visit, while there is no effect of environmental concern and nature-based destination image on environmental attitude. Results also showed that individual green value moderates the influence of environmental attitude on the intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations. This research suggests sustainable tourism marketers create a message that forms a positive environmental attitude. This study offers a conceptual model that focuses on environmental attitude as a key variable that is widely proven to be the best predictor of intention.

Keywords: Environmental Concern, Enjoyment of Nature, Environmental Identity, Nature-Based Destination Image, Environmental Attitude, Individual Green Value, Intention to Visit.

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INTRODUCTION

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The Covid 19 pandemic that has hit the world since 2020 brought a huge impact on various business sectors, including tourism. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy plans to accelerate the recovery of the tourism sector by inviting tourism and creative economy players to implement sustainable tourism (<https://kemenparekraf.go.id/ragam-pariwisata/ISTC:-Mendorong-Percepatan-Pariwisata-Berkelanjutan-di-Indonesia>). United Nations World Tourism Organisation defines sustainable tourism as tourism that takes full account of the impact of its activities on economic, social

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and environmental aspects, and meets the needs of visitors, industries, the environment, and local communities both now and in the future (<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>).

According to UNWTO, after the pandemic, nature-based tourism will contribute both economically and non-economically to the recovery of the tourism sector (UNWTO, 2020). In the new normal era, changes in the tourism industry are inevitable and this is triggered by changes in tourists' choices, the readiness of tourism destinations, and government policies, all of which lead to sustainable tourism (Spalding, Burke and Fyall, 2020).

The concept of sustainable tourism has been initiated by The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy since 2015 and The Minister Regulation Number 9 /2021 regarding sustainable tourism has also been issued (<https://www.kemendikbud.go.id/post/peraturan-menteri-pariwisata-nomor-9-tahun-2021>.) The scope of sustainable tourism includes social, economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability as well as sustainable management [5]. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has also formed the Indonesia Sustainable Tourism Council (ISTC) which must support the implementation of sustainable tourism in Indonesia as well as facilitate and coach the selected tourism destinations (<https://kemendikbud.go.id/ragam-pariwisata/ISTC:-Mendorong-Percepatan-Pariwisata-Berkelanjutan-di-Indonesia>). ISTC has taken many efforts to prepare the tourism destinations to meet the sustainability criteria as well as carry out an assessment of these destinations. Local communities are also invited to participate in making their places more sustainable and attractive. The yearly award is also conducted by The Ministry to give appreciation to the tourism destinations that successfully met the criteria of sustainability.

Indonesian tourism industry contributed 4,2 % to Gross Domestic Product in 2021, an increase of 37.4% compared to year 2020 and it is expected to contribute 4.3% in 2022, and it is also reported that there was a growth of foreign exchange earned in the tourism sector, which is USD 0.36 million in 2021 compared to 0.32 million in 2020 (<https://www.menpan.go.id/site/berita-terkini/berita-daerah/kemendikbud-menargetkan-devisa-pariwisata-naik-1-7-miliar-dolar-as-di-2022>). While the numbers of foreign tourists decline from 4.05 million in 2020 to 1.5 million in 2021. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has set up a target of 1.8 million until 3.6 million tourists and Tourism sector is expected to earn USD 470 million until USD 1,7 billion in 2022 (<https://www.menpan.go.id/site/berita-terkini/berita-daerah/kemendikbud-menargetkan-devisa-pariwisata-naik-1-7-miliar-dolar-as-di-2022>).

Despite the optimism and opportunities regarding sustainable tourism, the proportion of tourists visiting sustainable tourism destinations before the pandemic is relatively lower compared to other types of destination, such as culinary, city, marine, and religious tourism (<https://www.bps.go.id/publication>). Probably it is because of people's lack of awareness that Indonesia has some tourism destinations that are categorized as sustainable and bring positive impacts to the society and environment. The Ministry

of Tourism and Creative Economy and sustainable tourism organizers (local government) must develop appropriate marketing strategies to promote sustainable tourism by understanding factors that influence tourists' behavioral intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations. This will accelerate the recovery of the tourism sector as well.

