

Forming Community-Based Eco-Travel Intentions in Small Island Destinations: How Norms and Environmental Responsibility Interact with Attitude and Behavioral Control

Sri Ismulyati^{1*}, Ginta Ginting¹, Andriyansah¹

Jalan Cabe Raya, Pondok Cabe, Pamulang, Tangerang Selatan, Banten 15418

*Corresponding Email: srismu@ecampus.ut.ac.id¹

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ABSTRACT

Small island destinations are highly vulnerable ecosystems where sustainable tourism depends on community participation and environmentally responsible tourist behavior. This study integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) Theory to examine factors influencing tourists' community-based eco-travel intentions. Data were collected from 289 tourists visiting small island destinations in Indonesia and analyzed using PLS-Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results show that personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility significantly enhance tourists' attitudes toward community-based eco-travel, while attitude positively influences behavioral intention. Attitude also partially mediates the relationships between these antecedent variables and behavioral intention. However, perceived behavioral control does not moderate the relationship between attitude and intention. These findings suggest that positive attitudes alone do not necessarily translate into stronger eco-travel intentions. The study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by highlighting the importance of normative influences and environmental responsibility in promoting community-based eco-tourism and supporting the long-term sustainability of small island destinations.

Keywords: Community-Based Eco-Travel; Small Island Destinations; Personal Norms; Social Norms; Environmental Responsibility; Attitude; Behavioral Control; Sustainable Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a central agenda in the development of tourism destinations worldwide, particularly in small island regions characterized by unique natural and cultural attractions. Small islands offer exceptional ecological assets that attract tourists; however, they also constitute highly vulnerable ecosystems (Lee et al., 2023). These destinations frequently face a range of environmental and socio-economic challenges, including coastal ecosystem degradation, marine pollution, coral reef destruction, overexploitation of natural resources, and the marginalization of local communities resulting from tourism models that prioritize economic growth over sustainability. Such challenges underscore the need for tourism development approaches that are capable of balancing economic, social, and environmental dimensions simultaneously. In this regard, sustainable tourism has emerged as a strategic framework for ensuring long-term destination resilience while preserving environmental integrity and enhancing community well-being (UNWTO, 2024).

Over the past decade, a significant paradigm shift has occurred from conventional mass tourism toward Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET) models. This approach positions local communities not merely as passive beneficiaries or tourism attractions, but as key stakeholders who exercise substantial control over resource management and the distribution of local economic benefits (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). The success of CBET fundamentally depends on the willingness and intention of local communities to actively engage in sustainable tourism practices, ranging from environmental conservation initiatives to the adoption of environmentally responsible and culturally hospitable behaviors (Su et al., 2021).

In this context, community-based eco-travel has emerged as a promising approach to sustainable tourism development by positioning local communities as primary stakeholders in the management and utilization of tourism resources. This model not only promotes environmental conservation but also enhances community well-being through active participation in tourism service provision, the preservation of local cultural heritage, and involvement in destination development decision-making processes. Across numerous island destinations, including the Seribu Islands, Raja Ampat, Wakatobi, Karimunjawa, Labuan Bajo, and several small islands throughout Southeast Asia, local community engagement is increasingly recognized as a critical determinant of sustainable tourism success. Rather than serving merely as passive beneficiaries or observers, local residents are key actors whose support for, or resistance to, eco-travel initiatives can significantly influence the long-term sustainability and resilience of these destinations (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2023; Jamal et al., 2022).

Accordingly, understanding the psychological and social factors that shape local communities' intentions to engage in environmentally responsible tourism-related behaviors within their own destinations has become increasingly important. To address this issue, the present study integrates the Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine how personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility influence community-based eco-travel intentions. More specifically, the study investigates the mediating role of attitude and the moderating role of perceived behavioral control in explaining the formation of such intentions.

Nevertheless, the development of community-based tourism in island destinations continues to face several significant challenges. Although awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism has increased substantially, not all tourists demonstrate a strong intention to choose tourism products and experiences that actively involve local

communities and contribute to environmental conservation. Many travelers continue to prioritize factors such as convenience, affordability, and accessibility over the social and environmental benefits associated with their tourism choices. As a result, a noticeable gap persists between the growing demand for sustainable tourism models and tourists' actual willingness to participate in community-based eco-travel activities (Nguyen et al., 2024; Prasetyo & Setiawan, 2024).

Empirical studies have shown that many small island destinations in Indonesia and other parts of the world are increasingly confronted with the negative consequences of localized overtourism, including plastic waste accumulation, coral reef degradation resulting from tourism-related marine activities, and the unsustainable extraction of groundwater resources. Within this context, a critical behavioral paradox emerges among local communities. Although local residents are among the first to bear the environmental and socio-economic costs of ecosystem degradation, many continue to participate in tourism practices that undermine environmental sustainability due to immediate economic pressures. Such practices may include the provision of fossil fuel-based transportation services, inadequate waste management efforts, and limited engagement in environmental conservation initiatives. This paradox suggests that environmental awareness alone is insufficient to generate environmentally responsible behavior. Instead, it reveals the existence of substantial barriers that hinder the transformation of environmental concern into actual eco-travel intentions and sustainable tourism practices among island communities (Su et al., 2021; Han & Hyun, 2022; Li et al., 2024).

Furthermore, recent developments in the tourism sector suggest that travelers are becoming increasingly aware of sustainability challenges, climate change, and environmental conservation. A growing body of global evidence indicates a rising preference among tourists for travel experiences that are environmentally responsible and contribute positively to local community development. Nevertheless, increased environmental awareness does not necessarily lead to corresponding behavioral intentions or actual participation in community-based tourism initiatives. In many cases, tourists who express support for sustainability principles fail to translate such concerns into concrete travel choices, resulting in a persistent gap between pro-environmental attitudes and sustainable tourism behaviors.

