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What Drives the Eco-Friendly Tourist Destination Choice? The Indian Perspective

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Abstract: Although eco-friendly (pro-environmental) behaviour in tourism has attracted interest among practitioners and scholars, little is known about the influence of these attitudes on the choice of eco-friendly destinations, especially in the context of emerging tourist markets such as India. Thus, this article aims to verify a model of the relationships between attitudes towards the environment and eco-friendly tourism, social and personal norms regarding environmentally responsible behaviour, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intentions regarding eco-friendly destinations and the willingness to pay for such trips using the theory of planned behaviour. The study used an online survey conducted with 598 Indians. The relationships between the variables were analysed using PLS-PM. The most important results indicated that (1) there are significant relationships between the attitude towards the environment, the attitude towards an eco-friendly destination, social and personal norms and behavioural control and intentions regarding travelling to eco-destinations and (2) well-educated young Indian consumers expressed a positive attitude towards eco-friendly destinations; however, there was only a very weak relationship between this attitude and willingness to pay more for trips to them. These findings are valuable for pro-environmental planning and the growing green market/economy, as well as for the discussion on the future of pro-environmental tourism development.

Keywords: environmental awareness; intentions to pay a premium for travel; partial least squares path modelling; green destinations; tourism

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1. Introduction

In the modern world, a transition towards greener technologies [1,2] and consumption [3] is seen as essential. This is favoured by both knowledge spillovers and environmental innovations, and clean energy transition policies are perceived as key to sustainable development [1]. This challenge covers all areas of social and economic activity, including tourism, which is characterized by both a continual observed increase in demand (during the prepandemic period) and so-called high emissivity (transport, accommodation); see among others, Scott et al. [4]; Lenzen et al. [5]; Uzuner, Akadiri, Lasisi [6].

From a global perspective, tourism is regarded as an energy- and emission-intensive industry [5,7,8]. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism's global carbon footprint had increased more than previously estimated, accounting for about 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions [5]. While most of this footprint belongs to high-income countries, India has the fourth-largest carbon footprint from tourism in the world. India also faces challenges in the energy sector [9], which further adds to the carbon footprint as energy consumption

and tourism positively contribute to emissions in India [10]. This highlights the importance of studying sustainable tourism in India.

In recent years, there has been a shift in trends towards eco-friendly and green products, services and consumer choices [11]. Scholars have been studying this issue for almost three decades, and the recent surge in green consumerism has attracted even more interest among scholars from various fields in examining what drives pro-ecological behaviour [3,12,13]. Pro-environmental behaviour, also referred to using various terms such as, but not limited to, green behaviour, environmentally sustainable consumer behaviour and eco-friendly consumption, has become a hot topic among tourism academics and practitioners [14,15]. This is due to a growing general environmental awareness, including a growing awareness of the environmental costs accompanying the development of tourism, which changes both tourist behaviour (trends in tourist demand) [16–18] and the tourism and hospitality industry [19].

Loureiro et al. [14] indicated that the literature about pro-environmental behaviour started with the paper by Higham and Carr [20] in 2002, which revealed that visiting eco-tourism destinations affects environmental values. After ecotourism experiences, consumers were more likely to consider environmental issues. Even though ecotourism is one of the most rapidly developing trends in tourism, as noted by Benckendorff and Moscardo [21], "the future of ecotourism will depend to some extent on how well the tourism industry understands the social trends influencing traveller behaviour". Taking the above into account, understanding the determinants of eco-friendly behaviour would appear to be vital to developing sustainable tourism, and in turn positively influencing energy conservation [22].

In this study, we focused on India, which, as already mentioned, has the fourth-largest carbon footprint from tourism in the world. At the same time, India is one of the fastest-developing countries in the world, offering wide possibilities for using renewable energy, including in tourism. Jayasinghe and Selvanathan [10] analysed these issues in their latest work, indicating that "sustainable tourism, energy consumption, and economic growth should be at the forefront of the economic development agenda of India". At the same time, they pointed to ecotourism, which encourages responsible travel and responsible consumption, as a potential tool for sustainable development, both economic and social. The position of Puri et al. [23] is similar, as they also emphasized that although nature-based tourism is developing dynamically in India, there are relatively few real green practices. Taking into account the above and bearing in mind the growing tourist demand among Indians (both in domestic and international tourism [24]), as well as the efforts of the country in building environmental awareness and knowledge [25], it seemed particularly interesting to investigate what individual behavioural variables favour an interest in ecotourism among Indians. Burhanudin and Unnithan [26] claimed that as India is beginning to represent an important share of international travellers from emerging markets, understanding Indians' eco-friendly behaviour is important to developing sustainable tourism. This study focused on young consumers, as young people in India have more awareness of ecological issues than other age categories [27], and their actions can shape the future conditions of the environment [28].

