

Observational Learning in Ecotourism: An Investigation into Ecotourists' Environmentally Responsible Behavioral Intentions in South Korea

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Abstract : This study proposes a behavioral model in which ecotourists' level of observational learning shapes their subsequent environmentally responsible behavioral intentions through ecotourism participation. Unlike past studies that have focused on individual attributes such as attitudes, locus of control, personal responsibility, knowledge, skills or effect, this present study explores select social attributes as potential antecedents to environmentally responsible behaviors. A total of 207 completed questionnaires were obtained from ecotourists in Korea and path analyses were conducted to explore the degree in which the hypothesized model directly and indirectly explained ecotourists' environmentally responsible behavioral intentions. Results suggest that observational learning and its associated predictors (i.e., engagement, observation, reproduction and reinforcement) are key determinants of ecotourists environmentally responsible behavioral intentions. The application of observational learning proved to be informative, and has a number of implications for improving ecotourism programs. Our model also lays out a theoretical framework for future research.

Keywords : ecotourism, observational learning, environmentally responsible behavior, social learning theory

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