In small island destinations, this paradox is manifested in the persistent dominance of mass tourism, which continues to exert significant pressure on fragile coastal and marine ecosystems. In contrast, community-based eco-travel initiatives often experience limited tourist participation despite their strong potential to promote environmental conservation, local economic development, and community empowerment. This discrepancy highlights the existence of underlying psychological mechanisms that shape tourists' travel decision-making processes and influence their willingness to support community-based and environmentally responsible tourism. However, these factors remain insufficiently explored within the context of small island destinations (Su et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

In practice, a notable discrepancy often exists between environmental awareness and actual behavioral intentions. Although the concept of Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET) has been widely incorporated into tourism development policies, empirical realities frequently reveal a contrasting pattern. In many island tourism destinations, local communities remain engaged in short-term exploitative practices or exhibit apathy toward eco-travel initiatives (Jamal et al., 2022). While they may possess a basic understanding of the importance of environmental conservation, such awareness does

not necessarily translate into genuine behavioral intentions to manage and develop tourism destinations sustainably. This phenomenon may be attributed to a range of structural and psychological barriers commonly encountered in island settings, including inadequate infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and economic pressures that reduce individuals' perceptions of control over sustainable tourism practices (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Furthermore, not all tourists who hold favorable attitudes toward sustainable tourism demonstrate a corresponding intention to participate in community-based eco-travel activities. This inconsistency suggests that additional factors may strengthen or weaken the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention. One such factor is perceived behavioral control, which reflects individuals' perceptions of their ability, resources, and opportunities to perform a particular behavior. Consequently, understanding the role of perceived behavioral control is essential for explaining why positive attitudes do not always translate into stronger intentions to engage in sustainable tourism practices.

The research gap addressed in this study stems from two major limitations within the existing literature. First, the majority of studies on eco-travel intention predominantly position tourists as the primary unit of analysis (Wang et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). Research that specifically investigates the formation of local communities' intentions as hosts within the Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET) framework, particularly in Small Island Destinations (SIDs), remains scarce. Given that local communities play a pivotal role in the success and sustainability of CBET initiatives, a deeper understanding of the factors shaping their behavioral intentions is critically needed.

Second, from a theoretical perspective, previous studies examining pro-environmental behavior among local communities have tended to adopt fragmented approaches. Some studies have relied primarily on the Norm Activation Model (NAM) to explain moral motivations underlying environmentally responsible behavior (Han, 2021), whereas others have employed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to capture the influence of rational decision-making processes (Shen et al., 2022). However, limited attention has been given to integrating these complementary theoretical perspectives into a comprehensive framework. In particular, no prior study has simultaneously incorporated personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility to explain the formation of attitudes toward community-based eco-travel and to examine how perceived behavioral control may facilitate or constrain the translation of such attitudes into behavioral intentions within the context of small island destinations.

An Integrated Moderated-Mediation Model

To address these gaps, the present study offers both theoretical and empirical contributions by developing an integrated moderated-mediation model that combines insights from the Norm Activation Model (NAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The first contribution lies in the incorporation of moral and normative factors namely personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility as key antecedents shaping local communities' attitudes toward Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET). By integrating these variables within a unified framework, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying pro-environmental tourism intentions in small island destinations.

The second, and most significant, contribution concerns the positioning of perceived behavioral control as a moderating variable influencing the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention. This perspective offers an empirical explanation for why local community members who hold favorable attitudes toward eco-travel do not necessarily

develop strong intentions to engage in sustainable tourism practices. Specifically, even when positive attitudes are present, intentions may remain weak when individuals perceive limited control over their ability to participate in or implement eco-travel activities. Such perceptions may arise from inadequate infrastructure, limited access to resources, insufficient policy support, or the lack of tourism-related facilities and opportunities within island destinations. By examining this moderating mechanism, the study advances understanding of the conditions under which positive attitudes are translated into meaningful behavioral intentions, thereby extending existing applications of NAM and TPB in the context of community-based sustainable tourism.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study seeks to achieve three primary objectives. First, it aims to examine the effects of personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility on local communities' attitudes toward the management and development of eco-travel initiatives in small island destinations. Second, it investigates the mediating role of attitude in explaining the relationship between normative factors and environmental responsibility, on the one hand, and local communities' intentions to participate in Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET), on the other. Third, the study evaluates the extent to which perceived behavioral control moderates the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention among local community members.

By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to contribute to the sustainable tourism literature by providing a comprehensive psychological framework for understanding the determinants of community participation in eco-travel initiatives. Furthermore, the findings are anticipated to offer valuable insights for policymakers, destination managers, and community stakeholders in designing effective empowerment strategies that encourage active local participation and support the long-term sustainability of small island tourism destinations

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen. TPB posits that behavioral intention serves as the most immediate and significant predictor of actual behavior. According to the theory, behavioral intention is determined by three key factors: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991, 2020). Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behavior, subjective norms refer to perceived social pressures to engage in or refrain from a behavior, and perceived behavioral control captures individuals' perceptions of their ability and available resources to perform the behavior.

Within the context of sustainable tourism in small island destinations, TPB has been widely employed to explain why both tourists and local communities are willing to support environmentally responsible tourism practices. Community-based tourism requires the active involvement of local stakeholders in protecting and managing natural resources that are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation. Consequently, social norms and environmental responsibility represent important determinants that may foster favorable attitudes toward eco-travel and ultimately strengthen intentions to participate in sustainable tourism activities.

Recent studies have demonstrated that extending the TPB framework by incorporating moral and environmental dimensions can substantially enhance its explanatory and predictive power in understanding pro-environmental behavioral intentions (Han et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Such extensions are particularly relevant in sustainable tourism settings, where behavioral decisions are often influenced not only by rational considerations but also by moral obligations, environmental values, and social expectations. Therefore, integrating normative and environmental responsibility factors into the TPB framework provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying participation in community-based eco-travel initiatives.

Norm Activation Theory (NAT)

To explain the role of environmental responsibility, this study draws upon the Norm Activation Theory (NAT) originally proposed by Schwartz (1977), which has subsequently been widely applied and extended within the context of environmentally responsible and sustainable tourism behavior (Han, 2021). NAT posits that pro-environmental behavior is driven by the activation of personal norms, which occurs when individuals become aware of the potential consequences of their actions (awareness of consequences) and accept responsibility for those consequences (ascription of responsibility). Once activated, these personal norms create a sense of moral obligation that motivates individuals to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors.

In the context of small island destinations, environmental responsibility extends beyond an abstract ethical concept and becomes a practical necessity for community survival and well-being. Small island ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation, including coastal erosion, marine pollution, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. Consequently, local communities are often more directly exposed to the environmental impacts of unsustainable tourism practices than residents of other destinations. As a result, a heightened sense of environmental responsibility may play a crucial role in shaping pro-environmental attitudes and encouraging participation in community-based eco-travel initiatives. The application of NAT in this context provides a valuable theoretical perspective for understanding how moral obligations toward environmental protection contribute to the formation of sustainable tourism intentions and behaviors.