This study used the theory of planned behaviour [29,30], which links one's beliefs and behaviour. The theory states that attitude, subject norms and perceived behavioural control together shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours. The New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) was also included in the model of the relationship among the variables. The NEP represents environmental concerns toward human–nature relationships, in contrast to the dominant social paradigm [31]. Environmental awareness is an element of individual beliefs that drives consumers to engage in environmentally beneficial behaviours [32]. This behaviour also applies to travelling to eco-friendly destinations.

As Passafaro [33] pointed out, attitudes represent one of the first psychological factors taken into account by academics interested in identifying the determinants of environmentally significant behaviours. Therefore, this study aimed to propose and verify a model

for the relationships between attitudes towards the environment and eco-friendly tourism, social and personal norms regarding environmentally responsible behaviour, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intentions regarding eco-friendly destinations and the willingness to pay more for travel to such destinations. Moreover, this is the first survey of this type with respondents from India. Taking into account the previously highlighted growing importance of this phenomenon (ecotourism) both in Indian tourism [23,34] and among travelling Indians, the results obtained are of particular importance for the growing fields of green planning, marketing and sustainable transition management, as well as for the discussion on tourism development following the SDGs.

1.1. New Environmental Paradigm

The New Environmental Paradigm scale (NEP) is a measure of the endorsement of an ecological world view [35]. The conceptualization of the NEP focuses on beliefs about humanity's ability to upset the balance of nature, the existence of limits on growth for human societies and humanity's right to rule over the rest of nature [36]. Stern [37] wrote that the NEP represents a general ecological belief about or concern for the environment about human–nature interdependence. Park et al. [38] developed a model to explain environmental behaviour in tourism. They integrated the value-belief-norm and modified norm activation model to verify the role of the NEP in tourists' pro-environmental decision-making processes. They found that the NEP plays a critical role in facilitating predictive power improvement. Based on this, we hypothesized that a pro-environmental orientation or the NEP can have a significant influence on factors such as attitudes towards eco-tourism, social norms and/or perceived behavioural control. Hence, the following Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c were formulated:

Hypothesis 1a. *Pro-environmental orientation (NEP) significantly influences attitudes toward eco-tourism;*

Hypothesis 1b. *Pro-environmental orientation (NEP) significantly influences social norms;*

Hypothesis 1c. *Pro-environmental orientation (NEP) significantly influences perceived behavioural control.*

1.2. Theory of Planned Behaviour

A theory that is useful in explaining free-time behaviour is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) [29]. TPB is one of the most widely used socio-psychological models in the literature in terms of feasibility, testability, methodological suitability and validity within the framework of tourism, leisure and hospitality management [39]. According to the TPB, the decisive factor for behaviour is intentions, understood as a motivating factor influencing behaviour. The TPB suggests that there are three independent determinants of behavioural intentions: attitude (towards a behaviour), subjective norms (understood as an individual's perception about a particular behaviour) and perceived behavioural control (which refers to the perceived degree of difficulty of performing a particular behaviour) [29].

The TPB is quite often used to explain behaviour in leisure time, as well as pro-environmental behaviour [15]. For example, Mancha and Yoder [40] used the TPB to explain consumers' green behavioural intentions. In turn, Han and Kim [41] used the TPB to explain the decision-making process regarding the payment of comparable regular hotel prices for green hotels. In another article, Han and Hyun [42] verified the model by combining the TPB and the theory of reasoned action by examining the impact of attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioural control on the intentions of visiting eco-friendly museums.

Both social norms and perceived behavioural control are elements that can lead to the development of a sense of moral obligation or personal norms [38,43,44]. Social norms can activate the capacity for personal norms [45]. The same may be true of perceived behavioural control, which affects the sense of moral obligation, suggesting that individual

self-control or willpower control may increase the ability of personal norms to prompt a person to act pro-ecologically [44,46,47].

