

# **The Effect of Motivations on Ecotourism Intention and Willingness to Pay Premium for Ecotourism: A Conceptual Paper**

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## **Abstract**

Sustainable consumption has been a popular topic in tourism research and ecotourism has been identified as a form of sustainable consumption. Yet, recent literature emphasizes that there is an ambiguity on ecotourism consumption as actual pro-environmental behaviors deviate from the intentions. Further, it is identified that ecotourism offerings are higher in price and discourage ecotourism consumption. Hence, this study offers a conceptual look at further examining ecotourism consumer behaviors focusing on motivation, ecotourism intention, and the actual behavior. Among the consumer behavioral theories, self-determination theory was identified as a prominent theory to discuss motivation on ecotourism consumption intention. However, it fails to discuss the actual behavior. To address this theoretical gap, the proposed framework further explains self-determination theory; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on ecotourism intention and thereby willingness to pay premium.

The current study contributes to the existing literature on ecotourism consumption by incorporating ecotourism intention as a mediating variable on the relationship between intrinsic, extrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium. Further, significant practical implications are provided for ecotourism providers, marketers, policymakers, and other decision-makers for planning and developing ecotourism offerings to encourage and ensure sustainable tourism consumption.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Ecotourism Intention, Extrinsic Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Tourist Behavior, Willingness to Pay Premium

## **1. Introduction**

Sustainable consumption has been identified as a rising trend in the tourism industry (Negacz, 2021). According to (IISD,1994, p.4 as cited in Negacz, 2021) sustainable consumption refers to “the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations”.

In tourism, sustainable consumption takes place in many forms, and ecotourism: which refers to responsible travel to natural areas that endeavors to preserve the environment and respect the local communities, is identified to be one of them (Negacz, 2021).

Orams, 1995, as cited in Kazeminia, Hultman & Mostaghel (2016), defined ecotourism as “traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas”. Ecotourism is a particular kind of alternative tourism closely associated with areas that are environmentally and culturally sensitive (Lu, Gursoy & Chiappa, 2014). Wallace & Pierce, 1996, as cited in Sharpley, (2008) posited three key pillars of ecotourism, i.e., (1) Environment, (2) Development and, (3) Experience. Accordingly, the Environment pillar refers to managing ecotourism towards conserving the environment and the natural areas. Development pillar refers to the encouragement of local participation in tourism development to derive sustainable socio-economic benefits for the local communities. Experience pillar refers to providing learning opportunities and meaningful experiences to tourists and the local community.

According to Sharpley (2008), the importance of tourists’ awareness of the environment, engaging in environmentally appropriate forms of tourism, awareness of the impacts of tourism, and, hence, willingness to modify their behaviour are important aspects of the success of ecotourism development. Further, Sharpley (2008) emphasized that tourists must be positively motivated to consume responsibly for ecotourism to achieve its objectives and such tourist-consumer behaviour is fundamental to the development of ecotourism. However, Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999 as cited in Sharpley, (2008) relatively few tourists seem to make purchase decisions based on environmental concerns (Swarbrooke

& Horner, 1999: 204). Sharpely (2008) highlighted that the tourists' motivation directly impacts their nature of consumer behaviour. Further, motivations persuade the tourists to convert themselves from inertia into tourism consumption translating needs into goal-oriented consumer-behaviour. Further, Negacz (2021) emphasized that it is necessity of in-depth studies on factors affecting sustainable consumer decisions, especially in the field of tourism.

