

An Analysis Of Intention To Do Ecotourism In The New Norm: A Comparative Structural Model Between Malaysia And Indonesia

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Abstract

Tourism contributes to the growth of economy of a nation through employment, multiplier effect, and foreign exchange earnings and also contributes to positive balance of payments. Ecotourism is the natural evolution of tourism employing care for the environment, culture and local traditions, while promoting environmental education. Eco-tourists behavior are still areas of opportunity for research in order to understand the factors, whether economic, cultural, social, demographic, or psychographic, that determine this behavior. The Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic situation has posed significant effect on tourism industry. The COVID-19 lockdown around the world has imposed negative impact on world economy as well. This research aimed at understanding the determiners in the process of consumer intention in ecotourism contexts, as well as verifying the growing importance of ecotourism. This comparative research is to analyze the intention to practice ecotourism among eco-tourists from two countries by comparing eco-tourists from Malaysia and Indonesia, in which the importance of ecotourism is similar. The construct variables toward to do ecotourism are awareness of consequences, personal norms and social norms with covid 19 as moderator. The data were obtained from questionnaire distribution to 100 Malaysian and 100 Indonesian eco tourists respondents using five likert scale and analyzed through smart PLS 3. The hypotheses were to indicate the intention to practice ecotourism which influenced by awareness of consequences, personal norms, and social norms. The result indicates a significant and positive relationship between Covid-19 and Intention to do Ecotourism. Personal Norms and Social Norms have significant positive relationship with Intention to do Ecotourism, respectively. However, there is no moderation effect of Covid – 19 on Intention to do Ecotourism.

Keywords: Ecotourism Intention, Covid 19, awareness of consequences, personal norms, social norms

Introduction

Tourism which has high level of human interaction, indeed is one of the sectors suffering most from the COVID -19 (Hoque et al., 2020). The new norm period in 2020 now back to the serious lockdown period during 2021 in most countries in particular Malaysia and Indonesia. Currently both countries still face the uncertainty of this pandemic as well as tourism business uncertainty.

A report from tourism Malaysia (2020) informed that hygiene and safety were become the main concern on traveling decision other than prioritizing on the pricing and attractiveness of the destination. In addition to tourism Malaysia survey in the year 2020 stated that 91.5% of respondents decided to avoid traveling in crowded areas subject to their fear of COVID-19 virus transmission. As many 67.6% of respondents would

avoid shopping activities, whilst 63.1% did not intend to engage in theme park related activities, and around 47% respondents avoid traveling for food and beverage activities as well as for sports and recreation activities. Hence, there is a phenomenon that most respondents prefer for domestic travel rather than abroad. This phenomenon is also happened in other countries such as Indonesia. Statista (2020) stated the Indonesia's tourism sector record for the international tourism receipts in the first quarter of 2020 was around 2.9 billion U.S. dollars versus 147.3 million US dollar in the fourth quarter in 2020. This decreasing value of international tourism receipts indicated the high negative impact of Covid – 19. However, despite this global crisis, both countries still hope a recovery in their tourism business

Indeed, tourists have high risk perceptions of travel due to the health alert (Neuburger & Egger, 2020) and greater attention being paid to hygiene and cleanliness (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Shaw et al. (2020) study indicated a lifestyle changes toward long term behavioral implications. On the other hand, Ivanov et al., (2020), stated that some habits, behaviors and expectations in travelers in the post-viral world could be imprinted by Covid – 19. One of the new habits is to always practice physical distancing by avoiding unnecessary travel and staying away from large groups of persons. WHO (2020) declared that to avoid infection and to slow transmission of COVID-19, persons were encouraged to maintain at least 1-meter distance.

Based on the physical distance enforcement at all of the countries, it will relate to the tourism object preferences. People who still need to do traveling might think to find the location which has potential of fresh air or natural environment. Republika (2021) cited that the new policy issued by the Indonesia Minister of Tourism and Creative Economics, Sandiaga Uno was aimed to achieve tourism sustainability. The Indonesia government want to provide environmental friendly of tourism destinations which ecotourism was the target. In line with ecotourism policy in Indonesia, Focus Malaysia (2021) highlighted that Malaysia Government policy was also stated that Ecotourism could be the opportunity for the tourism sector in Malaysia to revive.