The TPB model is also used in sustainability studies. This is one of the most reliable and accurate theories in analysing green behaviour [48,49]. Examples include the search for factors determining conflict resolution in sustainable tourism [50], testing a sports sustainability campaign evaluation model among sports participants [51], as well as water-related innovations of accommodation managers [52]. The TPB is also suitable for predicting pro-environmental behavioural intentions [53]. According to the TPB, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

Hypothesis 2a. *Attitudes toward ecotourism significantly influence behavioural intentions to travel to eco-friendly destinations;*

Hypothesis 2b. *Attitudes toward ecotourism significantly influence behavioural intentions to pay more for travel to eco-friendly destinations;*

Hypothesis 3. *Subjective norms significantly influence personal norms;*

Hypothesis 4. *Perceived behavioural control significantly influences personal norms.*

1.3. Personal Norms

Personal norms are defined as "feelings of moral obligation to perform or refrain from specific actions" [54]. The theory of Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) assumes that values generate the NEP, creating awareness of negative consequences and assigning responsibility leading to personal norms as a direct predictor of pro-environmental behaviour in a hierarchical, causal process [38]. In turn, the Norm Activation Model (NAM) explains individual pro-ecological behaviour using personal norms, awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility [55]. In the Modified version of the NAM (MNAM), the model also includes social norms and perceived behavioural control as determinants of personal norms [38,56,57]. The last theory that takes into account personal norms is the value-identity-personal norm model [58]. The VIP model assumes that pro-environmental behaviour is influenced by a sense of moral obligation to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (personal norms). The model also suggests that personal norms, in turn, are influenced by an environmental identity that reflects the degree to which one sees oneself as being green [58].

Stern [37] found that assigning responsibility to individuals develops their moral obligation (or personal norms) to engage in pro-environmental activities. It has been shown that individuals display a sense of moral duty when they perceive a sense of responsibility for an unfavourable environment caused by hostile environmental behaviour. Therefore, assigning responsibility has a direct impact on personal norms [59,60]. Many studies show that personal norms have a strong influence on pro-environmental behaviour [38,61]. Hence:

Hypothesis 5a. *Personal norms significantly influence behavioural intentions to travel to eco-friendly destinations;*

Hypothesis 5b. *Personal norms significantly influence behavioural intentions to pay more for travel to eco-friendly destinations.*

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Survey Development

To examine the hypotheses in this study, we used a structured, self-administered online questionnaire, consisting of a range of scales devised by other authors and established in the literature: attitude toward eco-tourism [29,62], the New Environmental Paradigm [36], social norms [29,38], personal norms [29,38], perceived behavioural control [38], visiting

intention [29,63] and willingness to pay more [64]. Table A1 in the Appendix provides more details.

A pilot study was carried out in English among 17 individuals from India through convenience sampling in order to validate and improve the survey. The responses collected during the pilot phase were excluded from the final sample used for analysis within this paper. The final version of the questionnaire had 36 mandatory questions, 1 conditional question and 1 optional open-ended question. The questionnaire was hosted on Qualtrics and enabled the authors to use a range of advanced security and user-friendly options, such as preventing users from submitting multiple responses, bot detection using an embedded data field (reCAPTCHA), preventing security scanners from accidentally starting the surveys and allowing respondents to finish the survey later.

2.2. Sampling

The survey was distributed through a convenience sampling method that leveraged the personal and professional connections of the authors. Multiple channels were used to send out the questionnaire, such as emails to university mailing lists, personal messages and posts on social media channels. All respondents were further requested to share the questionnaire among their network so as to enable the questionnaire to reach beyond the immediate social and professional network of the authors, thus aiding in increasing the number of responses and enhancing the external validity of the study [65].

The questionnaire was available online from 13 April 2021 to 16 June 2021, during which time 598 complete responses and 818 partial responses were recorded from Indian nationals. The average time spent by the respondents on submitting a valid response was 6 min and 38 s, whereas the average time spent by the respondents who did not complete the questionnaire was 43 s. On average, the partial responses recorded were only 19.4% complete, with most of them being 0%. None of the partial responses were used in the analysis.