### **1.1 Performance Gap**

In sustainable goals, it has been evidently identified depletion of natural resources and negative impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity, and loss of biodiversity, as challenges that the world faces. Hence, sustainable consumption is emphasized as one key area to focus on (SDG12). Similarly, the global code of ethics for tourism emphasizes the importance of reducing the pressure of activities of visitors on the environment and enhancing its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy. According to Sharpely (2008), the concept of sustainable tourism development is challenged by the nature of tourism consumption and, Kazeminia, Hultman and Mostaghel, (2016), posited that environmental policies should focus on reducing materialistic values if the goal of environmental policy is to change environmentally harmful consumption behaviors. Even though institutions have identified policies and other eco-friendly measures to ensure the reduction of harmful environmental behaviours, there is still a doubt about whether people actually are willing to accept those measures. For instance, "ecotourism is recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites" (Global Code of Ethics for Tourism). Similarly, environmental protection has been identified as a major objective of ecotourism development. Yet, previous researchers' have identified ecotourism as an unattractive type of leisure activity for tourists' who are highly materialistic (Lu, Gursoy & Chiappa, 2014). Similarly, ecotourism criticized for the premium prices compared to the comfortability when compared to the mass tourism offerings (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015). Further, Kazeminia, Hultman and Mostaghel, (2016) identified a stronger negative effect of materialistic values on the willingness to pay premium for the respondents with a greater interest in ecotourism. Similarly, it was identified that a greater interest in ecotourism attractions may negate logical reasoning and boost the negative

affective influence of materialistic values on willingness to pay premium price (Kazemina, Hultman & Mostaghel, 2016). Hence, tourists would not want to pay a premium for ecotourism products (Lu, Gursoy & Chiappa, 2014). Therefore, this study critically focuses on how an individual is motivated towards ecotourism consumption and their willingness to pay premium for such consumptions.

## **1.2 Behavior of the Problem: Empirical and Theoretical Gap**

Previous scholars (Paul & Roy, 2023; Baloch, Q.B., Shah, S.N., Iqbal, N. et al., 2022) have discussed ecotourism, as an important topic in current tourism research. However, Hultman, Kazemina and Ghasemi (2015), states that there are only a few studies discussed on motivation, ecotourism intention and willingness to pay premium. Similarly, it has been identified that little attention has been paid to study ecotourism intention and their willingness to pay premium for ecotourism (Duong, Chi, Thi Nguyen, Kim Nguyen, Phuong Nguyen & To Nguyen, 2021) and what motivations can lead to ecotourism intention (Chi & Pham, 2022). Further, existing literature has revealed that behavioral intentions to engage in pro-environmental behaviors do not guarantee that they will actually engage in pro-environmental behaviors. Hence, it has been advised to further research to measure both respondents' behavioral intentions and their actual behaviors (Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002; McDaniel and Rylander 1993, as cited in Chiappa).

In explaining why consumers are willing to pay premiums for ecotourism related products and services, consumer motivation has been identified as a prominent variable. Further, in the discussion of motivation in tourism, self-determination theory has been identified as a macro theory that focuses on human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Weiner, 1990) and how humans are motivated on knowledge of physical and social environment (Ryan, 1995). The theory discusses two motivations as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Further, the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with the intention has been widely discussed in ecotourism research (Chan & Boum, 2007). However, self-determination theory is only focusing on motivation, and it fails to discuss willingness to pay premium as an antecedent. To address this theoretical gap, the current study further explains self-determination theory; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on ecotourism intention and thereby willingness to pay premium.

Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to identify the possible motivational factors driving the willingness to pay premium with the mediating role of ecotourism intention.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Sustainable Tourism Consumption**

Sustainable consumption and production are identified "as a holistic approach that focuses on minimizing the negative environmental impacts of consumption and production processes while ensuring the quality of life for everyone" (Akenji et al., 2015). On the consumption side, sustainable consumption and production discuss changes in the consumption patterns of households and governments through transformations in lifestyles and individual consumer behavior and choices (World Bank, 2017b).

Accordingly, sustainable consumption has been defined as "the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of further generations" (Ofstad et al., 1994).

In the tourism literature, it has been highlighted that sustainable tourism is challenged by the nature of tourism consumption (Sharpley, 2008). Nevertheless, the development of tourism consumption is based on environmental awareness and its impact on tourism. In addition, new tourists are seeking flexible, quality environmentally friendly experiences while old mass tourists were satisfied with the homogeneous, predictable holiday experiences (Poon, 1993).