One main determinant of behavioral intention in marketing studies is an attitude that represents people's predisposition to act favorably/unfavorably towards an object. (Ajzen and Cote, 2008)(Ajzen I, 2008). Past studies have focused on environmental attitude as a strong predictor of intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations (Teeroovengadum, 2019; Mohaidin, Wei, and Murshid, 201; Garcia, et.al, 2016). Those past studies agreed that when people hold positive evaluations and feeling about the environment, they will be more likely to visit sustainable tourism destinations. Previous research has shown environmental concern (Garg and Pandey, 2021; Huang and Liu, 2017; Hultman, Kazemina, and Ghasemi, 2015).), enjoyment of nature (Yilmaz and Anasori, 2022; Mayer et.al., 2009; Paswan, Guzman, and Lewin, 2017), environmental identity (Teeroovengadum, 2019; Nunkoo and Gursoy, D, 2012), and nature-based destination image (Chiu, Lee, and Chen, 2014; Jiang et.al, 2018; Stylos, 2017) influence environmental attitude. According to the findings, the more people aware of environmental preservation and identify themselves as individuals who are attached to the environment, the more they are they have a positive attitude toward the environment. Moreover, when people feel happy and enjoy nature, they will form a sustainable attitude regarding the environment. Also, a nature-based destination image evokes an affective feeling that will induce tourists' attitudes towards a sustainable tourism destination.

However, as Juvan and Dolnicar (2014) found, there is a gap between environmental attitude and intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations. Several reasons were revealed why the gap occurs, such as people are not sure about the precise vacation activities that have bad consequences for the environment, they do not feel responsible, uncontrollable external factors, and financial or time limitations. Following these findings, the present research examines the moderating role of individual green value in the effect of environmental attitude on the behavioral intention of sustainable tourism destinations. In the Value-Belief-Norm Theory, individuals' values contribute to their pro-environmental behavior (Stem et.al, 1999). Moreover, Rahman and Reynolds (2017); Shieh et.al (2020), and Channa et.al (2022) reported that individuals that have stronger green values are more concerned about the preservation of the environment and will buy green products. The present study explores the green individuals' value as a potential moderator between environmental attitude and behavioral intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations that to the best of the authors' knowledge have not been studied in the context of sustainable tourism.

The main purpose of this research is to examine the attitudinal factors that predict intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations and the moderating effect of individual values in explaining the

influence of environmental attitude on behavioral intention. The present study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by exploring the antecedents of environmental attitude and how it influences behavioral intention when moderated by green individual values. Likewise, the results of this research provide insights to policymakers, local government, and other stakeholders to create effective marketing strategies for promoting sustainable tourism which is still in the growth phase.

In the marketing literature, the attitude construct is important in understanding consumer behavior, especially for predicting behavioral intention. Attitude can be defined as a tendency to act (positively or negatively) towards an object and it is an evaluation based on beliefs that are formed from experience as well as word-of-mouth and other external sources (Ajzen and Cote, 2008). Similarly in the context of the environment, attitudes show a person's psychological tendency to protect the environment, and someone with high environmental concern is expected to choose a sustainable tourism destination (Hanh dan Chi, 2020). In the realm of pro-environmental behavior research, the environmental attitude has been widely studied and it can predict specific behavior (Gifford and Sussman, 2012).

Environmental concern reflects one's awareness of the importance of protecting the environment and someone with high environmental concern is expected to choose a sustainable tourism destination (Pham and Khanh, 2020). Environmental concern can be interpreted as people's awareness of environmental issues and alternate solutions to overcome the problems (Zheng et.al, 2021). According to Akehurst (2012), environmental concern refers to the raising awareness of people regarding the environment. Moreover, environmental concern motivates people to have a positive attitude toward the environment and it is significantly proven to influence environmental attitudes (Yadav and Pathak, 2016). Another study conducted in Indonesia shows that the environmental concern of college students significantly influences their attitude toward green products (Fauzan and Azhar, 2019). Next, past research by Onurlubas (2018) and Maichum, Parichatnon, and Peng (2017) agreed that young consumers who are concerned about environmental issues will be likely to have a positive attitude towards green products and they are willing to buy them. Paul, Modi, and Patel (2016) also found a positive significant effect of environmental concern on environmental attitude.