The shifting of tourism destination policy toward ecotourism concept stimulates this study to conduct a preliminary study about an analysis of intention to do ecotourism in the new norm. A comparative structural model between Malaysia and Indonesia will be analyzed in order to find the recommended model to support the tourism turn around business in both countries. In addition, Malaysia and Indonesia have some similarity of targeted ecotourism destination location.

ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is an alternative tourism that provide nature tourism by helping to conserve the environment in which the tourist is received for the benefit of both visitors and the local destination community (Epler Wood, 2002). According to Hultman et al. 2015, Hwang and Lee 2018, ecological behavior and the internal or external factors can lead to new forms of tourism, such as ecotourism or nature tourism. The ecological behavior relates to the model of value-belief-norm (VBN) which developed by Stern et al. (1999). This VBN model in a tourism sector can be used to explain consumer ecological behaviors (Choi et al. 2015).

Research on eco-tourist behavior is based on the analysis of either consumption intention or consumption itself (Han 2015, Kiatkawsin and Han 2017). Earlier study found that the theory of planned behavior (TPB), explain about the individual's willingness to perform that particular behavior (de Groot and Steg 2008). With regards to various government policy in preventing Covid – 19 transmissions, thus people also develop their personal norms as well. Hence, the current trend of such personal norms incorporate the TPB to determine how the intention to undertake ecotourism. In addition, the intention to pay more for ecotourism is relate to the VBN model

2.1. Awareness of Consequences

Awareness of consequences (AC) refers to a disposition to become aware of the potential consequences of one's acts for the welfare of others during the decision-making process. Awareness consequences is a personal orientation. In the VBN theory (Stern, 2000; Stern et al., 1999) it is posited that awareness-of-consequences beliefs are causally related to value orientations. The basis for this AC is because a value orientation biases individuals to select and believe in information that is congruent with their value orientation and to deny value- incongruent information. In this study the awareness of consequences is relate to the understanding of prevention effort subject to Covid – 19 such as consideration to do ecotourism which more close to the clean environment in line with social distancing effort.

2.2. Social Norms

Social norms refer to the perception of other people's opinions on how the individual should behave. Ham, et al (2015) study identified social norms was a dimension part of the subjective norms factor. Subjective norms refer to the belief that an important person or group of people will approve and support a particular behaviour. Subjective norms are determined by the perceived social pressure from others for an individual to behave in a certain manner and their motivation to comply with those people's views. According to the theory of planned behaviour, the intention to undertake a certain behaviour is directly influenced by three factors, namely personal attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Study by Doran & Larsen (2016), found that social and personal norms seem both related to eco- friendly travel choices.

2.3. Personal Norms

Personal norms differ from social norms in that they refer to internal standards concerning a particular behaviour rather than reflecting externally imposed rules (Kallgren et al., 2000). Doran & Larsen (2016) finding indicated that a particular emphasis should be given to the role of personal norms in relating with eco- friendly travel choices. In addition, Doran & Larsen (2016) identify several studies in relationship between personal norms and willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviour while being on vacation

2.4. Intention To Do Ecotourism

Romero et all (2019) study on cross-cultural analysis of the ecological behavior of Chilean and Spanish ecotourists, recommend their proposed model framework to be tested in other countries as the basis for understanding the behavioral intention of ecotourism. The model of Romero et all (2019) will be used for this study in order to now the intention to do ecotourism model in Malaysia and Indonesia.

As the preliminary study which concern on how government policy create new social norms as well as the awareness of consequences, thus the variables to be tested it relationship with the intention to do ecotourism are social norms and awareness of consequences. Furthermore, the personal norms is also be measured subject to the theory of planned behaviour.

2.5. Covid – 19

As implemented in most countries, the COVID-19 lockdowns policy have caused a reduction in social and physical contact among people. Therefore, the present study incorporates COVID-19 as a moderating variable. This study analyses how Covid – 19 effects the intention to do ecotourism despite confirmation of positive relationship between Covid – 19 and the intention to do ecotourism.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual research framework is illustrated in figure 1 below.