Further, Dobson (2007) argued that behavioral changes of consumers towards sustainable development are based on environmental considerations than financial incentives. Also, it has been found that the purchases of sustainable products and services and ethical practices have increased over the years (Harrison et al., 2005).

Moreover, Hanss, Bohm, Doran and Homburg, (2016) have highlighted that sustainable consumption could be strengthened to investigate willingness to pay for products and services. Therefore, it has been recommended that sustainable consumption should be further studied.

## **2.2 Ecotourism**

As cited in Bjork (2000), Allcock et al. (1993, p.15) defined ecotourism as "nature-based tourism that includes an educational component and is managed to be sustainable". Further, ecotourism includes the sustainable use of resources with a minimum impact on the environment, economic benefit, and maximum satisfaction to the tourists (Hertzer, 1965) and it has been identified as a part of sustainable tourism (Lai & Shafer, 2005). Moreover, some argue that ecotourism is a declaration of sustainable tourism (Silanteva, 2022) and it focuses on environmental and cultural understandings (Crabtree et al., 2007). Meanwhile, it is identified as a responsible trip to natural areas that could conserve the environment and develop the welfare facilities of local communities and ecotourism has been studied under the nature tourism phenomenon (Wallace & Pierce, 1996). Thus, ecotourism has been familiarized within the context of tourism as more environmentally sensitive tourism (Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002).

As per the previous findings, Tavakoli, Monavari, Farsad et al., (2022) it is noteworthy that ecotourism has been discussed in diverse ways. Later, previous scholars discussed a common principle of a model of tourism that conserves the environment and provides economic benefits for local communities (Hall & Kinnaird, 1994; Goodwin, 1996; Holden & Kealy, 1996). Presently, tourism has focused on the sustainability approach, and ecotourism has been identified as a timely and relevant area to study (Sadiq & Adil, 2021). Moreover, it has been highlighted that ecotourism as a key research area in both developing and developed countries (Soteriou & Coccossis, 2010).

## **2.3 Ecotourism Intention**

Intention refers to consumer preference towards a specific product or service (Younus, Rasheed, & Zia, 2015). Further, as depicted in the theory of planned behavior attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are acting as the main predicting variables of intention (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism research, ecotourism is defined as a tourist's intention to engage in ecotourism (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015), and ecotourism intention has been discussed as conserving and experiencing natural areas (Pham & Khanh, 2021). Further, it has been disclosed that previous literature on ecotourism intention has paid more attention to motivation (Luo and Deng, 2008; Hultman et al., 2015).

Ecotourism intention has been identified as “an individual’s intention to travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas to experience the natural environment and, sometimes, the cultural environment” (Chi & Pham, 2022). Further, Pham and Nguyen (2020) have discussed ecotourism intention as an individual’s foreseen or planned future engagement with eco-destinations. Ecotourism intention has paid more attention to factors such as motivation, attitudes, and environmental concerns (Luo and Deng, 2008; Hultman et al., 2015). Previous research also has focused on examining the impact of individuals’ travel motives on their ecotourism intentions (Lee et al., 2014; Postma and Schmuecker, 2017).

Ecotourism also has been conceptualized as responsible environmental behavior which is also a reflection of the environment, commitment, and environmental knowledge (Cottrell & Graefe, 1997). In fact, responsible tourism intention has been defined as consumers’ belief about the future and it is highlighted that consumers develop attitudes in relation to favorable and unfavorable emotional intentions (Zeithaml, 2000). Kang and Moscardo (2006), have discussed attitudes also have been affected towards responsible tourism intention. Further, people with an awareness of environmental protection and conservation will behave responsibly towards the environment (Pham & Khanh, 2021) promoting social and economic benefits (Weeden, 2002). Similarly, Raviv, Becken, and Hughey (2016), has posited that responsible tourism aims to decrease the negative effect of tourism while increasing the social benefits.

On the other hand, (D'Souza, Taghian, & Khosla, 2007) argues that green purchase intention is predominantly dependent on the two dimensions of price and quality of the green product under consideration.