Social and Personal Norms (Norms – Independent Variables)

Norms represent the social and moral pressures perceived by individuals to engage in specific behaviors. In the context of community-based eco-travel, social norms refer to the perceived expectations and influences exerted by significant others, including community leaders, fellow residents, local organizations, and government authorities, regarding participation in sustainable tourism practices (Chen et al., 2022). Personal norms, in contrast, reflect an individual's internalized sense of moral obligation and responsibility to perform behaviors that contribute to environmental conservation and community well-being.

Within small island destinations, where social cohesion and kinship ties are often strong, normative influences play a particularly important role in shaping individual perceptions and behavioral intentions. The close-knit nature of island communities can reinforce shared values and collective expectations concerning environmental stewardship and sustainable tourism development. Consequently, both social and personal norms may serve as powerful drivers of support for community-based eco-travel initiatives.

In this study, the concept of norms encompasses both subjective norms and personal norms. Subjective norms capture the perceived social pressure from relevant others to engage in environmentally responsible tourism-related behaviors, whereas personal norms represent an individual's moral commitment to protecting local environmental and cultural resources. In the context of small island destinations, local communities often serve as frontline stewards of fragile ecosystems. Strong normative influences emerge when individuals perceive that adherence to local customs, environmental regulations, and conservation practices—such as marine conservation zoning or restrictions on certain fishing activities—is not merely desirable but socially and morally expected. These normative pressures can strengthen favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel and encourage greater participation in sustainable tourism initiatives.

Environmental Responsibility (Independent Variable)

Environmental responsibility refers to an individual's awareness, sense of obligation, and emotional commitment to minimizing the negative environmental impacts of their actions. It reflects a willingness to engage in behaviors that contribute to environmental preservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. Within the context of tourism, environmental responsibility is manifested through environmentally conscious actions and decisions that support ecological sustainability and reduce pressures on fragile ecosystems.

In small island destinations, environmental responsibility is particularly important due to the ecological vulnerability and limited carrying capacity of island environments. For tourists, environmental responsibility may be reflected in their willingness to protect coral reef ecosystems, conserve scarce freshwater resources, minimize waste generation, and respect the socio-cultural and environmental integrity of coastal communities. Such behaviors demonstrate a recognition of the environmental consequences associated with tourism activities and a commitment to reducing potential ecological harm.

From the perspective of local communities, environmental responsibility represents a moral obligation to safeguard both marine and terrestrial resources from the adverse impacts of unsustainable tourism development and mass tourism activities (Wijaya et al., 2023). Given their close dependence on local ecosystems for livelihoods and well-being, residents of small island destinations often possess a heightened awareness of environmental degradation and its long-term consequences. Accordingly, environmental responsibility is expected to encourage stronger support for sustainable tourism practices and foster positive attitudes toward community-based eco-travel initiatives.

Attitude Toward Eco-Travel (Mediating Variable)

Attitude refers to an individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of a particular behavior and represents a central determinant of behavioral intention within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). In this study, attitude is defined as local community members' positive or negative evaluations of actively participating in Community-Based Eco-Travel (CBET) initiatives (Ebison et al., 2023). It reflects the extent to which individuals perceive involvement in sustainable tourism activities as beneficial, desirable, and worthwhile.

Within the context of small island destinations, attitudes toward eco-travel are shaped by individuals' beliefs regarding the potential outcomes of sustainable tourism practices. Positive attitudes are likely to develop when local communities perceive that participation in eco-travel initiatives contributes to environmental conservation, protects fragile marine and coastal ecosystems, supports local economic development, and enhances

community well-being. Such perceptions may strengthen individuals' willingness to support and engage in sustainable tourism activities.

More broadly, attitude reflects the degree to which individuals associate eco-travel with positive environmental, social, and economic outcomes. Consequently, favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel are expected to increase the likelihood of developing stronger intentions to participate in environmentally responsible tourism practices and sustainable destination management initiatives.

Perceived Behavioral Control (Moderating Variable)

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of the extent to which performing a particular behavior is within their control, taking into account the availability of resources, opportunities, and capabilities required to undertake the behavior. Within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), perceived behavioral control is considered a critical determinant of behavioral intention, as it reflects individuals' assessments of their ability to successfully perform a given action.

In the context of community-based eco-travel, perceived behavioral control represents local community members' perceptions of the ease or difficulty of participating in and supporting sustainable tourism activities. In small island destinations, these perceptions are often shaped by structural and contextual factors, including the availability of tourism infrastructure, financial resources, technical expertise, and access to training and development opportunities. Due to geographical isolation and limited resource availability, local communities in small island destinations frequently encounter substantial barriers that may constrain their involvement in eco-tourism initiatives. Such constraints include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to capital, insufficient managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and restricted institutional support (Liu et al., 2021).

Accordingly, perceived behavioral control reflects the extent to which local residents believe they possess the necessary means and opportunities to actively participate in community-based eco-travel development. Even when individuals hold favorable attitudes toward sustainable tourism, their intentions to engage in eco-travel activities may remain weak if they perceive significant obstacles to participation. Therefore, perceived behavioral control is expected to play an important moderating role in influencing the strength of the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention within the context of community-based eco-travel in small island destinations.

Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention (Dependent Variable)

Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention refers to an individual's willingness and commitment to engage in, support, or participate in tourism activities that minimize negative environmental impacts while generating social and economic benefits for local communities. As a behavioral intention construct, it reflects the extent to which individuals are prepared to adopt and promote sustainable tourism practices that contribute to environmental conservation and community well-being.

In the context of small island destinations, community-based eco-travel intention encompasses more than environmental concern alone. It also reflects support for local livelihoods and community development through actions such as purchasing locally produced goods and services, participating in conservation initiatives, respecting local cultural values, and contributing to tourism activities that promote equitable benefit-sharing. Such intentions are particularly important in island environments, where ecological sustainability and community welfare are closely interconnected.

From the perspective of local communities, Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention can be defined as the willingness of residents to manage, support, and implement tourism practices that are environmentally sustainable while generating direct economic benefits for local communities and villages (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). This intention reflects a commitment to balancing environmental conservation objectives with socio-economic development goals, thereby fostering long-term destination sustainability.

Recent studies have emphasized that sustainable tourism intentions constitute a critical factor in the successful management and development of small island destinations. The long-term sustainability of these destinations depends largely on collaborative relationships between tourists and local communities, both of whom play essential roles in supporting environmentally responsible tourism practices and community-based development initiatives (Pham et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2024). Accordingly, understanding the determinants of community-based eco-travel intention is essential for promoting sustainable tourism development and enhancing the resilience of small island destinations.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

In island communities, which are typically characterized by strong collectivist values and close social relationships, social norms play a crucial role in shaping individual perceptions and behavioral orientations. When local residents perceive expectations or social pressure from influential community figures, such as village leaders or traditional authorities, to protect marine ecosystems and support sustainable tourism development, they are more likely to cognitively evaluate such behaviors as desirable and beneficial. As a result, these normative influences can foster more favorable attitudes toward environmentally responsible tourism practices and community-based eco-travel initiatives.

