

# A Study of Tourist's Motivation, Intention and Willingness to Pay Premium for Ecotourism

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## Abstract

*The tourism business has grown dramatically in recent years. The tourism industry contributes significantly to a country's economic development as it provides various employment generation opportunities. Goa, India's smallest state, is a popular tourist destination that draws visitors from all over the world. Numerous people in Goa, particularly those living around the coast, earn their livelihood by engaging in tourism related activities. The sun and sand of Goa are well-known. It is surrounded by natural beauty and includes a variety of heritage sites, churches museums and temples. Goa is promoted internationally as a beach tourism resort that has reached its peak. As a result, there is a need to promote additional tourism options. The current research focuses on Goa's ecotourism. An attempt is made to identify latent motivational factors. Latent motivational factors were identified and categorised. Exploratory Factor Analysis and Chi square test were employed to analyse the data. This study also aimed to investigate how demographic characteristics affect travellers' intentions to engage in ecotourism and their willingness to spend more on ecotourism. The study revealed that demographic considerations have no bearing on tourists' desire to participate in ecotourism. Tourists' willingness to spend more for ecotourism is also unaffected by demographic factors.*

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Travel motivation, Ecotourism intention, Willingness to pay premium, Goa, India

## Introduction

Tourism is an important source of revenue for many governments across the world, extensive study is being conducted to determine the competitive advantages of a certain destination. One of the tourism industry's fastest-growing subsectors is ecotourism (Das, Chatterjee, 2015). Due to their effectiveness in preserving the environment, offering education and job development, and giving re-creation, ecotourism sites have grown in importance as tourist attractions (Pham, Khanh, 2020). The social, cultural, environmental, and economic implications of tour-

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ism in a given destination have all been studied. The studies related to tourism are increasing. However, few recent studies have focused on the importance of tourists revisit intentions (Oppermann, 1999) of which some have focused tourists satisfaction at different destinations (Kozak, 2000). While knowledge has been advanced on the tourists' motivational factors, not much has been studied on the subject in relation to eco-visitors (Adam et al., 2017). Limited research in the field of ecotourism has focused on the role of motivations of tourists to participate in ecotourism and their ecotourism behavior intention, and such studies on Indian ecotourists are particularly scarce. There is a need to understand to understand tourist willingness to pay more for ecotourism facilities at a destination, as this will affect tourists purchase behaviour intention.

Goa is an attractive destination for tourism and related activities. Goa has a high potential to develop as an ecotourism destination and yet no research has been conducted to assess factors affecting tourist's motivation towards ecotourism. The current study made an attempt to identify the motivational factors that influences visitors to participate in ecotourism and examine the demographic factors that influence travelers' intention to visit ecotourism destinations. It also made an attempt to understand the association of demographic variables on tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism. This will provide a clear picture on what motives tourists to undertake ecotourism and will help to come up with strategies to motivate them to engage in ecotourism and thus promote the growth of ecotourism. It also provided an insight on tourists' willingness to spend on ecotourism facilities. This knowledge can be used by tourism planners, government, various stakeholders, tourism related businesses to develop adequate strategies to promote ecotourism in the study region and to price their products.

The study made an attempt to identify latent motivational factors. The goal of this research is also to examine the demographic factors that influence travelers' intention to participate in ecotourism. The demographic variables used to understand travelers' intention to participate in ecotourism included gender, education, and age. It also assessed the relationship between demographic variable and tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism. The study also made an attempt to understand the association between income and willing to spend more on ecotourism.

## Literature review

### Tourist Motivation

Motivation is the foundation for human behaviour and it explains why people behave in a particular manner. In tourism research, motivation explains why people travel; it is a key element and an influential factor behind the behaviour of tourist (Hsu, Huang, 2007).

Awaritefe (2004) is of the opinion that leisure travel to a destination has various motives, and tourist have different factors that motivate them to travel. However, culture, scenic environment, interaction with locals is of prime importance. Further, the study states that selection of a destination is influenced by motivational factors like adventure, sports, health and entertainment. In the words of Dann (1981), imbalance in life motivates tourists to travel and are influenced by the various push and pull factors various destinations offer. Push factors are intrinsic, that is, emotional factors which include escape, adventure, and relaxation and to motivation to meet loved ones. Whereas, pull factors are extrinsic which include facilities for recreation, price, security and safety, scenic beauty, culture etc. (McGehee et al., 1996; Uysal, Jurowski, 1994).

Push factors are important as they initiate a desire to travel in an individual. Pull factors are essential to determine destination choice. However, for effective destination management there is a need to understand tourist satisfaction along with the needs of tourists (Bello, Etsel, 1985). Silverberg et al. (1996) used a sample of North American travellers that have an inclination to nature related travel, which revealed that these travellers are motivated by factors like history, living in tents, relaxing, interacting with people and spending time in natural setting.