#### **2.4 Willingness to Pay Premium**

Willingness to pay premium has been defined as the preparedness to pay more than the other alternative products and/or services in the market (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Further, Bishop and Barber (2014), have discussed that willingness to pay premium acts as a vital factor for designing optimal prices and estimating the demand for a product or service. Ligas and Chaudhuri (2012), further discuss that consumers' willingness to pay more for a specific brand in preference to other alternative brands can lead to profitability and competitive advantage. Also, consumers have the perception of higher price reflects higher value (Davicik et al., 2015).

Further, it is stated that willingness to pay premium as the perceived influence of engaging in an activity (Hultman et al., 2015). According to Duong, Chi, Thi Nguyen, Kim Nguyen, Phuong Nguyen & To Nguyen (2021), willingness to pay premium has been identified as the actual behavior in ecotourism. Similarly, Perkins and Grace (2009) revealed that interest in ecotourism is a factor for tourists' greater intention to ecotourism consumption, as well as their actual behavior.

In a study on consumer willingness to pay for green initiatives, it has been highlighted that consumers who are concerned about the environment are more likely to search for green initiatives and are willing to pay more (Kang et al., 2012). Similarly, Tajfel and Turner (1986) revealed a positive association of environmental concern and willingness to pay premium for green initiatives employing the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, in the same study, it is highlighted that many customers dither pay premiums for green initiatives (Choi & Parsa, 2006).

When focusing on the willingness to pay for ecotourism offerings, it is revealed that ecotourism and pricing of sustainable tourism offerings are not focusing competitive market (Duong, Chi, Thi Nguyen, Kim Nguyen, Phuong Nguyen & To Nguyen, 2021). Hence it depicts that the pricing of green initiatives/ecotourism offerings must be handled as consumer sensitivities (Makwela & Elizabeth, 2022).

There are various factors that have affected the willingness to pay premium such as motivation, materialism, and perceived value (Weaver & Lawton, 2007; Hultman et al., 2015). Further, it depicts that most of the existing literature has focused on individual relationships of the variables rather than integrated frameworks to discuss the relationship between willingness to pay premiums, motivation and ecotourism intention. However, previous research has emphasized that pricing for ecotourism has not been paid much attention (Cetin et al., 2017). Similarly, a limited number of studies have discussed the assessment of consumer willingness to pay premium (Lim, 2016).

## **2.5 Intrinsic Motivation**

Motivations are internal psychological factors that direct towards behavior (Iso-Ahola, 1980). Similarly, motivation means moving to act on something (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to previous literature, self-determination theory has been discussed as a theoretical underpinning to understand motivations in terms of



intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation has been defined as an individual's internal values and attitudes that affect personal enjoyment and satisfaction without any external outcome (Grønhøj & Thøgersen 2017). Further, Intrinsic motivation has been characterized as a feeling of interest (Cini, Kruger, & Ellis 2013) and enjoyment or fun (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Also, intrinsic motivation has been identified as pleasure and satisfaction that occurs due to internal interests. (Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992; Chiu & Li, 2015; Van Yperen et al., 2016; Ifinedo, 2017).

Internal and external motivations have been studied in previous tourism research as “push” and “pull” motives (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981). Further, tourist motivations have been identified as factors that relate to the needs, goals, and preferences of the tourists, and understanding tourist motivations is important in understanding tourist behaviour in relation to destination choice (Chan & Baum, 2007).

Accordingly, internal motives have been referred to as “push motives”; traveler needs, wants, desires, and are intangible and intrinsic needs (Lundberg, 1990). Similarly, Crompton (1979) has highlighted the desire to go on vacation as a push factor in tourism and travel intention has been identified as an emotional state of pleasure, arousal, and dominance that captures the consumer mindset (Lehto, Douglas, & Park, 2008).