Previous research has highlighted the significant role of social norms in shaping pro-environmental attitudes within small island destinations. For instance, Yoon et al. (2021) found that subjective norms constitute one of the strongest predictors of local communities' environmental attitudes, as individual decisions in close-knit island societies are often strongly influenced by collective expectations and community oversight. In such settings, conformity to socially accepted values and behaviors becomes an important mechanism through which attitudes toward sustainable tourism are formed.

Beyond external social pressures, internalized moral obligations also play an important role in shaping attitudes toward eco-travel. Personal norms reflect individuals' feelings of moral responsibility and ethical commitment to protecting the natural environment and ensuring the sustainability of their communities. Residents who recognize the importance of preserving the environmental resources upon which their livelihoods and well-being depend are more likely to develop favorable evaluations of community-based eco-travel initiatives. Empirical studies have suggested that stronger personal norms are associated with more positive attitudes toward environmentally responsible tourism and conservation-oriented behaviors (Zhang & Moyle, 2025; Han & Hyun, 2024).

H1: Social norms positively influence local communities' attitudes toward community-based ecotourism in small island destinations.

H2: Personal norms positively influence local communities' attitudes toward community-based ecotourism in small island destinations.

Environmental responsibility serves as an important internal driver of pro-environmental attitudes and behavioral intentions. Local community members who recognize that natural resources, such as coral reef ecosystems, constitute a vital source of livelihood

and well-being are more likely to develop a strong sense of responsibility for their preservation. This sense of environmental responsibility fosters greater awareness of the consequences of environmental degradation and reinforces individuals' commitment to sustainable resource management. Consequently, such responsibility is translated into favorable evaluations of community-based eco-tourism initiatives, as these initiatives are perceived as consistent with values of environmental stewardship, conservation, and long-term sustainability.

Within the framework of pro-environmental behavior theories, environmental responsibility represents a moral and psychological commitment that influences how individuals assess environmentally responsible practices. When local residents perceive eco-tourism as an effective mechanism for balancing environmental conservation with community development, they are more likely to form positive attitudes toward participation in sustainable tourism activities. Empirical evidence supports this relationship, with previous studies demonstrating that moral constructs, particularly environmental responsibility, play a significant role in shaping individuals' affective evaluations and attitudes toward green tourism programs and sustainable tourism initiatives (Han, 2021).

H3: Environmental responsibility positively influences local communities' attitudes toward community-based ecotourism in small island destinations.

According to the fundamental postulates of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude is a direct antecedent of behavioral intention. Individuals who evaluate a particular behavior favorably are more likely to develop a stronger intention to engage in that behavior. In the context of community-based ecotourism, local community members who perceive eco-tourism initiatives as beneficial—both in terms of economic opportunities and environmental conservation—are expected to demonstrate a greater willingness to participate in and support such initiatives.

Within small island destinations, where traditional livelihood activities such as fishing are increasingly being complemented or replaced by tourism-related occupations, positive attitudes toward community-based ecotourism can serve as an important catalyst for sustainable behavioral and economic transitions. When local residents believe that ecotourism contributes to environmental protection, community welfare, and long-term economic resilience, they are more likely to view participation in sustainable tourism as a desirable and worthwhile endeavor. Consequently, favorable attitudes toward community-based ecotourism are expected to strengthen individuals' intentions to engage in environmentally responsible tourism practices and support sustainable destination development (Ebison et al., 2023).

H4: Attitude positively influences community-based ecotourism intention in small island destinations.

The relationship between positive attitudes and behavioral intentions does not always operate in a straightforward or linear manner, particularly within the context of small island destinations. These destinations frequently face a range of structural and contextual constraints, including limited transportation accessibility, inadequate tourism training programs, insufficient infrastructure, and restricted access to financial resources. Such barriers may prevent local communities from translating favorable attitudes toward community-based ecotourism into concrete intentions to participate in sustainable tourism activities.

Within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) reflects individuals' perceptions of their ability to perform a particular behavior based on the availability of resources, opportunities, and capabilities. Higher levels of perceived behavioral control indicate that individuals feel more capable of engaging in a given activity, whereas lower levels suggest the presence of perceived obstacles and constraints. In the context of community-based ecotourism, local residents who perceive that they possess adequate skills, resources, institutional support, and tourism infrastructure are more likely to transform positive attitudes into stronger behavioral intentions.

Conversely, even when individuals hold highly favorable attitudes toward ecotourism, their intentions may remain weak if they perceive significant barriers to participation. For example, local residents may believe in the benefits of sustainable tourism but feel constrained by a lack of guiding skills, inadequate tourism facilities, limited entrepreneurial capacity, or insufficient support from relevant stakeholders. Under such circumstances, positive attitudes alone may be insufficient to generate strong intentions to participate in community-based ecotourism initiatives.

Accordingly, perceived behavioral control can be viewed as a critical boundary condition that influences the extent to which favorable attitudes are translated into behavioral intentions. Liu et al. (2021) argue that in marginalized and geographically isolated island communities, perceived behavioral control plays a decisive role in determining whether pro-environmental attitudes can be converted into meaningful behavioral intentions. Therefore, both a direct effect and a moderating effect of perceived behavioral control are proposed in the present study.

H5: Perceived behavioral control positively influences community-based ecotourism intention in small island destinations.

H6: Perceived behavioral control positively moderates the relationship between attitude and community-based ecotourism intention, such that the positive effect of attitude on intention becomes stronger when perceived behavioral control is high.

This study argues that social norms and environmental responsibility do not directly translate into behavioral intentions without first undergoing an evaluative cognitive process. In the context of small island destinations, local community members do not automatically engage in community-based ecotourism merely because they experience social pressure or possess a sense of environmental responsibility. Rather, these normative and moral influences must first shape individuals' perceptions and evaluations of ecotourism, thereby fostering favorable attitudes that subsequently develop into behavioral intentions.

From a theoretical perspective, attitude serves as a critical psychological mechanism through which external social influences and internal moral obligations are transformed into intentional behavior. Social norms provide guidance regarding socially desirable actions, while environmental responsibility generates a sense of moral commitment toward environmental protection. However, the effectiveness of these factors in promoting sustainable tourism participation largely depends on whether they lead individuals to develop positive evaluations of community-based ecotourism. Once favorable attitudes are formed, individuals become more likely to express strong intentions to support and participate in environmentally responsible tourism activities.

