

the attitude-behaviour gap in sustainable travel - environmental attitudes and travel behaviour of young travellers

introduction.

The ever-growing desire to travel and the rapid expansion of international tourism poses increased risks for our natural environment. Many researchers and tourist practitioners agree that a more environmentally responsible behaviour of tourists would contribute to reducing the overall environmental consequences of tourism, as particularly mass tourism and inconsiderate tourist behaviour directly cause environmental damage (E. Cohen, 1978 ; Gössling et al., 2010; Pearce, 2005).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tourists seem to generally hold a positive attitude towards the environment. However, this positive environmental attitude is not always reflected in a more pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) related to travelling (Barr et al., 2010; Mc Kercher et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2010). This discrepancy between attitude and behaviour is called the attitude-behaviour gap (ABG). The ABG has therefore raised discussions whether environmental attitudes can be a driver for environmentally responsible behaviour among tourists. Younger generations, including Generation Y have the reputation of being particularly environmentally conscious (Hume, 2010).

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do environmental attitudes impact the travel behaviour of Generation Y travellers?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Examining the role of environmental attitude as a determinant of pro-environmental travel behaviour (PETB)
- Analysing the potential attitude-behaviour gap
- Giving insights into the effectiveness of attempts to enhance PETB by increasing attitude and awareness

theoretical background.

- Pro-environmental consumer behaviour: definition, classification, theories (Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991))
- PEB and the ABG in tourism (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2016; Pearce, 2005)
- Environmental attitude and environmental knowledge as determinants of PEB (Bamberg, 2003; Diekmann and Preisendörfer, 2017)
- Generation Y: characteristics, tourist behaviour, sustainability

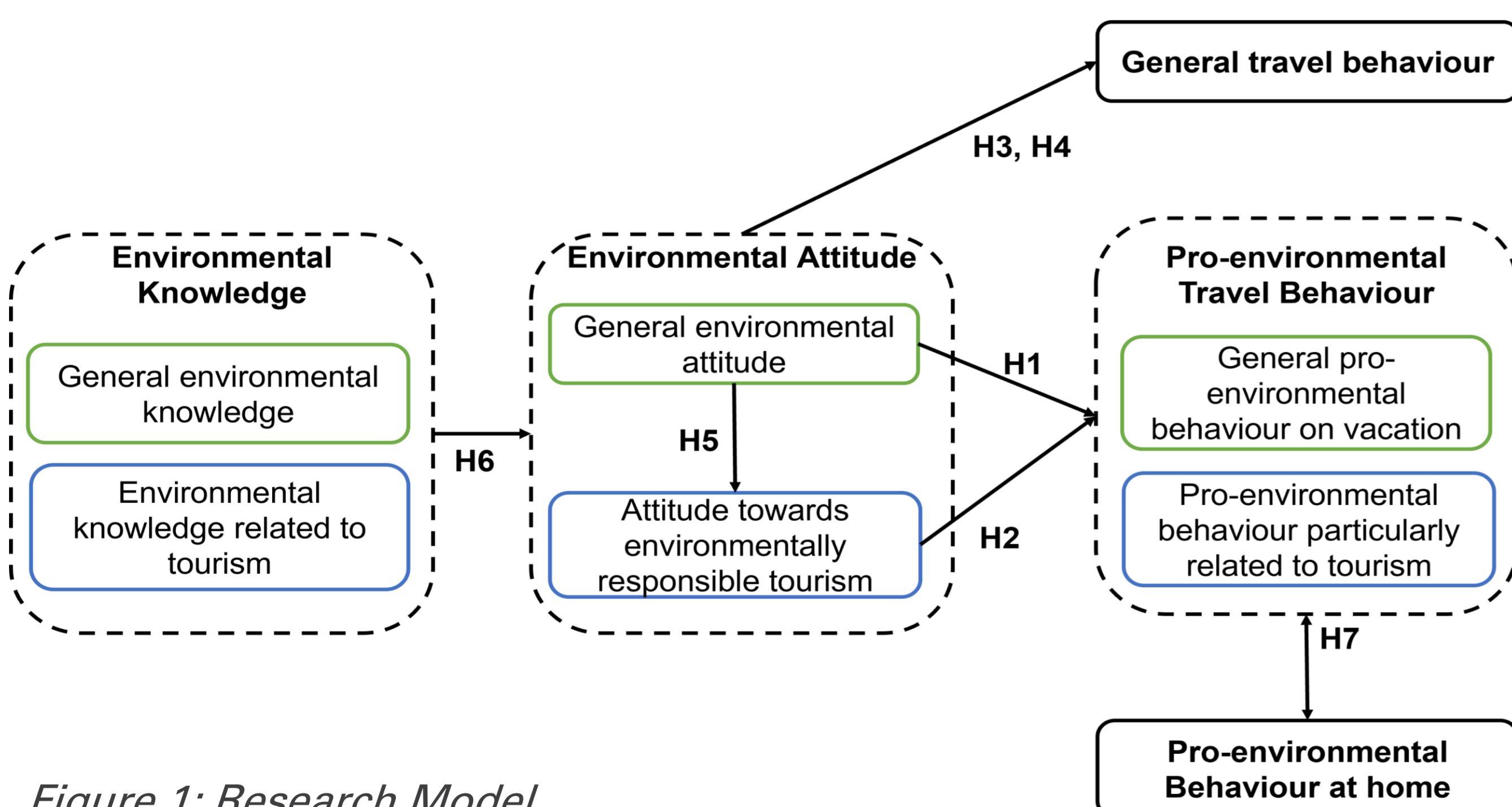


Figure 1: Research Model

research design.

Quantitative research : standardised, online questionnaire
Measures: multiple-indicator measures
Data Collection: 19.05. – 19.06.2021
Sample: Generation Y travellers, who went on vacation in 2019; convenience sampling, n=199
Data Analysis: descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, linear regression analysis

findings.

Attitude-Behaviour Relations: Positive environmental attitudes have a weak positive impact on travel behaviour depending on the specificity of attitude and type of behaviour: Specific attitude has a stronger impact on PETB than general environmental attitude; environmental attitudes have a stronger impact on low-cost PEB than high-cost PEB. Environmental attitudes have no impact on general travel behaviour and travel frequency.

Knowledge-Attitude Relations: Environmental knowledge has a weak positive impact on environmental attitudes.

Table 1.: Main hypotheses and results

Hypothesis	Result
H1, H2: Gen Y travellers' environmental attitudes have a positive impact on their PETB.	Partly supported
H3,4: Gen Y travellers' environmental attitudes have no impact on their general travel behaviour.	Supported
H5: Gen Y traveller's attitude towards environmentally responsible tourism is mediating the impact of general attitude on PETB.	Supported
H6: Gen Y travellers' environmental knowledge has a positive impact on their environmental attitude	Supported
H7: There is no correlation between PEB at home and PEB on vacation.	Rejected

implications.

Based on these results it can be argued that there is an ABG among travellers of Generation Y. In order to bridge this gap, raising awareness for the environmental impacts related to one's own vacation and enhancing a positive attitude towards sustainable tourism can to some extent positively impact PETB. It is however unlikely to have a significant impact on their travel frequency and number of flights. Future research into the further drivers of PEB in a tourism context is recommended.

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