When focusing on ecotourism research, Chan and Baum (2007) highlighted that the intrinsic motivations of ecotourists aim to achieve a broad objective of an individual, such as a need to get away from work or to enjoy a different natural environment. Similarly, learning about nature, active participation and meeting new people with similar preferences have been identified as the main intrinsic motivations of ecotourists (Holden and Sparrowhawk, 2002) Therefore, it could be identified that the intrinsic motivations of ecotourists are diverse and required to further study.

## **2.6 Extrinsic Motivation**

Extrinsic motivation has been defined as being motivated by external factors (chow et al., 2017). Further, explanations relating to extrinsic motivation highlight that it is mandatory to have external rewards to motivate consumers externally towards something (Deci, Ryan, Vallerand, & Pelletier, 1991). As an example, reviews of

other consumers can act as an external motivation to consumers whilst credibility of the source acts as an intrinsic motivator. As per previous literature, further classifications of extrinsic motivation have been identified such as integrated, identified, introjected and external regulations (Deci & Ryan 1985) and Huang et al. (2016) emphasize that extrinsic motivation tends to lessen people's intrinsic motivation to engage in eco-friendly practices. Additionally, from the findings of Davis et al. (1992), it is evident that consumer internal and external motivation helps to lead consumers towards purchase intention.

According to tourism literature, extrinsic motivations have been referred to as “pull factors” (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977, 1981) and are used to explain tourists’ choices (Crompton, 1979). Further, these factors have been identified to be associated with tourism destination features, attractions or attributes (Klenosky, 2002), which are tangible features of the destination’s attributes (Chan & Baum, 2007).

The empirical evidence on ecotourism revealed that natural attractions, including wildlife, rainforest, nature and wildlife conservation and local lifestyle and eco-activities; such as riverboat cruises and jungle walks are important extrinsic motivating factors in attracting ecotourists to a destination (Chan & Baum, 2007). Similarly, Ajuhari, Aziz and Bidin (2023) have identified the availability of preferred outdoor activities and the opportunity to spend time with their companions as important extrinsic factors in ecotourism.

### **3. Conceptualization**

#### **3.1 Intrinsic Motivation and Willingness to Pay Premium**

Motivation has been discussed widely in relation to travelling. Further, tourism literature indicates that tourists who seek motivation are always concerned about environmental and social issues (Holden & Sparrowhawk, 2002). Similarly, environmentally concerned tourists always depict stronger motivation to attend environmental related content (Luo & Deng, 2008). Further, it is identified that intrinsic motivation as pleasure and satisfaction occurs due to internal interest (Vallerand & Blssonnette, 1992; Chiu & Li, 2015; Van Yperen et al., 2016; Ifinedo, 2017).

Willingness to pay premium has been defined as being prepared to pay more than the other alternative products/services in the market (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Accordingly, the intrinsic motivation was found to have a positive relationship with willingness to pay premium (Kim, Shinaprayoon & Ahn, 2021).

Supporting the mentioned relationship, perceived enjoyment, another conceptualization of intrinsic motivation has a positive relationship with intention and thereafter willingness to pay premium (Kim, Shinaprayoon & Ahn, 2021). Further, the same study states that people accept and change their behavior when they are internally motivated through enjoyment (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992). Another study disclosed that there is a tendency to pay premium prices for eco-friendly activities due to internal motivation (Hultman, Kazeminia, & Ghasemi, 2015). According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H1: Intrinsic motivation will impact the willingness to pay premium.

### **3.2 Extrinsic Motivation and Willingness to Pay Premium**

Extrinsic motivation defines as being motivated by external factors (chow et al., 2017). Further, explanations relating to extrinsic motivation highlight that it is mandatory to have external rewards to motivate consumers externally towards something (Deci, Ryan, Vallerand, & Pelletier, 1991).

Willingness to pay premium has been defined as prepared to pay more than the other alternative products/services in the market (Netemeyer et al., 2004). As discussed, the relationship of intrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium, extrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium has a close relationship (Gilal, Zhang, Naeem & Rukhsana, 2018).