Empirical evidence supports this mediating mechanism. Rahmawati et al. (2022), in their study of coastal tourism development, demonstrated that attitude mediates the relationship between pro-environmental norms and behavioral intention, highlighting the central role of attitude as a psychological driver that transforms both external social

pressures and internal moral motivations into behavioral intentions. Consistent with this reasoning, the present study proposes that attitude functions as a mediating variable linking personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility to community-based ecotourism intention.

H7: Attitude positively mediates the relationship between personal norms and community-based ecotourism intention.

H8: Attitude positively mediates the relationship between social norms and community-based ecotourism intention.

H9: Attitude positively and significantly mediates the relationship between environmental responsibility and community-based ecotourism intention.

Based on the foregoing theoretical arguments and hypotheses, the following conceptual framework is proposed.

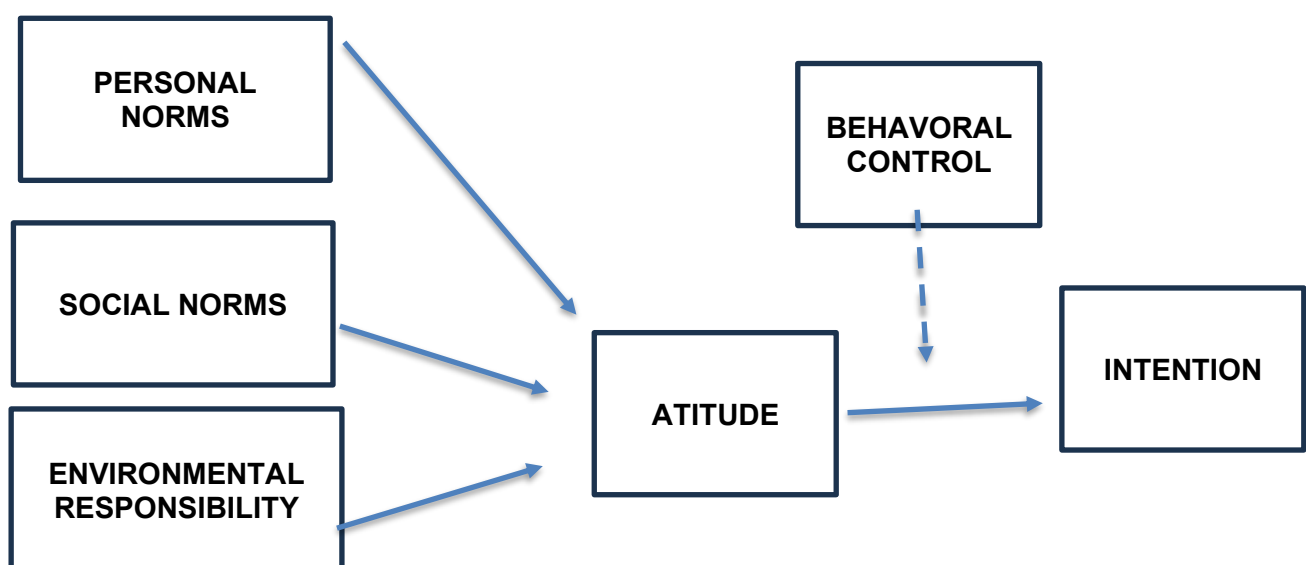


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and Data Collection

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the determinants of community-based ecotourism intention among local communities residing in small island tourism destinations. The target population consisted of local residents living in island-based tourism destinations who were directly or indirectly involved in, or affected by, tourism activities. A purposive sampling technique, categorized as a non-probability sampling method, was utilized to select respondents who possessed relevant knowledge and experience regarding tourism development within their communities.

Data were collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms between April and May 2026. A total of 289 valid responses were obtained and retained for subsequent analysis. This sample size is considered adequate for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. According to Hair et al. (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016), sample sizes exceeding the minimum recommended threshold for quantitative research are generally sufficient to ensure robust statistical estimation and hypothesis testing.

Measurement of Variables

The measurement instruments were adapted from well-established theoretical and empirical studies to ensure content validity and construct reliability. The constructs of attitude and community-based ecotourism intention were measured using items derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and related behavioral frameworks (Ajzen, 1991, 2020, 2024; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Lee et al., 2018). Personal norms and social norms were adapted from the scales developed by Han and Hyun (2024), Zhang and Moyle (2025), Wang et al. (2022), and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2023). Environmental responsibility was measured using instruments adapted from Han (2021) and Lee et al. (2023). Perceived behavioral control was measured using scales adapted from Nguyen et al. (2024), Shen et al. (2022), and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2023). All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of respondents' perceptions by calculating means and standard deviations for each construct.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a widely recognized analytical approach for examining complex causal relationships among latent constructs and testing predictive research models (Hair et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020; Chin, 1998). PLS-SEM was considered appropriate for the present study due to its ability to simultaneously assess measurement validity and reliability while estimating structural relationships among variables. The analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4.0 software, which was employed to evaluate both the measurement model and the structural model and to test the proposed research hypotheses

RESULTS

This study involved 289 respondents drawn from local communities residing in several island tourism destinations, including the Seribu Islands, Lombok Island, Bali Island and Pangkal Pinang. The respondents varied in terms of age, gender, educational background, and socioeconomic status (see Table 1). Although the sample was selected using a non-probability sampling approach, the diversity of respondent characteristics indicates a considerable degree of heterogeneity within the sample. This variation enhances the representativeness of different demographic and socioeconomic groups, thereby providing a broader perspective on local communities' perceptions and intentions regarding community-based ecotourism.

Table 1. Profile Responden

	Frequency (n) 289	Percentage (%)
Ages		
<17 years	11	3.81
17-25 years	123	42.56
26-35 years	84	29.07
36-45 years	47	16.26
46-55 years	19	6.57
>55 years	5	1.73
Gender		
Male	124	42.91
Female	165	57.09

Occupation		
Private	36	12.46
Government Employee	9	3.11
Home maker	21	7.27
Student	103	35.64
Entrepreneur	85	29.41
unemployed	9	3.11
Others	26	9.00
Education		
Yunior High School	34	11.76
Senior High School	210	72.66
Diploma	10	3.46
Bachelor	32	11.07
Master and Doctoral	3	1.04
Total	289	100.00

The demographic characteristics of the respondents reveal several important patterns. The dominance of younger age groups in the sample indicates the active involvement of younger generations in issues related to environmental responsibility. Specifically, respondents aged 17–25 years constituted the largest age group, accounting for 42.56% of the total sample, followed by those aged 26–35 years at 29.07%. When combined, individuals within the productive age range of 17–35 years represented more than 70% of all respondents. This finding provides strong evidence that young adults and early-career individuals in these island communities possess a relatively high level of awareness and concern regarding environmental issues, positioning them as potential drivers of future environmental conservation initiatives and sustainable tourism development.