The vast majority of respondents were men (72.1%), with only 26.6% women (Table 1). Eight respondents (1.3%) did not provide their gender. People aged 23 were the most numerous group of respondents (32.8%), followed by those aged 24 (27.6%). Most of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree (53.0%) or a Master's degree (41.6%), with a small number who were less or more educated.

Table 1. Characteristics of the test sample (N = 598).

Feature		Number of Respondents	Percentage of the Sample
Gender	Female	159	26.6%
	Male	431	72.1%
	Did not say	8	1.3%
Age ***(in years)***	19–22	33	5.50%
	23	196	32.80%
	24	165	27.60%
	25–27	88	14.70%
	28–35	69	11.50%
	36 and over	46	7.70%
	Preferred not to say	1	0.20%
Education	High school diploma	7	1.20%
	Bachelor's degree	317	53.00%
	Master's degree	249	41.60%
	Doctorate	25	4.20%

2.3. Sampling

To start with, the reliability and validity of the constructs were tested, followed by the assessment of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity and collinearity. The relationships between the variables were analysed using the method of Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modelling using SmartPLS software [66].

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Results

It was interesting to see the choice of "dream destination" and "eco-friendly destination" among the respondents. All the respondents (N = 598) reported their dream tourist destination, whereas 242 respondents reported having selected an eco-friendly destination. Figure 1 shows the respondents' choices on the world map. It can be observed that a large number of respondents chose India itself as their dream destination, whereas the majority of respondents who chose an eco-friendly destination also selected India. This is not surprising as India is one of the most recognizable nature-based tourism destinations [23] and is considered to be one of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world [67].

The majority of the respondents also felt that environmentally friendly eco-tourism was good (73.9%), wise (64%), pleasant (59.7%), beneficial (69.1%) and attractive (60.9%). It was also observed that a large proportion of the respondents agreed that it is necessary to maintain a balance in nature (87.1%), that such a balance is delicate (54.8%), that human interference often produces disastrous results (66.4%) and that business as usual would lead to a major catastrophe (75.9%). Most of the respondents plan to visit an eco-friendly destination in the future (72.2%) and put more effort into finding eco-friendly destinations (71.7%), and over 68% of respondents either strongly or mildly agreed that they have the willingness to pay more for a visit to an eco-friendly destination.

3.2. Model Evaluation

In the first step of the model assessment, the indicator loadings were checked. Nearly all the factor loadings were over the recommended 0.708, except two items for the perceived behavioural control construct at 0.633 and 0.627 and one for the NEP at 0.675 (Table 2). However, these values are also acceptable for exploratory research [68]. In the next step, internal consistency reliability (composite reliability (CR)) was assessed, the value of which was from 0.759 to 0.958. The indicators can be rated "satisfactory to good", except the 0.958 for willingness to pay more, but the recommended value of 0.95 was only slightly exceeded. Another indicator of internal consistency reliability—Cronbach's alpha—reached values between 0.601 and 0.934, which can also be considered satisfactory [68]. Convergent validity was estimated by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and ranged from 0.508 for the NEP to 0.884 for willingness to pay more. Hair et al. [69] reported that an acceptable AVE is 0.50, which was true for all constructs.