Numerous scholars have counter-argued on the uncertainty of willingness to pay premiums for environmentally sustainable products and services (Arnot, Boxall, & Cash, 2006; Corrigan, Kling, & Zhao, 2008; Ellis, McCracken, & Skuza, 2012; Ha-Brookshire & Norum, 2011; Ku & Zaroff, 2014). Further, it disclosed that external motives such as incentives cannot be considered as permeant behavioral changes (Dodds et al., 2021). Similarly, scholars have proven that external motives are considered as temporary, and as a result, the behavior is also considered to be temporary (Pelletier et al., 1998). However, some scholars have found that there is a relationship between extrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium (Gilal,

Zhang, Naeem & Rukhsana, 2018). According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H2: Extrinsic motivation will impact the willingness to pay premium.

### **3.3 Ecotourism Intention and Willingness to Pay Premium**

Ecotourism intention is defined as the tourist's intention to engage with ecotourism in the near future (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015). Also, ecotourism intention has been widely discussed in tourism related studies. However, it has been identified that further investigation of antecedents of willingness to pay premium is vital (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015). Hence, Hultman et al., (2015), have discussed the willingness to pay premium along with the theory of planned behavior. According to the results, it is identified that there is a positive relationship between ecotourism intention and willingness to pay premium (Hultman et al., (2015).

Supporting the above proclamation, another study relating to the intention and willingness to pay premium has identified a positive relationship (Kim, Shinaprayoon & Ahn, 2021). In the same study, it states that enjoyment will affect the intention and thereafter it affects the willingness to pay premium. According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H3: Ecotourism intention will impact the willingness to pay premium.

### **3.4 Intrinsic Motivation and Ecotourism Intention**

Deci and Ryan (2010) have discussed that intrinsic motivation has the highest level of determination when an individual is motivated by pleasure and feelings. Further, Cini, Kruger, and Ellis (2013), disclosed that intrinsic motivation is denoted by the feeling of something that is interesting. The relationship between motivation and ecotourism intention has been discussed widely (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015) as a positive relationship. Further, another study relating to extrinsic, intrinsic motivation in the use of Internet as a tourist information source states that the outcome of intrinsic behavior and extrinsic behavior affects the intention (Castaneda, Ma Frias, Munoz-Leiva & Rodriguez, 2007). Further, the same study deployed that intrinsic motivation affects more than extrinsic motivation towards intention. Moreover, in supporting the above relationship between intrinsic motivation and intention, a recent study conducted by Elgarhy, Rahieem and

Abdulmawla (2023) argues that intrinsic motivation acts as a consequence of intention.

Supporting the above argument, another study states that the impact of intrinsic motivation on intention has not been studied systematically (Li, Liu, Shen & Li, 2021). Additionally, perceived enjoyment positively influences the intention more extensively (Heijden, 2003; Lin, Wu, & Tsai, 2005; Teo et al., 1999). Further, it has been identified that environmentally friendly or sustainable products and services tend to be driven by intrinsic motives than extrinsic motives as individuals decide it based on feelings (Kazeminia et al., 2016). Hence, respecting the above arguments, the hypothesis below has been derived.

H4: Intrinsic motivation will impact the ecotourism intention.

### **3.5 Extrinsic Motivation and Ecotourism Intention**

The main motivation of the users with goal-directed behavior is related to functional aspects or extrinsic motivation (Castaneda, Ma Frias, Munoz-Leiva & Rodriguez, 2007). Further, perceived usefulness has been identified as a significant variable that has a direct relationship with behavioral intention under Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989). Further, a study relating to extrinsic motivation and intention has found that there is a positive relationship between extrinsic motivation and intention (Fagan, Neil & Wooldridge, 2008).

Moreover, extrinsic factors or the destination attributes, e.g.: natural attractions, wildlife, local lifestyle and eco-activities are the main motivational factors towards ecotourism consumption intention; and these factors influence the intrinsic factors of ecotourists, e.g.: the social psychological desire to escape from routine lifestyle or of normal life (Chan & Baum, 2007). Further, it has been identified that perceived usefulness is a key predictor of intention (Kim, 2016) and another study of ecotourism has found that there is a relationship between perceived usefulness and intention (Kim, 2016; Sahli & Legohérel, 2016). Further, another study of tourists' technology acceptance has highlighted that if perceived usefulness is high the probability of having intention would be high (Sadiq & Adil, 2021). According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H5: Extrinsic motivation will impact the ecotourism intention.