From the perspectives of gender and occupation, the respondent profile demonstrates considerable diversity, albeit with certain dominant characteristics. Female respondents accounted for a larger proportion of the sample than male respondents, representing 57.09% and 42.91%, respectively. In terms of occupational background, students constituted the largest group (35.64%), followed by entrepreneurs and self-employed individuals (29.41%). This composition is noteworthy because it indicates that participation in the study was not limited to individuals engaged in formal education but also included members of the local economic sector. Such representation is particularly important, as local economic actors play a crucial role in the adoption and implementation of environmentally sustainable practices within tourism destinations.

Finally, with regard to educational attainment, the majority of respondents had completed senior high school education, accounting for 72.66% of the total sample. This level of education provides an important foundation for shaping individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and acceptance of environmental conservation initiatives. Although only 15.57% of respondents possessed higher education qualifications ranging from diploma to doctoral degrees, the substantial participation of high school graduates suggests that environmental responsibility is a concern that extends across broader segments of the local population. This finding highlights the importance of designing environmental education and awareness programs that are accessible and comprehensible to individuals with diverse educational backgrounds. Consequently, strategies aimed at

promoting environmental responsibility and sustainable tourism should be tailored to accommodate varying levels of educational attainment within local communities.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated to ensure the construct validity of the proposed research model. The measurement model explains the extent to which the observed variables (manifest indicators) adequately represent the underlying latent constructs being measured. Convergent validity was assessed using two key criteria: outer loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which multiple indicators of a construct share a high proportion of common variance. In reflective measurement models, individual indicators are considered to have satisfactory convergent validity when their outer loading values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the indicators are strongly associated with their respective latent constructs. Furthermore, an AVE value greater than 0.50 suggests that the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators, thereby confirming adequate convergent validity.

Accordingly, indicators with outer loading values above 0.70 and constructs with AVE values exceeding 0.50 are considered to demonstrate acceptable levels of convergent validity and are therefore suitable for inclusion in the subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 2. Validity Test Result

	<i>Loading Factor</i>	<i>T statistics</i>	<i>P values</i>
ATT1 <- Attitude	0.776	26.945	0.000
ATT2 <- Attitude	0.847	33.008	0.000
ATT3 <- Attitude	0.888	49.482	0.000
ATT4 <- Attitude	0.843	34.426	0.000
ATT5 <- Attitude	0.799	26.516	0.000
BC1 <- Behavioral Control	0.833	34.101	0.000
BC2 <- Behavioral Control	0.747	23.108	0.000
BC3 <- Behavioral Control	0.868	46.843	0.000
BC4 <- Behavioral Control	0.872	55.185	0.000
BC5 <- Behavioral Control	0.864	48.604	0.000
ENV1 <- Environmental Responsibility	0.835	26.110	0.000
ENV2 <- Environmental Responsibility	0.886	51.394	0.000
ENV3 <- Environmental Responsibility	0.873	42.549	0.000
ENV4 <- Environmental Responsibility	0.875	50.562	0.000
INT1 <- Intention	0.723	18.159	0.000
INT2 <- Intention	0.779	20.909	0.000
INT3 <- Intention	0.851	43.995	0.000
INT4 <- Intention	0.748	16.304	0.000
INT5 <- Intention	0.846	42.058	0.000
INT6 <- Intention	0.858	35.801	0.000
INT7 <- Intention	0.830	31.508	0.000
PN1 <- Personal Norms	0.836	25.045	0.000

	<i>Loading Factor</i>	<i>T statistics</i>	<i>P values</i>
PN2 <- Personal Norms	0.884	32.112	0.000
PN3 <- Personal Norms	0.892	37.330	0.000
PN4 <- Personal Norms	0.858	26.704	0.000
PN5 <- Personal Norms	0.880	35.153	0.000
SN1 <- Social Norms	0.782	24.999	0.000
SN2 <- Social Norms	0.829	37.567	0.000
SN3 <- Social Norms	0.739	14.744	0.000
SN4 <- Social Norms	0.837	33.976	0.000
SN5 <- Social Norms	0.803	27.765	0.000

Table 2 presents the results of the validity assessment based on factor loadings, which were conducted to verify whether each indicator empirically and adequately represents its corresponding latent construct. The findings indicate that all indicators associated with the constructs of Attitude, Perceived Behavioral Control, Environmental Responsibility, Intention, Personal Norms, and Social Norms exhibit satisfactory loading factor values. These results are further supported by T-statistics exceeding the recommended critical threshold and p-values of 0.000, indicating a high level of statistical significance.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the measurement instruments satisfy the criteria for convergent validity. Each indicator contributes significantly and reliably to the formation of its respective latent construct, demonstrating a strong association with the intended variable and providing no evidence of measurement inadequacy. Consequently, the results confirm that the indicators employed in this study are valid and appropriate for representing the underlying constructs within the proposed research model.

Table 3. Reliability Test Result

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude	0.888	0.918	0.691
Behavioral Control	0.895	0.922	0.703
Environmental Responsibility	0.890	0.924	0.752
Intention	0.910	0.928	0.651
Personal Norms	0.920	0.940	0.758
Social Norms	0.858	0.898	0.638

Table 3 provides further empirical evidence regarding the reliability and internal consistency of the measurement instruments employed in this study. All latent constructs demonstrate Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.85, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the measurement items. Furthermore, the Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs are above 0.89, confirming the strong reliability of the collected data and the consistency of the indicators in measuring their respective latent variables.

In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs exceed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, thereby confirming adequate convergent validity. The highest AVE value was observed for the Personal Norms construct (0.758),

while the lowest AVE value was recorded for Social Norms (0.638). Despite these differences, all constructs satisfy the established validity criteria and demonstrate a satisfactory level of variance explained by their respective indicators.

Overall, these findings indicate that the measurement instruments used in this study possess strong reliability and validity. The results confirm that the constructs are measured consistently and accurately, thereby providing a robust foundation for subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing.