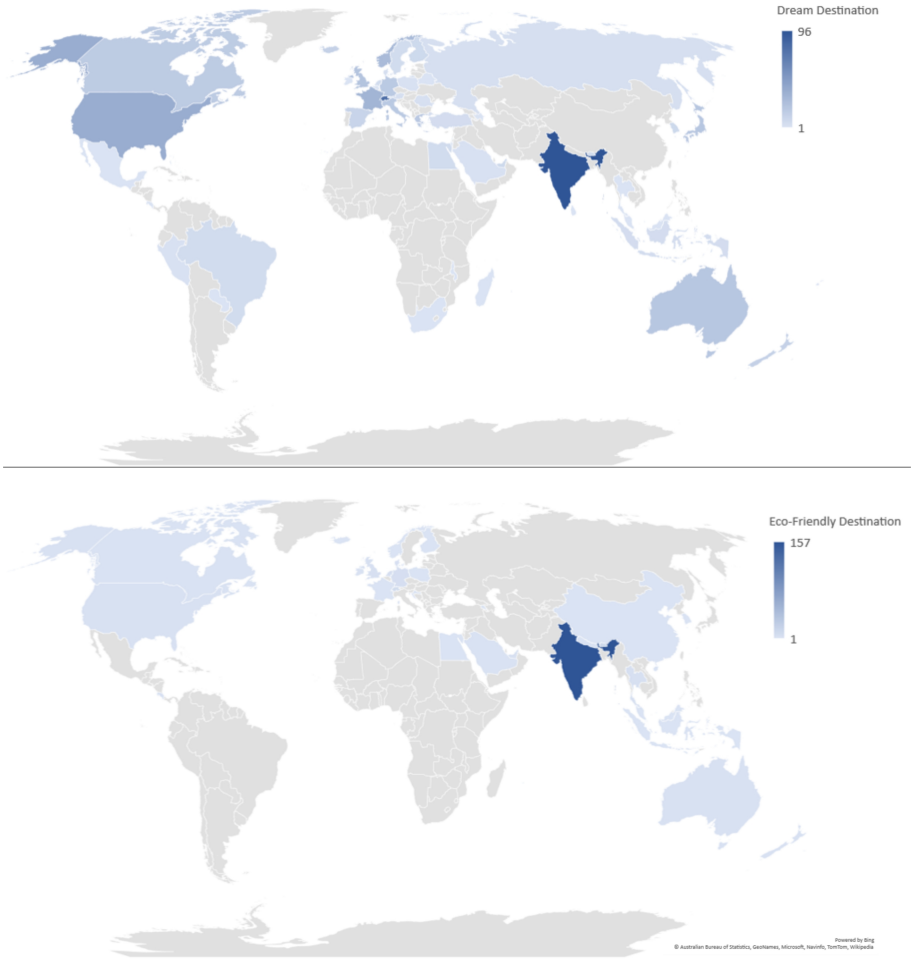

Figure 1. Respondents' choices of dream destinations and eco-friendly destinations.

Table 2. Assessment of construct reliability and validity.

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Factor Loadings
Attitude toward eco-tourism	0.858	0.898	0.639	0.804–0.885
Willingness to pay more	0.934	0.958	0.884	0.924–0.959
Behavioural intentions to travel	0.752	0.857	0.668	0.783–0.858
NEP	0.653	0.792	0.508	0.675–0.780
Perceived behavioural control	0.601	0.759	0.517	0.623–0.846
Personal norms	0.817	0.89	0.729	0.825–0.889
Social norms	0.829	0.897	0.743	0.819–0.884

In the next step, the discriminant validity was assessed, which is the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the structural model [69]. For this purpose, the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations [70] was counted (Table 3). Discriminant validity problems are present when HTMT values are high (according to Henseler et al. [71]), that is 0.85 or more, but here, this did not occur.

Table 3. Discriminant validity: Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations.

	Attitude toward Eco-Tourism	Willingness to Pay More	Behavioural Intentions to Travel	NEP	Perceived Behavioural Control	Personal Norms
Willingness to pay more	0.166					
Behavioural intentions to travel	0.262	0.34				
NEP	0.238	0.16	0.233			
Perceived behavioural control	0.23	0.252	0.345	0.318		
Personal norms	0.182	0.215	0.311	0.335	0.301	
Social norms	0.186	0.22	0.218	0.246	0.359	0.291

Before assessing the structural model, the collinearity was examined by calculating the VIF values. All the values were well below three, except one indicator for willingness to pay more, which was lower than the required five [72]. Assessment of the structural model was performed by calculating the coefficient of determination (R2) and the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure Q2. The R2 measures the variance explained in each of the endogenous constructs and is a measure of the model's explanatory power [73]. The results were R2 = 0.055 for willingness to pay more and 0.099 for behavioural intentions to travel. Although the R2 values were relatively low (even 0.55 and 0.10), in some cases, they were considered satisfactory [74]. The Stone–Geisser Q2 test was conducted using the blindfolding procedure [75,76]. This is a test of how far the observed values are reconstructed by the proposed model. The obtained Q2 values were from 0.047 (for willingness to pay more) to 0.066 (for personal norms) and were rather low, but positive. Finally, the Standardized Root-Mean-Squared Residual (SRMR) value was calculated, which is the difference between the observed correlation matrix and the correlation matrix implied by the model. The SRMR was 0.062, which is considered to be good as it was lower than 0.08 [77].