### **3.6 Intrinsic Motivation on Willingness to Pay Premium Mediates by Ecotourism Intention**

In the discussion of mediating impact of ecotourism intention in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium, Lu, Gursoy and Chiappa (2014) have highlighted that the individuals who are interested or motivated towards ecotourism would only engage in ecotourism activities. Further, the same study highlighted that consumers who are having the intention towards ecotourism activities tend to pay premium (Lu, Gursoy & Chiappa, 2014). According to previous literature relating to destination marketing, it states that an individual's intention to select a destination is led by intrinsic motives (Battour, Battor & Ismail, 2014).

Further, in another study on ecotourism intention and willingness to pay premium, it was found that there is a mediating impact of ecotourism intention on the relationship between perceived value and willingness to pay premium (Duong, Chi, Thi Nguyen, Kim Nguyen, Phuong Nguyen & To Nguyen, 2021).

In supporting the above relationship, consumers' knowledge and awareness about ecotourism will affect the interest and intention and thereby consumers' willingness to pay premium (Lu, Gursoy & Chiappa, 2014). According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H6: Ecotourism intention will impact the relationship between intrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium.

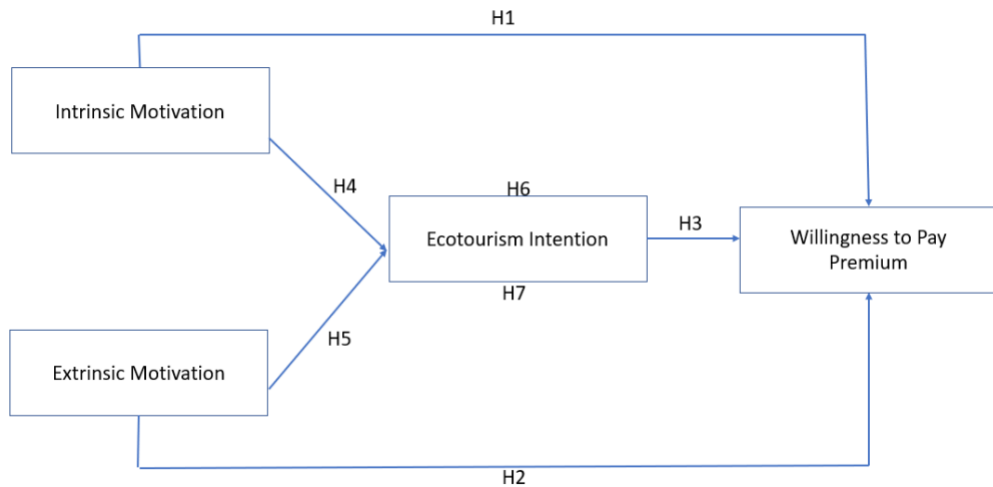
### **3.7 Extrinsic Motivation on Willingness to Pay Premium Mediates by Ecotourism Intention**

Extrinsic motivation has been conceptualized as perceived usefulness (Oh, Jeong & Baloglu, 2013). As per literature, perceived usefulness is what consumer believes with the usage of products or services (Axel & Daniel, 2011). Averdung and Wagenfuehrer (2011), have identified that perceived usefulness has an impact on intention and thereby willingness to pay premium. Moreover, it explains that intention as a vital concept that leads to willingness to pay more for ecological initiatives (Agag, Brown, Hassanein & Shaalan, 2020). Further, it is highlighted that perceived usefulness has a significant impact on willingness to pay (Roe et al.

2001; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005). According to the above arguments below hypothesis has been derived.

H7: Ecotourism intention will impact the relationship between extrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium.