H1: Environmental concern positively influences environmental attitude.

For decades, environmental psychologists believed that when people visit the natural world they will have physical and psychological benefits. According to Sato and Conner (2018), enjoyment of nature represents a positive experience as people savor the natural environment and it elevates positive affect. Using experimental studies, Mayer et.al (2009) proved that exposure to nature increases connectedness to nature that will create a positive mood. According to Paswan, Guzwan, and Lewin (2017), when people feel enjoy taking activities in the natural world, they believe that their actions towards the environment will bring a positive effect on preserving the environment. Earlier research by

Duerden and Witt (2010) using students as participants, proved that experiencing nature will develop strong environmental attitudes both cognitively and affectively. This result is supported by recent research that people's experience in nature has a positive effect on their attitude (Rosa and Collado, 2019). A study by Yilmaz and Anasori (2020) confirmed that tourists' enjoyment of nature positively influences their feelings and attitude toward the natural environment.

H2: Enjoyment of nature positively influences environmental attitude.

The environmental identity reflects how people interact with a natural environment that is shaped by their belief that the environment is important for human beings and part of who we are, and it affects their actions toward the world (Clayton, 2004). It is about how people see the world and perceive that nature is psychologically close to humans so that they are willing to participate in green behaviors (Kashima, Paladino, and Margetts, 2014). Past studies found that the stronger people perceive themselves as an environmentalist, the more positive their attitudes toward the environment (Teeroovengadum, 2019; Lu et.al, 2014; Wanga et.al, 2013; Hinds and Sparks, 2008).

H3: Environmental identity positively influences environmental attitude.

Nature-Based Destination Image describes tourists' awareness and impression of the characteristics of a tourist destination that preserve the natural environment (Khanh and Phong, 2020). It is suggested that tourists are pulled by the natural destination attributes. According to Gu et.al (2022) who studied a national forest in China, some natural attributes are important for the tourists, such as the landscape, rare flora, and fauna as well as the topography of the forest. Previous research by Chiu, Lee, and Chen (2013) found that visitors' image of the natural attributes of an eco-tourism site will increase their positive emotions about the site. Jiang et.al (2018) referred to cognitive and affective aspects when studying nature-based destination images that encompass the quality and value of the ecotourism site as well as the positive feelings that visitors have. It has been confirmed that the more favorable a nature-based destination is perceived by the visitors, they will feel a strong attachment to the site and have a positive attitude toward it (Khanh and Phong, 2020; Jiang et.al, 2018).

H4: Nature-based destination image positively influences environmental attitude.

In his seminal paper, Ajzen (1991) described attitude as one of the important elements in predicting behavioral intention, and it is influenced by people's beliefs about an attitude object and how it will affect their behavior. In the context of tourism, numerous research confirmed that a favorable attitude towards the environment will influence people to visit ecotourism destinations (Paswan, Guzwan, and Lewin, 2017; Lu, Gursoy, and del Chiappa (2014); Mohaidin, Wei, and Mursid, 2017; Sujood., Hamid S and Bano, N, 2021 and Ashraf et.al, 2019). The intention to visit eco-friendly tourism destinations reveals people's pro-environmental behavior and their concern for the future, other human beings, and the whole environmental issues. Hultman, Kazeminia dan Gasemi (2015) agreed that

ecotourism intention is people's willingness to engage in ecotourism experiences and it is a function of a positive attitude. A study by Lu, Gursoy, and del Chiappa (2014) shows that environmental concern and positive attitudes toward ecotourism influence people's intention to visit eco-friendly destinations.

H5: Environmental attitude positively influences intention to visit eco-friendly destinations.