Palacio and McCool (1997) suggested that the factors that motivates a sample of nature-based tourist from Belize are escape, cohesiveness, education about nature and health. Hvenegaard (2002) after examining a sample of bird watchers, trekkers and general tourist at a natural park in Thailand identified birds and animal watching, waterfalls, tribes, culture, scenic environment, physical activities as motivating factors. Holden, Sparrowhawk (2002) in their study identified the motivational factors of ecotourist at Annapurna in Nepal. The factors identified included rest, excitement, esteem needs, social interaction.

Luo and Deng's (2008) observed that individual surveyed at a forest park in China are motivated by self-development, spending time with nature, learning and fitness. The study conducted by (Raadik et al., 2010) on visitors at a national park in Sweden extracted four factors through an exploratory factor analysis technique which includes discovering oneself, solitude, exploring and challenge.

Mehmetoglu and Normann (2013) examined the relationship between travel motivation and travel activities and confirmed that a strong relationship exists between them in nature-based tourism. Factors that motivate participation in whale tourism, fishing and hiking were identified which included doing something different, engaging in physical activities and prestige needs. Ma et al. (2018) made an attempt to gauge the link between motivation and environmentally responsible behaviours of Chinese tourists. It found that push and pull or intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are essential to visitors and that there is a strong link between tourist's attitude towards the environment and responsible behaviour towards the environment. According to Adam et al. (2017) information about tourist motivational factors is available but not much research has been conducted with respect to eco visitors.

In order to fill this gap and understand better the changing nature of responsible travel, an attempt will be made in the present research to examine the motives of travellers to visit ecosites in the state of Goa.

### Ecotourism intention

Ecotourism, also known as eco-travel or nature-based tourism, has been characterized in a variety of ways. Bjork defined ecotourism in a comprehensive literature review report based on a number of principles created within the existing literature as "authorities, the tourism industry, visitors, and local people collaborate to allow tourists to travel to authentic regions to admire, learn, and enjoy nature and culture in ways that do not deplete resources and help to long-term development" (Bjork, 2000).

This notion offers a comprehensive view of ecotourism, identifying the various sorts of stakeholders involved, however it is rather sophisticated for the purposes of this research. Ecotourism, to put it another way, is a type of tourism that focuses on enjoying and maintaining natural regions. As a result, this study defines ecotourism intention as a tourist's desire to visit an ecologically sensitive area.

The study of the demand side of ecotourism has made tremendous progress, particularly in respect to the drivers of ecotourism behavior, of which environmental concern is commonly

acknowledged as an antecedent. Especially, the empirical literature on the demand side of ecotourism has placed a greater emphasis on understanding than on ecotourism consumer preferences as opposed to ecotourism intention (Das, Chatterjee, 2015). In particular, the existing work on ecotourism intention has primarily focused on the influence of attitudes (Teeroovengadam, 2019), environmental concern (Lee, Moscardo, 2005; Huang, Liu, 2017), environmental knowledge (Zhang, Lei, 2012; Schaffer, Tham, 2019), ecotourism experience (Lee, Moscardo, 2005; Huang, Liu, 2017; Brochado, 2019) and environmental identity (Teeroovengadam, 2019) on ecotourism intention. Another drawback of the available literature is that previous research on the topic have concentrated on developed nations (Teeroovengadam, 2019), necessitating the testing of current ecotourism intentions in the setting of developing nations. Studies on the influence of demographic variables on intention to participate in ecotourism are few. The present study proposes to test the ecotourism intention in the context of Goa. The small state of Goa being a developing destination for ecotourism. Therefore, current study will try to fill this gap. Similarly research the influence of gender, age, education, and income on tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism are scarce. This study will explore the association of demographic variables on tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism. Thus, providing a better understanding of the influence of demographic characteristics on the environmental motivation. The current study will investigate the travel motivations of visitors.

## Study Area

The study area included various ecotourism sites in Goa. Visitors at several ecotourism sites in Goa were interviewed. The ecosites included Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary at Ponda, Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary at Khotigao in Canacona, Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park. Tourists visiting various ecotourism farms and resorts like Jungle book in Collem, Dudhsagar spa resort and Stone water eco resort in Bogmalo. Spice farms included Tanshikar spice farm at Netravali, Savoi planataion, Tropical spice farm and Sahakari spice farm.

## Methodology

A structured questionnaire was employed to collect data. There are 402 valid responses in the data set. The study was carried out from January to April 2021. There were three sections to the questionnaire. The first section attempted to examine demographic information about tourists, such as gender, age, education, marital status, monthly income, and social class (Table 1). The second part related to various motivational factors considered by tourists while participating in ecotourism. Thirteen statements were designed based on review of literature and respondent were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 5-point Likert's scale. The third part focused on tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism and whether they were willing to pay a premium for ecotourism services.