#### **4. Conceptual Framework**



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**  
(Source: Authors)

#### **5. Methodology**

The present study focuses on identifying the possible motivational factors driving the willingness to pay premium with the mediating role of ecotourism intention by further explaining self-determination theory. Hence, there is an opportunity for future work in this area to apply the quantitative method under the deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2008).

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study attempts to enhance the existing knowledge of internal and external motivational factors affecting intention and thereby willingness to pay premium for ecotourism. Thus, the current study has used self-determination theory as the main theory to discuss human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Weiner, 1990) and it has mainly focused on human motivation and consumption behavior. The findings of the present study could be useful for decision makers in implementing new initiations.

However, self-determination theory does not discuss why consumers are reluctant to pay premium even though they are having a positive intention towards ecotourism. Hence, the current study incorporates willingness to pay premium as a vital concept to discuss how consumers are moving towards ecotourism related behaviors. The current study contributes to the existing literature on willingness to pay premium precisely by incorporating ecotourism intention as a mediating variable on the relationship between intrinsic, extrinsic motivation and willingness to pay premium.

### **6.2 Managerial Implications**

Previous empirical findings have posited that pro-environmental behaviors do not guarantee that consumers will engage in pro-environmental behaviors (Holden & Sparrowhawk 2002; McDaniel & Rylander 1993). Hence the findings of the present study will reveal respondents' internal and external motivations and their effect on ecotourism intention and willingness to pay a premium for ecotourism consumption, that will provide some practical implications for ecotourism operators and marketers.

According to Chiappa (2014) it was suggested that the stakeholders involving in ecotourism operations should cooperatively develop and implement communication strategies and materials that emphasize the importance and benefits of ecotourism for the preservation of environment and culture while generating positive benefits for residents and tourists. Accordingly, understanding intrinsic and extrinsic motives for ecotourism would help in segmenting the ecotourism market (Duong, 2021) and will help in developing and implementing



precise and effective messages for encouraging pro-environmental behaviors and the conservation of local culture. Further, segmenting the ecotourism market is important in making decisions for new product development, creating effective advertising messages and strategic positioning (Kessler, Lee & Whittingham, 2020).

Moreover, it is identified that many tourists seek memorable tourism experiences in a destination (Hosany et al., 2022) and tourists who develop memorable experiences are more likely to revisit the destination (Zhang et al., 2018), foster destination loyalty (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023) and, help to gain a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors in the tourism industry (Wei et al., 2019). However, it is identified that the prices of ecotourism offerings are higher but often less comfortable than mass tourism offerings (Hultman, Kazeminia & Ghasemi, 2015) and tourists would not want to pay a premium for ecotourism products yet, ecotourism experience has been identified as a factor to pay a premium price for ecotourism (Huang & Liu, 2017). Therefore, ecotourism providers, marketers, and policymakers have been advised to increase the value of ecotourism towards creating a memorable and unique tourism experience and turning tourists' intentions into their actual decisions (Duong, 2021). Therefore, understanding participants' motivations in ecotourism activities is vital for creating memorable ecotourism experiences and make them pay a premium for ecotourism.

Accordingly, understanding the motivations and intention to ecotourism will help policymakers and other decision-makers to plan strategies for planning and developing ecotourism to encourage and ensure sustainable consumption and production.

## **7. Conclusion**

The current study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge of internal and external motivation towards intention. Further, it focuses on understanding whether consumers are willing to pay premiums for ecotourism. According to the previous literature, the direct relationships of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation towards willingness to pay premium along with a mediating impact of ecotourism intention have been developed. Moreover, based on previous literature, it has been highlighted that internal motivation as a vital variable where an individual could be directed towards ecotourism intention and thereby willingness

to pay premium than extrinsic motivation. However, as a counter argument, extrinsic factors have been identified as the main motivational factors towards ecotourism consumption intention and intrinsic factors of ecotourists are influenced by the extrinsic factors. Hence, it is noteworthy that initiations to enhance both external and internal motivation may result in increasing consumer intention towards ecotourism behaviors.

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