The Value-Belief-Norm Theory (VBN) introduced by Stern et.al (1999) has discussed the importance of value that leads to belief and personal norms that people will be engaging in pro-environmental behavior. Gifford and Sussman (2012) suggested that some forms of environmental values influence environmental attitudes. Several research has confirmed the influence of personal value on environmental behavior, such as visiting green hotels (Rahman and Reynolds, 2017; Fauzi, Hanafiah, and Kunjuraman, 2022; Kiatkawsin and Han, 2017). Moreover, studies by Shiel et.al (2020) and (Rahman and Reynolds, 2017) found that individuals having stronger green will be more concerned about environmental issues and prefer to buy green products and stay at green hotels.

H6: Individual green values moderate the influence of environmental attitude on intention to visit ecotourism destinations.

The proposed conceptual framework of this research is illustrated in Figure 1.

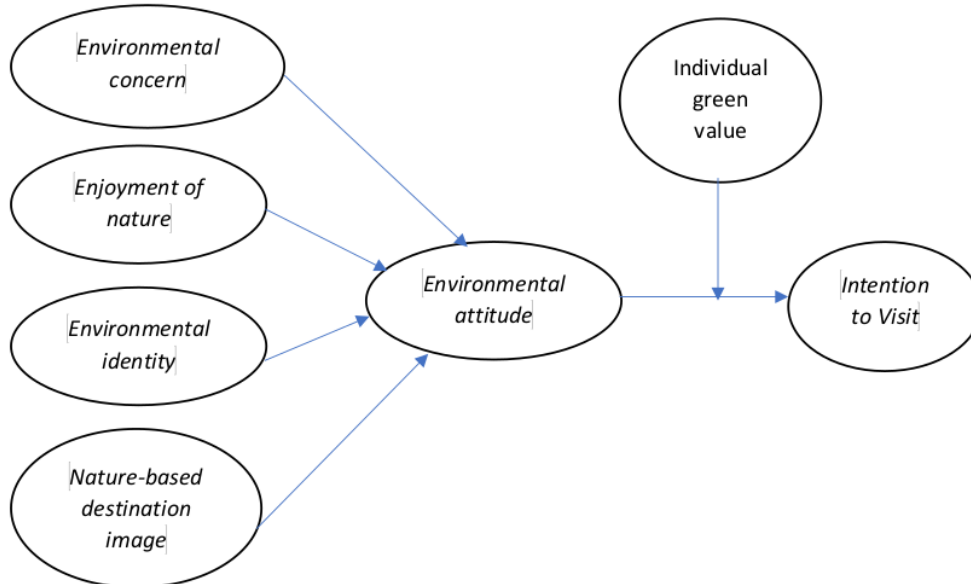


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

METHODS

This study is descriptive in nature and used a survey to collect the data. Since this is a correlational study, the researcher's interference was minimal. This research was a cross-sectional study and used the individual as the unit of analysis. A questionnaire was used to collect the data that was distributed electronically. A purposive sampling technique was used to get the people that met some criteria (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016) which are those who have visited one or more of the six sustainable tourism destinations in Indonesia in the last four years from 2018 until 2021. 370 respondents participated in the survey, 51.9% were female and 48.1% were male. Out of the 370 respondents, 47.8% were between 21-30 years old. Most of the participants (52.4%) have traveled 2-4 times a year and the majority of the respondents (46.5%) spent between Rp. 5.000.000 until Rp.10.000.000 each year for traveling. Nglangeran Ancient Volcanic Mountain di Yogyakarta Special Region is the most visited sustainable tourism destination by visitors (37%), followed by Komodo National Park (30%) and Pemuteran Village (30%).