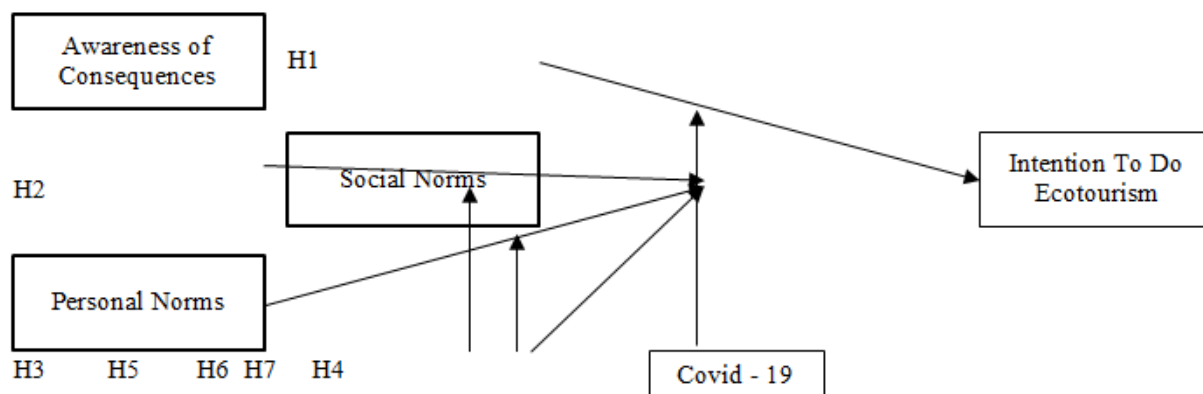


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework

The hypotheses are:

H1: There is a significant and positively relationship between Awareness of Consequences and Intention To Do Ecotourism.

H2: There is a significant and positively relationship between Social Norms and Intention To Do Ecotourism.

H3: There is a significant and positively relationship between Personal Norms and Intention To Do Ecotourism.

H4: There is a significant and positively relationship between Covid – 19 and Intention ToDo Ecotourism.

H5: Covid-19 moderates the relationship between Awareness of Consequences and Intention To Do Ecotourism

H6: Covid-19 moderates the relationship between Social Norms and Intention To Do Ecotourism

H7: Covid-19 moderates the relationship between Personal Norms and Intention To Do Ecotourism

METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative study for the tourism industry object with individual as the unit analysis based on convenience sampling method. 200 eco-tourists’ respondents from both Malaysian and Indonesian trough five likert scale questionnaire were analyzed by multi group analysis (MGA) smart PLS 3. MGA is one of the most efficient ways to assess moderation across multiple relationships (Hair et al., 2017). Construct variables are intention to do ecotourism, awareness of consequences, personal norms and social norms. Moderator variable is Covid-19. All model indicators are reflective. The questionnaire Cronbach alpha was tested based on 30 respondents outside the 200 respondents. The Cronbach alpha is above 0.7.

FINDING

4.1 Data Validity and Reliability – Smart PLS 3

The analysis was done based on the clean data of respondent subject to straight lining and outlier data. SPSS statistic tool was used to review the data from any outliers by Mahalanobis distance. The net data was 175 consist of 92 respondents from Indonesia and 83 respondents from Malaysia. The smart PLS analysis can be summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Data Validity and Reliability – Smart Pls 3

CONSTRUCT	INDICATOR	FACTOR LOADING	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY	AVE	CRONBACH ALPHA	R ²
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Awareness of Consequences			0.862	0.559	0.798	
	AC1	0.573 (this value was retain as AVE value was above 0.5				
	AC 2	0.744				
	AC 3	0.728				
	AC 4	0.857				
	AC 5	0.795				
Social Norms			0.964	0.900	0.945	
	SN 1	0.951				
	SN 2	0.948				
	SN 3	0.947				
Personal Norms			0.925	0.672	0.903	
	PN1	0.805				
	PN 2	0.800				
	PN 3	0.812				
	PN 4	0.829				
	PN 5	0.832				
	PN 6	0.839				
Intention to do ecotourism			0.935	0.784	0.908	0.558
	IE 1	0.837				
	IE 2	0.890				
	IE 3	0.905				
	IE 4	0.907				
Covid 19			0.857	0.667	0.753	
	C19 1	0.810				
	C19 2	0.760				
	C19 3	0.876				

Based on data validity and reliability in table 1 above, all data values fulfill the threshold value of standard Smart PLSs 3, as well as for the Fornel Larcker, HTMT and Composite Reliability value.