3.3. Hypothesis Verification

In the last step, the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients were assessed. For this purpose, the bootstrapping procedure was run to assess the path coefficients' significance and their values. As a result of this procedure, all nine hypotheses listed in Table 4 were confirmed. The NEP positively influenced attitude toward eco-tourism, social norms and perceived behavioural control (H1a, H1b, H1c). Attitude toward eco-tourism positively influenced behavioural intentions to travel (H2a) and willingness to pay more (H2b). Social norms and perceived behavioural control positively influenced personal norms (H3, H4). Personal norms positively influenced behavioural intentions to travel and willingness to pay more (H5a, H5b).

Table 4. Calculated path coefficients.

Hypothesis	Relationships	β	t	p
H1a	NEP -> Attitude toward ecotourism	0.172	3.911	**0.001**
H1b	NEP -> Social norms	0.180	3.328	**0.001**
H1c	NEP -> Perceived behavioural control	0.191	3.81	**0.001**
H2a	Attitude toward ecotourism -> Behavioural intentions to travel	0.188	4.646	**0.001**
H2b	Attitude toward ecotourism -> Willingness to pay more	0.132	2.697	**0.007**
H3	Social norms -> Personal norms	0.200	4.211	**0.001**
H4	Perceived behavioural control -> Personal norms	0.195	3.884	**0.001**
H5a	Personal norms -> Behavioural intentions to travel	0.223	5.069	**0.001**
H5b	Personal norms -> Willingness to pay more	0.175	4.086	**0.001**

A detailed analysis of the path model (Figure 2) indicated that the main path of the NEP's influence on behavioural intentions followed two pathways. The first led through social norms and perceived behavioural control and then further through personal norms and had a significant impact on behavioural intention to travel and slightly more for willingness to pay more. The second path led through attitude toward eco-tourism. Both paths of influence were statistically significant. These variables had a much weaker, but also statistically significant influence on willingness to pay more.

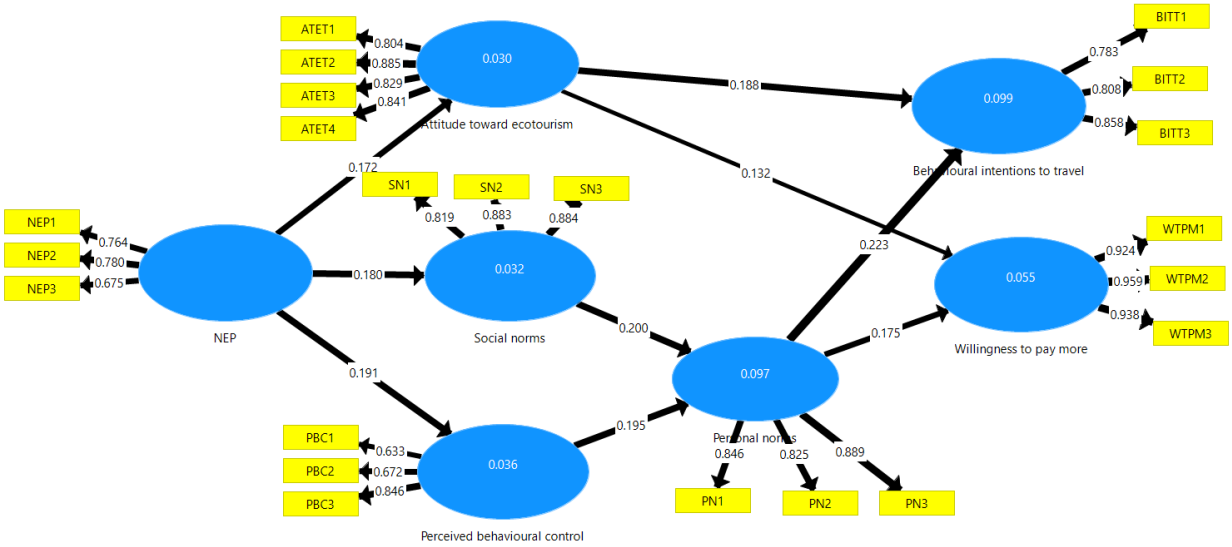

Figure 2. Verified behavioural model of the relationships between the variables.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to verify the relationship between the variables of the behavioural model and of the relationship between pro-environmental attitudes and the intentions to choose eco-friendly destinations. The research allowed the authors to verify this model on a sample of Indians, who represent travellers from emerging markets. This

study provides relevant theoretical and practical implications, as well as avenues for future research.