All the variables and measurements used in this study were adapted from previous literature. Environmental concern was assessed using four instruments from Hultman, Kazemina, and Ghasemi (2015) and Pham and Khanh (2020). Enjoyment of nature was measured using five instruments from Yilmaz and Anasori (2020). Five instruments from Pham and Khanh (2020) were used to measure nature-based destination images. The environmental attitude construct was measured using five indicators from Mohaidin, We, and Murshid (2018). Eleven items developed by Teeroovengadum (2018) were used to measure environmental identity. Next, green values were adopted from Channa et.al (2022) and it has eleven indicators. This study utilized four instruments from Pham and Khanh (2022) to measure the Intention to Visit. Five-point Likert scale was used to assess the respondents' answers. The data analysis method was Structural Equation Modelling using SPSS 25 and AMOS 22 as the supporting software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the validity and reliability of the instruments, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability test was conducted (Hair et.al, 2019). According to Hair et.al (2019), the minimum factor loading depends on the number of the sample, which was 0.3 in this study. However, three constructs (Environmental Concern, Enjoyment of Nature, and Environmental Attitude) had Cronbach Alpha Coefficients below 0,6, so the authors deleted the items that had the biggest coefficient and once again performed the CFA. After the rectification, all the indicators are valid and the internal consistency of the variables met the Cronbach Alpha requirement (≥ 0.6) which is suggested by Hair et.al (2019). The summary of the validity and reliability tests is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Validity and Reliability Tests.

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alfa Coefficient
Environmental Concern		
EC 1	0.761	0.654
EC 2	0.805	
EC 4	0.740	
Enjoyment Of Nature		
EN 1	0.693	0.705
EN 2	0.747	
EN 3	0.733	
EN 4	0.743	
Nature-Based Destination Image		
NBDI 1	0.699	0.756
NBDI 2	0.683	
NBDI 3	0.734	
NBDI 4	0.725	
NBDI 5	0.729	
Environmental Identity		
EI 1	0.708	

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alfa Coefficient
EI 2	0.660	
EI 3	0.667	0.875
EI 4	0.722	
EI 5	0.721	
EI 6	0.688	
EI 7	0.618	
EI 8	0.668	
EI 9	0.674	
EI 10	0.609	
EI 11	0.590	
Environmental Attitude		
⁶ EA 2	0.699	
EA 3	0.663	0.607
EA 4	0.583	
EA 5	0.762	
Intention to Visit		
IV 1	0.813	0.708
IV 2	0.738	

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alfa Coefficient
IV 3	0.742	
IV 4	0.622	
	-	
Individual Green Values		
GV 1	0.813	
GV 2	0.785	
GV 3	0.719	

Source: Data Processing Results

The goodness-of-fit test indicated an adequate fit of the measurement model (GFI: 0.885; AGFI: 0.864; CFI: 0.916; NFI: 0.818, TLI: 0.907; RMSEA: 0.043) as some indices were in the acceptable range recommended by Hair et.al (2019).

The statistic is descriptive and reveals some interpretations as follows: according to the respondents, they care about the environment because human activities can destroy the balance of nature and cause disaster (the mean score for Environmental Concern is 4.5477). Next, the respondents like to spend time outdoors and feel happy when they are in nature (the mean score for Enjoyment of Nature is 4.5872). It is interesting to know that the participants perceive the tourist destinations as interesting, have maintained the ecology, and preserve the natural and cultural attraction (the mean score for Nature-Based Destination Images is 4.4751). Moreover, the participants identify themselves as people who care for and protect the natural environment and are also willing to advocate the society about importance of nature conservation mean score for Environmental Identity is 4.5322). The mean score for Environmental attitude (4.6669) represents the respondents' opinion that protecting and conserving the natural environment is important as well as reducing environmental damage is important. Then, the respondents feel a moral obligation to do whatever they can to avoid environmental damage and use green products (the mean score for Green value is 4.5901). Lastly, the mean score for Intention to Visit (4.5831) shows that the participants will choose a sustainable tourism destination for their future destination.

The next step was testing the hypotheses and the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Results of Hypotheses Testing.

Hypotheses	Estimate	P Value	Results
H1: Environmental concern → Environmental attitude	0.028	0.576	Not supported
H2: Enjoyment of nature → Environmental attitude	0.212	0.004	Supported
H3: Environmental identity → Environmental attitude	0.449	0.000	Supported
H4: Nature-based destination image → Environmental attitude	-0.021	0.797	Not supported
H5: Environmental Attitude-Intention to Visit	0.745	0.000	H5 supported

Source: data processing results

The first hypothesis was not supported as the p-value was more than 0.05 and this infers that although individuals are concerned about the natural environment, they are not motivated to develop positive attitudes toward protecting it. This result is in line with the research conducted by Su, Hsu, and Boostrom (2019) that concern about the environment does not necessarily direct people to think about preserving the environment. Research by Chen, Wu, and Jiang (2022) suggested that ecological value mediates the relationship between environmental concern and environmental attitude. When people are concerned about the environment, their ecological values (biospheric, egoistic, or altruistic) will be activated and leads them to have favorable evaluation about protecting the environment, in the long run, dan reducing environmental damage.

