



Cognitive, affective, normative, and moral triggers of sustainable intentions among convention-goers



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ABSTRACT

Given that little research has considered cognitive, affective, normative, and moral drivers altogether in accounting for individuals' eco-friendly decisions, the present study addressed this omission in the convention industry by demonstrating the vital impact of such factors on attendees' environmentally responsible decision-making processes. Cognitive, affective, normative, and moral factors were found to play a significant role in the proposed theoretical framework. Our model explained a satisfactory amount of the total variance in environmentally-friendly intentions. That is, our model adequately explicated convention travelers' pro-environmental decision formations. We believe that this research makes a meaningful contribution to advancing knowledge of how cognitive, affective, normative, and moral triggers are related in determining convention travelers' intentions to practice eco-friendly activities, accept inconveniences for the sake of environmental protection, and recommend other attendees to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors.

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1. Introduction

The global hospitality and tourism industry is believed to be a significant contributor to ecological deterioration, continuously generating environmental criticism (Chan, Hon, Chan, & Okumus, 2014; Saarinen, 2006). This criticism has focused on the convention industry due to the industry's heavily reliance on natural resources and its significant demand for water, energy, and non-durable products (Han, 2014; Mair & Jago, 2010). The ecological harm generated by the industry has increasingly drawn the awareness of convention travelers (Wolfe & Shanklin, 2001). The increasing concern of delegates regarding the hazardous impact of conventions on the planet contributes to facilitating an environmentally responsible movement in the convention industry (Han, 2014; Hirschier & Hilty, 2002).

In environmental psychology and consumer behavior, it is becoming increasingly common to rely on cognitive, affective, normative, or moral dimensions for examining individuals' pro-environmental decision-making process and behavior (Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Bierhoff, 2002; Chen & Peng, 2014). Cognitive,

affective, normative, and moral triggers are widely believed to be essential determinants of pro-environmental decisions (Steg & Vlek, 2009). Indeed, previous studies in diverse environmental contexts indicated that cognitive variables (e.g., environmental awareness, ascribed responsibility, biospheric value, environmental concern, and perceived effectiveness) (Klöckner, 2013; Steg, Dreijerink, & Abrahamse, 2005; Van Riper & Kyle, 2014), anticipated feelings (Bamberg, Hunecke, & Blobaum, 2007; Onwezen, Antonides, & Bartels, 2013), moral obligations (Milfont, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2010; Zhang, Wang, & Zhou, 2013), and social norms (Matthies, Selge, & Klöckner, 2012; Smith et al., 2012) are vital triggers of eco-friendly intention. Utilizing these theoretical concepts has long been regarded to be an essential theoretical approach to account for diverse aspects of eco-friendly consumer decision-making (Bierhoff, 2002; Han, 2014).

Nevertheless, a comprehensive approach merging all the triggers into one theoretical framework for the explication of pro-environmental decisions has rarely been made. In addition, despite the criticality of anticipated pride and guilt as well as descriptive and injunctive social norms, the impact of these triggers on behaviors has little been considered in existing socio-psychological theories with pro-social/pro-environmental motives (e.g., norm-activation theory and value-belief-norm theory). Moreover, few researchers have examined the combined role of

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cognitive, affective, and normative triggers in activating personal norms within one conceptual framework. Furthermore, despite the fact that environmentally responsible tourism reflects an important trend in the tourism industry (Hirschier & Hilty, 2002), there have been minimal effort to study convention delegates' eco-friendly decision-making processes and their intention to behave pro-environmentally.

The present study was designed to fulfill these research needs. Specifically, the objectives of this research were to 1) develop a robust model that sufficiently explains the formation of travelers' intentions to behave pro-environmentally the next time they attend a convention (i.e., intention to sacrifice, intention to practice green activities, and intention to recommend other attendees to engage in eco-friendly behaviors) by taking cognitive, affective, normative, and moral elements into account; 2) identify the relative importance of cognitive, affective, and normative triggers in determining personal norms and intentions to behave pro-environmentally; and 3) investigate the mediating role of personal norms and affective triggers in generating intentions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Personal norms

Pro-environmental behavior is often viewed as being derived from pro-social motives involving individuals' anxiety regarding other people, the next generation, the eco-system, and other species (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). A theoretical approach often used to explicate such environmentally responsible behavior is the norm activation model and value-belief-norm framework (Schwartz, 1977; Stern, 2000; Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, & Kalof, 1999). The primary premise of the norm activation model and value-belief-norm framework is that one's personal norms are the most proximal and important direct determinant of eco-friendly intentions (Berenguer, 2010; Milfont et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2013). Schwartz (1977) described personal norms as feelings of moral obligation that individuals experience for themselves to conduct pro-social behavior. Similarly, in an environmental context, Zhang et al. (2013) conceptualized it as one's moral obligation to engage in pro-environmental behavior. If individuals have personal norms, they are likely to conduct pro-environmental behavior because the moral obligation serves as intrinsic motivating force that guides the behavior (Zhang et al., 2013).