The data was analyzed using a variety of statistical techniques. The main objective of Exploratory Factor Analysis, a method used in factor analysis, is to discover the underlying relations between variables. In the current study Exploratory Factor Analysis was applied to find the answer for **RQ<sub>1</sub>**: What are the motivational factors considered by tourists while participating in ecotourism? This is for the purpose of identifying the motivational factors.

**RQ<sub>2</sub>**: Do demographic characteristics affect tourists' intentions to engage in ecotourism?  
**RQ<sub>3</sub>**: Demographic variables affect tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism? To determine if two variables are related, the Chi square test is employed. Chi square of association was used to find out whether gender, education and age have no association on tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism and tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism.

Data was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive Statistics, factor analysis and chi square test were used. The reliability of the scale and data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha.

**Table 1.** Demographic Profile of tourists (n=

Demographic Profile	Number	%	Demographic Profile	Number	%
Gender			Marital Status		
Male	197	49.0	Married	215	53.5
Female	205	51.0	Unmarried	170	42.3
Age			Separated	17	4.2
18-29	98	24.4	Educational level		
30-39	174	43.3	Upto S.S.C	111	27.6
40-49	58	14.4	Upto H.S.S.C	58	14.4
50-59	38	9.5	Graduation	206	51.2
Above 60	34	8.5	Post-Graduation	27	6.7
Monthly Income			Social class		
Less than 25,000	68	16.9	Individual	170	42.3
25,001-50,000	134	33.3	Couple with no kids	105	26.1
50,001-75,000	129	32.1	Family with children	127	31.6
Above 75,000	71	17.7			

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

## Data Analysis and Discussion

### Factor analysis

The appropriateness of using factor analysis for detecting the 13 motivation items was confirmed by the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.765). Based on the Kaiser criterion of retaining eigen values greater than 1, a four-factor solution was obtained, which extracted 89.532 of the variance in the data. Results of the EFA are presented in Table 2, along with the Cronbach's coefficient alpha measures of reliability. The four motivation factors were labelled revival/refresh, fraternize with people, and connect to nature and knowledge. They had Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values ranging from 0.87 to 0.96 (all above Nunnally's (1978) thump rule of .70), which indicated strong consistency between the items for each factor.

**Table 2. Factor Analysis**

FACTOR ANALYSIS (overall $\alpha=0.883$ , $n=402$ )		F1	F2	F3	F4
Revival/Refresh ( $\alpha=0.877$ )	For revival of physical state	0.958			
	Escape from the worries of life	0.948			
	For emotional revival	0.919			
	Escape daily routine	0.649			
Fraternize with people ( $\alpha=0.958$ )	Feeling of belonging		0.946		
	Socialize with others		0.927		
	Connect with people of a like interest		0.885		
Connect to nature ( $\alpha=0.968$ )	Encounter nature			0.950	
	Participate in nature based recreational activities			0.949	
	Come closer to nature			0.899	
Knowledge ( $\alpha=0.965$ )	Acquire knowledge about plant and animal				0.928
	Increase my knowledge about conservation in Goa				0.902
	Learn about the ecosystem diversity				0.899
KMO measures of sampling adequacy		0.765			
Eigen Value		5.423	2.922	2.062	1.232
Variance Explained		41.719	22.473	15.864	9.476
Total Variance Explained		89.532			

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

**Table 3. Chi square test for intention to participate in ecotourism**

Demographic variable	Chi square value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	4.528	4	0.339	Statistically insignificant
Education	5.164	12	0.952	Statistically insignificant
Age	17.323	16	0.365	Statistically insignificant

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

The results of chi squared test of association shows that there is no significant association between gender and intention to participate in ecotourism.  $\chi^2$  (4, N= 402) = 4.528,  $p=0.339$  ( $p$ -value > 0.05). It was also found that there is no significant association between education and intention to participate in ecotourism.  $\chi^2$  (12, N= 402) =5.164,  $p=0.952$  ( $p$ -value > 0.05). It was also observed that there is no significant association between age and intention to participate in ecotourism.  $\chi^2$  (16, N= 402) =17.323,  $p=0.365$  ( $p$ -value > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the chi square test of independence reveals that gender, education and age do not affect visitor's intention to participate in ecotourism.

**Table 4. Chi square test for tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism**

Demographic variable	Chi square value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	4.246	4	0.374	Statistically insignificant
Education	7.094	12	0.851	Statistically insignificant
Age	17.247	16	0.370	Statistically insignificant
Income	16.094	12	0.187	Statistically insignificant

Source: Compiled from Primary Data

The results of chi squared test of association shows that there is no significant association between gender and tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism.  $\chi^2(4, N= 402) = 4.246$ ,  $p=0.374$  ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). It was also found that there is no significant association between education and tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism.  $\chi^2(12, N= 402) = 7.094$ ,  $p=0.851$  ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). It was also observed that there is no significant association between age and tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism.  $\chi^2(16, N= 402) = 17.247$ ,  $p=0.370$  ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). There is no significant association between income and tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism.  $\chi^2(12, N= 402) = 16.094$ ,  $p=0.187$  ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that the chi square test of independence reveals that gender, education, age and income do not affect tourists' willingness to pay premium for ecotourism.

**Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Hypothesis	Result
H <sub>1</sub> There is no significant association between gender, education, age and tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism.	Accept
H <sub>2</sub> There is no significant association between gender, education, age, income and tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism.	Accept

Therefore, it can be concluded demographic characteristics do not affect tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism as gender, education and age have no association on tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism. Similarly, gender, education, age and income does not influence tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism and can be concluded that demographic variables do not influence tourists' willingness to spend more on ecotourism.

## Conclusion

The first part of the analysis was carried out to understand the underlying factors which motivate tourists to engage in ecotourism activities, leading to the identification of four factors which include revival/refresh, fraternize with people, connect to nature and knowledge. As stated in the literature, understanding travel motivations is essential for the creation of an enjoyable tourism product and therefore, this research provides a base for successful tourism policies. Adequate tourism policies should be created to motivate tourist to engage in ecotourism.

According to Han et al. (2011) age, education, and household income had no significant impact on the respondent's eco-friendly intention. Age was not a significant factor in understanding hotel guests' willingness to be environmentally responsible. Additionally, they came to the conclusion that hotel guests' willingness to stay at a green hotel, their intentions to tell others about it, and their willingness to pay more for it are not necessarily correlated with their level of education, which is consistent with the results of the current study showing that willingness to pay more for ecotourism is unaffected by education. Thus, the current research is in line with these findings. However, the results of the current study did not support earlier findings about the impact of education on consumer behaviour (e.g., Evanschitzky, Wunderlich, 2006; Roberts, 1996). It's probable that different industries have different effects on how consumers behave when making purchases. The formation of green intentions by hotel customers is not highly correlated with income (Han et al., 2011); these findings are consistent with those of the current study since income has no bearing on tourists' intentions to engage in

ecotourism. The current findings, however, did not support past study on the impact of money on consumer behaviour (e.g., Evanschitzky, Wunderlich, 2006; Homburg, Giering, 2001; Im et al., 2003).

As per the research findings age, gender and education do not affect tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism. It can be seen that age, gender, education and income are statistically insignificantly related with tourists' willingness to pay more for ecotourism. This shows that demographic factors are not really associated with tourists' intention to participate in ecotourism.

Women typically see eco-friendly intentions more favourably. In other words, according to Han et al. (2011), female hotel guests were more likely to recommend and pay more for a green hotel. According to various studies (e.g., Banerjee, McKeage, 1994; Laroche et al., 2001; McIntyre et al., 1993; Roberts, 1996), women are more likely than males to be environmentally sensitive and to regularly have environmentally good intents while making purchases. The current findings were inconsistent with previous research about gender differences in eco-friendly behaviors.

High ecotourism awareness individuals would contribute money to ecotourism initiatives in the destination they are visiting and are prepared to pay more now in exchange for a better experience down the road (Meleddu, Pulina, 2016). Accordingly, Lu et al. (2014) discovered that people's willingness to spend more for ecotourism items is likely to decrease as a result of their materialistic behaviour. Although there seems to be a preference for ecologically friendly products among tourists in Switzerland, it was shown that, in the majority of the situations, respondents are not prepared to pay a minor premium for the inclusion of particular sustainable traits (Wehrli et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be seen that previous findings show that some people are willing and some are unwilling to pay more for eco-friendly products. The current research pointed out that demographic variables do not affect tourists' willingness to pay more for ecotourism. This gives an important insight that demographic variables are not key factors in shaping visitors intention to participate in ecotourism. Therefore, it is important for ecotourism service providers and the government to use various strategies to promote ecotourism. Strategies to motivate tourists to engage in ecotourism should be employed. Emphasis should be given to providing visitors with a nature driven experience which helps them connect to nature and feel refreshed and revived. The research findings will assist tourism managers in tailoring their services to the goals of their customers in order to boost visitor satisfaction, interest in returning, and the volume of recommendations and complimentary remarks about a location.

Finally, the study's limited timespan and emphasis on a narrow geographic region constitute its constraints. This study can be replicated in different context. The travellers can be segmented on the basis of their nationality. Future research can test a similar approach to other fragile environments, coastal areas etc. Supplementary methods can be used to analyse tourists' intention to engage in ecotourism and willingness to pay premium for ecotourism. The influence of various antecedents on tourists' intention to engage in ecotourism and willingness to pay premium for ecotourism can be studied with the help of various tools.



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