The findings revealed a positive influence of enjoyment the nature and environmental identity on environmental attitude, so H2 and H3 were supported. The result depicted that the more people enjoy nature and get a peaceful feeling while taking outdoor activities, the more they care about the environment and think that natural resources must be conserved and protected. This supports previous research by Mayer et.al (2009); Pazwan, Guswan, and Lewin (2017), Rosa and Colado (2019), and Yilmaz and Anasori (2020). As individuals have a strong connection with nature and are passionate about it, they are inclined to relate this identity with a positive attitude toward preserving the natural environment, and this supports past research by Teeroovengadam (2019), Lu et.al, 2014; Wanga et.al, 2013; Hinds and Sparks, 2008).

However, there was no influence of nature-based destination image on environmental attitude, which means hypothesis four was not supported. It was suspected that gender and generation play significant roles as moderating variables as stated by Huang and van der Veen (2019). These authors found that the effect of the natural environment in a particular destination on attitude was stronger for female tourists than male and Generation Y compared to Generation X. As it was predicted, H5 was supported, which means that having a positive attitude towards the environment will increase people's intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations.

In assessing the moderating effect of individual green values, the authors used Multigroup SEM by splitting the data into two groups: high and low in individual green values. (Hair et.al, 2019). Firstly, the unconstrained structural models for both groups were set up and the results were shown in Table 3 the moderating effect of individual green values was confirmed (H6 was supported). This result is in line with the findings suggested by Gifford and Sussman (2012) and Shiel et.al (2020).

Table 3. Testing for Individual Green Values as Moderator.

Model Fit	
Chi-square	72.783
Degree of freedom	44
<i>P</i> Value	0.004

***Significant at 0.05.**

Source: data processing results

Then, the second model for each group was built and the results showed that the influence of environmental attitude on intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations will be stronger when people have a low level of green values, whereas the effect of environmental attitude on intention to visit sustainable tourism destination is insignificant for those who already hold strong values of being green consumers. A rationale could be people who feel responsible to act pro-environmentally (high level of green values) will be immediately interested in visiting sustainable tourism destinations.

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p-value</i>
H6: Individual green values moderate the influence of environmental attitude on intention to visit ecotourism destinations.		
Low individual green values:		
Environmental Attitude → Intention to Visit		
High individual green values:	0,692	0,000
Environmental Attitude → Intention to Visit	0,339	0,052

Source: data processing results.

CONCLUSION

The research reveals that enjoyment of nature and environmental identity enhance people's attitude toward the environmental attitude, a strong predictor of intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations. However, there is no effect of environmental concern and nature-based destination image on environmental attitude. Also, the effect of individual green values as a moderating variable was found significant in explaining the influence of environmental attitudes on people's intention to visit sustainable tourism destinations.

This study found the importance of the environmental attitude that reflects individuals' position about the environment. The policymakers and local government are encouraged to create marketing campaigns that provoke people's enjoyment while visiting sustainable tourism destinations as well as enhancing the quality of the natural environment. The use of social media influencer or public figure that actively supports environmental preservation is also recommended to boost individuals' environmental identity and capture individuals with a low level of green values. Participating in a travel exhibition is also a good idea because all the information is provided and the visitors can directly ask questions, and watch a short movie about the environment and efforts to minimize environmental damage.

This study has several limitations that provide future research recommendations. First, some other variables influence environmental concern and environmental attitude which were not included in the proposed model. By adding new constructs, the predictive power of the model can likely be enhanced. Second, despite the role of individual green values as moderating variable, this study did not assess it as an independent variable as was confirmed in the previous studies. Therefore, the authors suggest that future research put individual green values as moderating variable as well as an independent variable that influences behavioral intention.

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