Personal norms affect one's pro-social/pro-environmental behavior when activated (Schwartz, 1977; Stern, 2000). Activation of individual personal norms occurs when they become cognitively aware of the harmful consequences of their non-green behaviors and they ascribe some responsibility for such detrimental consequences to themselves (Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999). The contribution of personal norms to an explication of environmentally responsible behavior has been evident in diverse sectors such as travel-mode choice and car-use reduction (Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 2007; Hunecke, Blöbaum, Matthies, & Höger, 2001; Jakovcetic & Steg, 2013), energy saving (Abrahamse & Steg, 2009; Zhang et al., 2013), water saving (Harland et al., 2007), eco-friendly buying (Thøgersen, 1999), organic food consumption (Klöckner & Ohms, 2009), recycling (Matthies et al., 2012), and hotel choice (Han, 2015). These studies in a variety of contexts all indicate that one's personal ecological norm is a key driving force for environmentally responsible intentions/behaviors. Thus, we developed the following hypothesis:

H1a – c. Personal norms have a positive impact on pro-environmental intentions among convention attendees.

2.2. Cognitive triggers

Recent research based on such theories as the norm-activation theory (Schwartz, 1977) and value-belief-norm theory (Stern, 2000) with pro-social/pro-environmental motives indicated that the activation of individuals' personal norms requires an active role of cognitive triggers (i.e., awareness of environmental problems, ascribed responsibility, biospheric value, ecological concern) (e.g., Han, 2015; Klöckner, 2013; Steg et al., 2005; Van Riper & Kyle, 2014). In addition, recent studies based on theories that view eco-friendly behavior as self-interested behavior (e.g., theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980)) showed that these cognitive triggers, including perceived effectiveness, significantly influence one's green behavior (Han & Yoon, 2015; Kim & Han, 2010).

Environmental awareness refers to an individual's level of consciousness of harmful consequences for valued objects when not performing an action in a pro-social/pro-environmental manner (Schwartz, 1977). That is, this variable is about what people know about the harmful effects of their behaviors on the environment (Chan et al., 2014). Ascribed responsibility can be defined as one's feeling of responsibility for the unfavorable consequences of not behaving in a pro-social way (De Groot & Steg, 2009). In addition, biospheric value reflects the self-transcendence aspect of value orientations stressing the natural environment and the biosphere (De Groot, Steg, & Dicke, 2007; Han, 2015). According to Kim and Han (2010), environmental concern is one's apprehensions about diverse environmental problems (e.g., environmental degradation, exhaustion of natural resources, pollution). Lastly, Han and Yoon (2015) described perceived effectiveness as individuals' beliefs about the impact of their environmentally friendly efforts and behaviors in reducing environmental problems. Environmentally friendly individuals are more aware of ecological harm, feel partly responsible for such harm, understand the value of environmental protection, concern about the diverse aspects of ecological problems, and believe in the effectiveness of greening efforts in minimizing environmental harm (Han & Yoon, 2015; Kim & Han, 2010).

One's awareness of environmental deterioration and knowledge of it are critical cognitive preconditions for developing personal ecological norms, and such a cognitive process eventually contributes to generating moral obligations (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). In examining conservation behavior, Kaiser, Hübner, and Bogner (2005) empirically identified that cognitive triggers (ecological concern, awareness of consequences, self-ascribed responsibility) are vital drivers of personal norms. Han (2015) found that biospheric value, environmental concern, awareness of ecological problems, and ascribed responsibility are all significant triggers of guests' sense of moral obligation to act pro-environmentally in a hotel setting. Klöckner (2013) conducted a meta-analytical structural model approach to understand how individuals make environmentally responsible decisions. According to his theoretical framework, awareness of consequences, self-transcendence (biospheric) value, ascription of responsibility, new environmental paradigm (environmental concern) are key cognitive variables that directly trigger personal ecological norms. Given these, we developed the following hypothesis:

H2a – e. Cognitive triggers have a positive impact on personal norms among convention attendees.

2.3. Affective triggers

Individuals experience favorable or unfavorable emotions in conducting a certain behavior and anticipate positive and negative

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