4.2. Multi Group Analysis – Smart PLS 3

The multi group analysis (MGA) was run based on the country grouping, Indonesia and Malaysia. The hypothesis result is summarized in table 2, 3, 4 as follow:

Table 2. Multi Group Complete Path Analysis Result

Hypotheses	Standard β	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.5% CI LL	97.5% CI UL
Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H1)	0.119	0.082	1.445	0.149	-0.057	0.266
Covid 19 -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H4)	<u>0.389</u>	<u>0.053</u>	<u>7.374</u>	<u>0.000</u>	<u>0.283</u>	<u>0.489</u>
Covid 19 * Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H5)	-0.133	0.163	0.813	0.417	-0.330	0.229
Covid 19 * Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H7)	-0.035	0.105	0.336	0.737	-0.198	0.180
Covid 19 * Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H6)	-0.148	0.076	1.932	0.054	-0.309	-0.022
Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H3)	<u>0.259</u>	<u>0.087</u>	<u>2.980</u>	<u>0.003</u>	<u>0.104</u>	<u>0.449</u>
Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H2)	<u>0.137</u>	<u>0.066</u>	<u>2.077</u>	<u>0.038</u>	<u>0.014</u>	<u>0.268</u>

Note: There is a significant and positive relationship between Covid-19 and Intention to do Ecotourism. Personal Norms and Social Norms have significant positive relationship with Intention to do Ecotourism, respectively. However, there is no moderation effect of Covid – 19 on Intention to do Ecotourism

Table 3. Indonesia Country Group Path Analysis Result

Hypotheses	Standard β	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.5% CC LL	97.5% CC UL
Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H1)	0.058	0.108	0.537	0.591	-0.176	0.230
Covid 19 -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H4)	<u>0.473</u>	<u>0.061</u>	<u>7.701</u>	<u>0.000</u>	<u>0.343</u>	<u>0.577</u>
Covid 19 * Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H5)	0.257	0.182	1.415	0.158	-0.164	0.586
Covid 19 * Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H7)	-0.220	0.278	0.794	0.427	-0.689	0.331
Covid 19 * Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H6)	-0.119	0.102	1.163	0.245	-0.270	0.135
Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H3)	<u>0.258</u>	<u>0.100</u>	<u>2.580</u>	<u>0.010</u>	<u>0.055</u>	<u>0.442</u>
Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H2)	0.087	0.094	0.924	0.356	-0.072	0.304

Note: There is a significant and positive relationship between Covid-19 and Intention to do Ecotourism. Personal Norms has significant positive relationship with Intention to do Ecotourism. There is no moderation effect of Covid – 19 on Intention to do Ecotourism.

Table 4. Malaysia Country Group Path Analysis Result

Hypotheses	Standard β	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	2.5% CC LL	97.5% CC UL
Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H1)	<u>0.368</u>	<u>0.132</u>	<u>2.782</u>	<u>0.006</u>	<u>0.093</u>	<u>0.606</u>
Covid 19 -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H4)	<u>0.267</u>	<u>0.079</u>	<u>3.393</u>	<u>0.001</u>	<u>0.096</u>	<u>0.407</u>
Covid 19 * Awareness of Consequences -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H5)	-0.212	0.234	0.906	0.365	-0.751	0.164
Covid 19 * Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H7)	-0.331	0.217	1.526	0.128	-0.788	-0.003
Covid 19 * Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H6)	0.173	0.181	0.958	0.338	-0.174	0.480
Personal Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H3)	0.234	0.121	1.928	0.054	-0.039	0.449
Social Norms -> Intention to do Ecotourism (H2)	0.033	0.093	0.350	0.727	-0.138	0.222

Note: There is a significant and positive relationship between Covid-19 and Intention to do Ecotourism. Awareness of consequences has significant positive relationship with Intention to do Ecotourism. There is no moderation effect of Covid – 19 on Intention to do Ecotourism.

4.3 Research Model

The research model is presented in the figure 2 as follow:

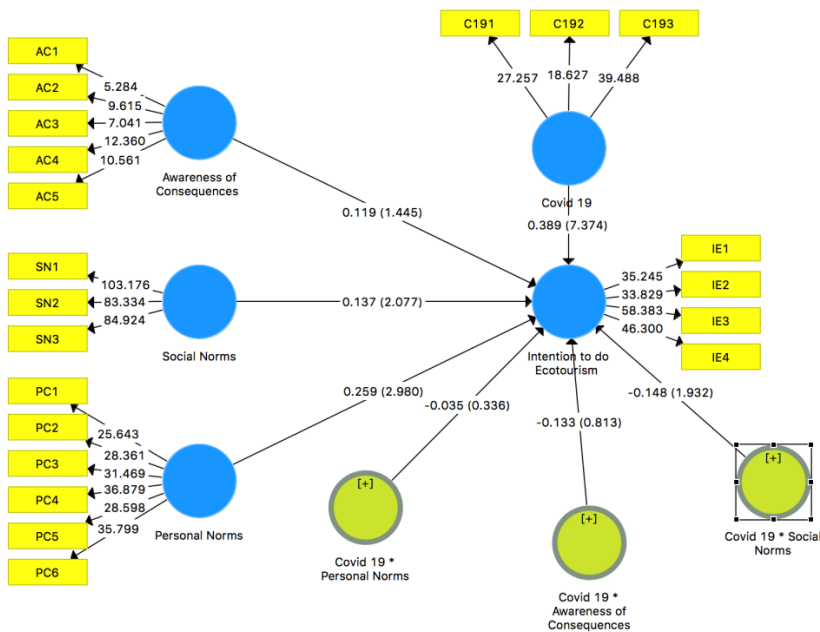


Figure 2. Multi Group Complete Model Result

DISCUSSION

Based on the finding of complete multi group path analysis, Covid – 19 has no moderation effect on all variables but significantly has positive relationship with the Intention To Do Ecotourism. The multi group analysis result of no Covid-19 moderation effect in any of the hypotheses, indicates similarity pandemic situation which effect to the behavior of the people within the two countries in relation to the general model

However, this finding indicate that the positive relationship to do ecotourism is due to physical distancing regulation as well as Covid – 19 transmission reason. As long as the pandemic still in the uncertain condition then it leads people to have intention to do ecotourism at both countries in general. The personal norm to have more fresh environment and social norms to put concern on prevention virus transmission to the community are also support the behaviour to choose ecotourism. Within the tourism framework, the growth of ecotourism as a form of alternative tourism has prompted the tourism industry to become increasingly interested prospect. The Covid – 19 positively relationship with the intention to do ecotourism result confirm the robustness of the model because there are no significant differences between the countries, which indicates that ecotourism behavior is similar regardless of the country of origin.

The multi group analysis result based on individual country resulting a different model for each country. For Indonesia, consumer behavior is still focus on their personal norms as stated in the theory of plan behavior. People are more concern to prevent them self from the Covid – 19 virus infections. This indicate that people who do traveling will put high concern to have clean and fresh environment. On the side, In Malaysia, people has high level of awareness consequences subject to the nature environment condition which lead them to has an intention to do ecotourism. Hence there are some approaches can be socialized to the people such as environmental education champagne activities at the family level, informational about ecological footprint of transport, and sustainability prospect of water and energy.

CONCLUSION

There are difference factors in the intention to do ecotourism model for each country. Malaysia country is more concern on the awareness of consequences which will impact a positive relationship with the

intention to do ecotourism. Indonesia country is more concern on the personal norms as the plan behavior toward intention to do ecotourism. The uncertainty of Covid -19 situation has positive relationship toward intention to do ecotourism. Hence, Covid – 19 has no role on moderation. The results suggest that the proposed model is a useful framework for develop ecotourism within the new norm. This study also provides ecotourism recommendations to recover from the business and economic downturn caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

There are different approach and socialization programs can be done for each country. In Malaysia, the Covid -19 has strength justification to the intention to do ecotourism. The government need to focus on building their people awareness of consequences which will support the intention to do ecotourism. The proposed model is presented in figure 3. The recommended model for Indonesia to gain intention to do ecotourism can be implemented based on the personal norms perspective and also during Covid -19.. Figure 4 below illustrate the model

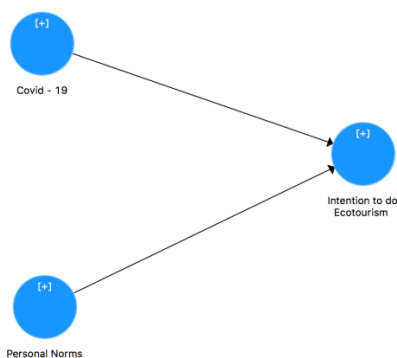


Figure 4. Recommended Model for Indonesia

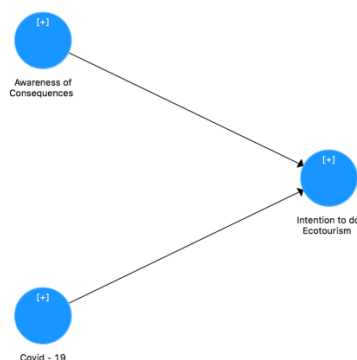


Figure 3. Recommended Model for Malaysia

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