As pointed out by Han [15], comprehending the drivers of green/sustainable behaviour is crucial to designing effective strategies for minimising the negative environmental impacts of contemporary tourism (see also [78–80]). This is all the more important for an emerging market with a massive population such as India, due to the challenges related to energy conservation and emissions [10]. The findings of this study confirmed the legitimacy of using the theory of planned behaviour [29] and the Norm Activation Model (MNAM) [38,56] in explaining pro-ecological behaviour, especially in the process of choosing an eco-destination.

The research also confirmed the significant influence of environmental beliefs (NEP) on attitudes towards ecotourism (H1a), social norms (H1b) and perceived behavioural control (H1c). When an individual is aware of environmental concerns, his/her attitude towards ecotourism is more positive, and social norms and perceived behavioural control are stronger. These findings are consistent with earlier literature (e.g., [38,57,63]). They also correspond to the conviction about the need to shape pro-environmental awareness, which stimulates eco-friendly interest and sustainable practices, both in everyday life and in tourism [81,82]. Moreover, our research results also support Han [15] in encouraging tourism, consumer behaviour and environmental psychology academics to work in cooperation in pursuit of common goals for promoting pro-environmental tourism consumption and eco-friendly behaviour.

Hypotheses H2, H3, H4 and H5 confirmed the relationships postulated in the models discussed in the theoretical part of the article (TPB, NAM, VIP). Attitudes toward ecotourism significantly influenced behavioural intentions to travel to green destinations, as suggested by the TPB [57,63,83]. However, the influence of attitudes on willingness to pay more (Hypothesis 2B) was much weaker than on behavioural intentions to travel, as described further below. It follows that a mere positive attitude towards ecotourism is insufficient for Indians to be willing to pay the premium price for a trip to green destinations. Here, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and personal norms are also necessary.

As mentioned above, the study showed that there was a relatively weak, but significant influence of attitude towards ecotourism on the intention to pay more for it (Hypothesis 2b). This confirmed a wider frustrating paradox for companies that are increasing their sustainable offers. Consumers in general express a positive attitude towards eco-friendly or sustainable products or services; however, they are not so willing to follow this up by opening their wallets and paying more for such products or services [84]. This shifts the focus to marketers, who have to take up the challenge to create a perceived green image, even among consumers who have a positive attitude towards ecotourism, in order to influence their willingness to spend more for it. As suggested by Moons et al. [85], the level of income significantly moderates the willingness to pay more for ecotourism, but this of course also has to do with the behavioural intentions to travel to eco-destinations. Other factors such as motivation to travel might also come into play, as this varies from culture to culture. For instance, a study by Booking.com found that the majority of Indians travel for social status or to become social media influencers, rather than as a result of a willingness to explore or empathize with the destination [86]. These assumptions, however, require verification in the form of further research.

Due to the growing importance of emerging countries (including India) in global consumption, more and more research is devoted to them. Studies on the factors influencing pro-environmental consumer behaviour have a special place among such research [87]; however, studies focused on behaviour in tourism are still rare [26] and focus on a narrow context, e.g., green hotels [48]. In this regard, our study not only fills the research gap, but also gives some practical implications.

The research also points out that there cannot be a single overall marketing plan that may be used to enhance travelling to eco-destinations in different parts of the world.

To promote an eco-friendly destination, the marketers and/or planners need to consider the target market factors (socio-economic aspects) to create an effective marketing plan, as indicated by Chawla [88]. The results of the study may also be useful for policymakers as they gear up to boost domestic tourism in the postpandemic era, where domestic tourism is seen as the driving force for the Indian tourism industry [89]. Sustainable tourism has been identified as one of Indian Tourism's niche products, with plans to inform and educate tourism stakeholders through the Responsible Tourism Society of India (RTSOI) [90].

5. Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted with the utmost rigour; however, there were some limitations that open the door to future research. These mainly resulted from the nonrepresentative nature of the collected research sample, which limited the possibilities of inference. Despite a large enough sample size, which helped in reducing the sampling error, the main limitation of the study was the nonprobabilistic sampling method used to collect the data. However, the exploratory nature of our research is undoubtedly valuable. Moreover, despite the identification of many relationships between the independent and dependent variables and the general acceptance of the hypothetical model for the relationships, the percentage of the explained variance of the dependent variables was relatively small (0.055 for willingness to pay more and 0.099 for behavioural intentions to travel). This means that future research should take into account more dependent variables, such as values (altruistic, biospheric, hedonic and egoistic) [38,58], motivations and perceived service quality [83] and the resultant self-transcendence and conservation [63]. Additionally, testing the proposed theoretical framework by considering the generation lens (Baby Boomer, X, Y and Z generations) and the cultural (nations) lens would be a thought-provoking and desired extension of the current study. In addition, it would also be interesting to look for differences in the relationships of the model between the genders. As shown by Giachino et al. [91], gender is a factor that mostly influences the perception and attitudes towards nature-based solutions: young females are interested in nature-based solutions more than young males. It is also worth verifying this model by taking into consideration respondents' level of income, as suggested by Moons et al. [85], and in the Indian context (as well as other emerging tourist markets), also taking into account the stratification of the level of education.

Chawla et al. [92] highlighted that presence on various communication channels can affect individuals' acceptance of sustainable products and their willingness to pay for them. It would also be interesting to see the impact of the use of various communication channels, especially social media (and social media influencers) and media multitasking, on the constructs used in this study. Additionally, it would be insightful to replicate such a survey among countries that have a large dependence on tourism, as well as those with a smaller or no dependence on tourism. Based on the results of this study, one of the hypotheses for future studies could be that respondents from the former countries or regions with a large dependence on tourism would be more concerned about ecotourism as compared to the latter group, as highlighted by Sambrook et al. [93] in the case of climate change perceptions.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
NEP	New Environmental Paradigm
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
VBN	Value-Belief-Norm
NAM	Norm Activation Model
MNAM	Modified version of the Norm Activation Model
VIP	Value-Identity-Personal
PLS	Partial Least Squares
HTMT	Heterotrait–Monotrait

Appendix A

Table A1. Scales used in the study.

Code	Description	Scale
	Attitude Toward Ecotourism (ATET) [29,62])	
ATET1	Environmentally responsible eco-friendly tourism is	Foolish (1)–Wise (5)
ATET2	Environmentally responsible eco-friendly tourism is	Unpleasant (1)–Pleasant (5)
ATET3	Environmentally responsible eco-friendly tourism is	Harmful (1)–Beneficial (5)
ATET4	Environmentally responsible eco-friendly tourism is	Unattractive (1)–Attractive (5)
	New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) [36]	
NEP1	Humans must live in harmony with nature in order to survive.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
NEP2	When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
NEP3	If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological disaster.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
	Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) [29,38]	
PBC1	Most people who are important to me think I should have environmentally responsible behaviour.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PBC2	People whose opinions I value would prefer me to do have environmentally responsible behaviour.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PBC3	Most people who are important to me would want me to have environmentally responsible behaviour.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
	Personal Norms (PN) ([29,38]	
PN1	I have an obligation to dissuade anyone from damaging the local environment.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PN2	I have an obligation to protect the local environment.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PN3	I have an obligation to alleviate local environmental problems.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
	Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) [38]	
PBC1	I have plenty of opportunities to participate in environmentally responsible activities.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PBC2	It is completely up to me whether or not I can participate in environmentally responsible activities.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
PBC3	I am confident that if I want, I can have environmentally responsible behaviour.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)

Table A1. *Cont.*

Code	Description	Scale
	Behavioural Intentions To Travel (BITT) [29,63]	
BITT1	I am willing to visit an eco-friendly destination in the future.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
BITT2	I plan to visit an eco-friendly destination in the future.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
BITT3	I will expend effort on visiting an eco-friendly destination in the future.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
	Willingness to Pay More (WPM) [64]	
WTPM1	It is acceptable to pay more for a visit to an eco-destination.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
WTPM2	I am willing to pay more for a visit to an eco-destination.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)
WTPM3	I am willing to spend extra to visit an eco-destination.	Strongly disagree (1)–Strongly agree (5)

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