Table 4. *Discriminant Validity Fornell Larcker Criterion*

	ATT	BC	ENV	INT	PN	SN
Attitude	0.832					
Behavioral Control	0.548	0.838				
Environmental Responsibility	0.695	0.689	0.867			
Intention	0.804	0.741	0.823	0.807		
Personal Norms	0.671	0.424	0.508	0.700	0.870	
Social Norms	0.769	0.588	0.711	0.800	0.583	0.799

Table 4 presents the assessment of discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, a widely accepted approach for evaluating whether the latent constructs in a research model are empirically distinct from one another. According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, represented by the values along the diagonal of the matrix, should be greater than its correlations with all other constructs in the model. The results indicate that this requirement is satisfied for all latent variables. For example, the Intention construct exhibits a square root of AVE value of 0.807, which is higher than its correlations with Attitude (0.804) and Perceived Behavioral Control (0.741). Similar patterns are observed across all other constructs included in the study.

These findings provide strong empirical evidence that each latent construct captures a substantial proportion of variance unique to itself and shares less variance with other constructs in the model. Consequently, the constructs demonstrate adequate discriminant validity and can be considered conceptually and empirically distinct. The results therefore confirm that the measurement model satisfies the stringent discriminant validity requirements recommended for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), supporting the appropriateness of the constructs for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 6. *Discriminant Validity HTMT*

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Behavioral Control <-> Attitude	0,581
Environmental Responsibility <-> Attitude	0,775
Environmental Responsibility <-> Behavioral Control	0,752
Intention <-> Attitude	0,738
Intention <-> Behavioral Control	0,799
Intention <-> Environmental Responsibility	0,712
Personal Norms <-> Attitude	0,742
Personal Norms <-> Behavioral Control	0,447
Personal Norms <-> Environmental Responsibility	0,557

Personal Norms <-> Intention	0,765
Social Norms <-> Attitude	0,878
Social Norms <-> Behavioral Control	0,649
Social Norms <-> Environmental Responsibility	0,809
Social Norms <-> Intention	0,729
Social Norms <-> Personal Norms	0,657

Table 5 complements the assessment of discriminant validity by employing the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), a more recent and rigorous approach that is widely regarded as a superior method for detecting potential discriminant validity issues among latent constructs. The HTMT values reported in Table 5 demonstrate highly satisfactory results, as all ratios between latent variables fall within the recommended thresholds and do not exceed the critical values that would indicate problematic overlap among constructs.

These findings provide additional support for the discriminant validity established through the Fornell–Larcker criterion. More specifically, the HTMT results confirm that no significant discriminant validity concerns exist among the latent variables included in the model. The consistency of the findings across both assessment methods strengthens confidence in the robustness of the measurement model and provides further evidence that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another.

Consequently, the results suggest that the proposed model possesses strong conceptual integrity, with each construct representing a unique theoretical concept while maintaining meaningful and theoretically justifiable relationships with other constructs in the model. Constructs such as Social Norms, Attitude, Environmental Responsibility, Personal Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Community-Based Ecotourism Intention therefore demonstrate adequate discriminant validity and can be confidently retained for subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing.

Table 6. *Discriminant Validity Cross Loading*

	ATT	BC	ENV	INT	PN	SN
ATT1	0.776	0.339	0.470	0.646	0.519	0.574
ATT2	0.847	0.380	0.515	0.668	0.619	0.595
ATT3	0.888	0.503	0.579	0.741	0.556	0.656
ATT4	0.843	0.524	0.673	0.741	0.514	0.698
ATT5	0.799	0.513	0.635	0.706	0.584	0.662
BC1	0.360	0.833	0.507	0.546	0.292	0.412
BC2	0.202	0.747	0.398	0.429	0.201	0.316
BC3	0.530	0.868	0.592	0.649	0.398	0.542
BC4	0.498	0.872	0.636	0.670	0.383	0.542
BC5	0.601	0.864	0.687	0.738	0.439	0.582
ENV1	0.628	0.572	0.835	0.701	0.471	0.607
ENV2	0.605	0.599	0.886	0.732	0.448	0.633
ENV3	0.552	0.583	0.873	0.697	0.409	0.612
ENV4	0.620	0.634	0.875	0.724	0.429	0.612
INT1	0.619	0.671	0.700	0.723	0.444	0.669
INT2	0.644	0.504	0.594	0.779	0.551	0.642

INT3	0.661	0.664	0.700	0.851	0.573	0.673
INT4	0.672	0.473	0.531	0.748	0.566	0.613
INT5	0.685	0.673	0.709	0.846	0.597	0.662
INT6	0.730	0.577	0.682	0.858	0.650	0.666
INT7	0.748	0.602	0.712	0.830	0.567	0.698
PN1	0.554	0.259	0.340	0.547	0.836	0.455
PN2	0.595	0.384	0.482	0.618	0.884	0.509
PN3	0.610	0.420	0.469	0.618	0.892	0.514
PN4	0.534	0.348	0.414	0.597	0.858	0.484
PN5	0.621	0.420	0.494	0.662	0.880	0.569
SN1	0.589	0.501	0.573	0.681	0.510	0.782
SN2	0.671	0.460	0.634	0.665	0.449	0.829
SN3	0.569	0.290	0.399	0.559	0.449	0.739
SN4	0.634	0.506	0.621	0.680	0.479	0.837
SN5	0.603	0.583	0.596	0.689	0.447	0.803

Table 6 presents the results of the cross-loading analysis, which was conducted to further assess discriminant validity at the individual indicator level. Cross-loading analysis compares the correlation of each indicator with its corresponding latent construct against its correlations with other latent constructs in the model. An indicator is considered to demonstrate adequate discriminant validity when its loading on the intended construct is substantially higher than its loadings on all other constructs.

The results indicate that all indicators exhibit considerably higher loadings on their respective latent variables than on any other latent variables included in the model. For example, the indicators measuring Attitude (ATT1–ATT5) consistently display high loading values on the Attitude construct, ranging from 0.776 to 0.888. In contrast, the correlations of these indicators with Perceived Behavioral Control, Environmental Responsibility, Intention, Personal Norms, and Social Norms are substantially lower. Similar patterns are observed across all other constructs, indicating that each indicator is strongly associated with its intended construct while maintaining relatively weak associations with unrelated constructs.

The findings presented in Table 6 provide additional and robust evidence supporting discriminant validity at the item level. The clear and consistent cross-loading pattern demonstrates that each indicator uniquely represents the construct it was designed to measure, with no indication of problematic cross-loadings or conceptual ambiguity. This result confirms that the measurement model is well specified and that the indicators accurately capture their underlying latent constructs without substantial contamination from other variables within the model.

Overall, the cross-loading assessment offers final confirmation of the strong discriminant validity of the measurement model. The absence of ambiguous indicators and the clear separation among constructs enhance confidence in the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments. Consequently, the model possesses a solid measurement foundation and is considered appropriate for subsequent structural model evaluation and hypothesis testing, as the indicators effectively capture the behavioral and attitudinal phenomena under investigation among local communities without significant interference from unrelated constructs.

Structural Model Assessment

Following the evaluation of the measurement model, the next step involved assessing the structural model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) (see Table 8 and Figure 2). The evaluation of the structural model, also referred to as the inner model, aims to examine the relationships among the latent constructs proposed in the research framework. This assessment enables researchers to determine the extent to which the hypothesized relationships are supported by the empirical data.

One of the key indicators used in structural model evaluation is the coefficient of determination (R^2), which measures the predictive accuracy of the model. Specifically, R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that can be explained by its corresponding exogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Higher R^2 values suggest greater explanatory power of the model, indicating that the exogenous variables are effective in explaining variations in the endogenous variables under investigation.

The results of the coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis are presented in Table 7. These results provide insights into the explanatory capability of the proposed model and the extent to which the independent variables contribute to explaining the variation in the endogenous constructs.

Table 7. *R-Square and Q-Square Test*

	R^2	Q^2
Attitude	0.695	0.473
Intention	0.824	0.524

Table 7 presents the R-square (R^2) and Q-square (Q^2) values, which provide insights into the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the proposed structural model. The R^2 values for Attitude (0.695) and Intention (0.824) indicate a substantial level of explanatory power. Specifically, these values suggest that a considerable proportion of the variance in the endogenous constructs is explained by their respective antecedent variables included in the model. In particular, the R^2 value for Intention demonstrates that the model is highly effective in explaining variations in local communities' behavioral intentions toward community-based ecotourism. These findings indicate that the constructs incorporated into the research framework possess strong predictive capabilities and contribute meaningfully to understanding behavioral intentions among local residents.

Furthermore, the Q^2 values for Attitude (0.473) and Intention (0.524), both of which are substantially greater than zero, provide evidence of strong predictive relevance. According to the predictive relevance criterion in PLS-SEM, positive Q^2 values indicate that the model has sufficient predictive accuracy and is capable of generating meaningful predictions for the endogenous constructs. The relatively high Q^2 values observed in this study therefore confirm the robustness of the model's predictive performance.

Overall, these results suggest that the structural model not only provides a theoretically sound explanation of the relationships among the latent variables but also demonstrates strong predictive validity. Consequently, the model can be considered effective in predicting local communities' behavioral intentions based on the psychological, normative, and environmental factors incorporated within the proposed conceptual framework.

Table 8. *Effect Size (F-Square Test)*

	f-square
Attitude -> Intention	1.321
Behavioral Control -> Intention	0.633

Environmental Responsibility -> Attitude	0.093
Personal Norms -> Attitude	0.193
Social Norms -> Attitude	0.247
Behavioral Control x Attitude -> Intention	0.005

Table 8 presents the effect size (f^2) values, which assess the magnitude of the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous constructs within the structural model. The results indicate that Attitude and Perceived Behavioral Control exert particularly strong effects on Intention. Specifically, the path from Attitude to Intention demonstrates a very large effect size ($f^2 = 1.321$), while the path from Perceived Behavioral Control to Intention also exhibits a substantial effect size ($f^2 = 0.633$). These findings suggest that both constructs play dominant and substantive roles in shaping local communities' behavioral intentions toward community-based ecotourism. The magnitude of these effects highlights the importance of attitude and perceived behavioral control as key determinants within the proposed behavioral model.

In contrast, the effects of Personal Norms ($f^2 = 0.193$) and Social Norms ($f^2 = 0.247$) on Attitude fall within the moderate effect size category, indicating that both normative factors make meaningful contributions to the formation of positive attitudes toward community-based ecotourism. Meanwhile, Environmental Responsibility demonstrates a smaller effect size on Attitude ($f^2 = 0.093$), suggesting a relatively modest contribution. Nevertheless, this effect remains meaningful and supports the theoretical importance of environmental responsibility in shaping favorable attitudes toward sustainable tourism practices.

Furthermore, the interaction effect between Perceived Behavioral Control and Attitude on Intention yields a very small effect size ($f^2 = 0.005$). This result provides additional support for the previous findings, indicating that the moderating effect of Perceived Behavioral Control on the relationship between Attitude and Intention is negligible and lacks substantive influence within the proposed model. Consequently, while Perceived Behavioral Control exerts a strong direct effect on behavioral intention, its role as a moderator appears to be limited in the context of community-based ecotourism intentions among local communities.

Table 9. *Fit Model Summary*

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.074	0.081
d_ ULS	2.690	3.221
d_ G	1.084	1.189
Chi-square	1757.244	1842.844
NFI	0.779	0.768

Table 9 presents the results of the model fit assessment using several goodness-of-fit indicators, including the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). The SRMR values for the saturated model (0.074) and the estimated model (0.081) fall within the acceptable threshold, indicating a satisfactory level of fit between the empirical data and the proposed theoretical model. These results suggest that the structural model adequately reproduces the observed relationships among the constructs and demonstrates an acceptable degree of model accuracy.

The NFI value, which is approximately 0.70, further indicates that the proposed model provides a reasonably good representation of the complex behavioral phenomena under investigation. Although NFI values closer to 1.00 generally indicate a stronger model fit, the obtained value suggests that the model captures a substantial proportion of the covariance structure observed in the data and is therefore considered acceptable for exploratory and predictive research contexts.

In addition, the Chi-square statistic and other supporting model fit indices reported in Table 9 collectively provide further evidence of the adequacy of the proposed model. Taken together, these findings indicate that the relationships among the latent constructs are supported by a sound theoretical foundation and are consistent with the observed data. Consequently, the structural model can be considered sufficiently robust and appropriate for hypothesis testing and for drawing substantive conclusions regarding the determinants of community-based ecotourism intentions among local communities.

Hypothesis Testing

In Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the decision to accept or reject a hypothesis is based on the statistical significance of the estimated path coefficients, as indicated by the *t*-statistics and *p*-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure. In SmartPLS, hypothesis testing is conducted by examining both the magnitude of the path coefficients and their associated levels of statistical significance.

The criteria for evaluating the proposed hypotheses are as follows: a hypothesis is considered to be supported when the *t*-statistic exceeds the critical value of 1.96 and/or the *p*-value is equal to or less than 0.05 at the 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Under these conditions, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is supported. Conversely, when the *t*-statistic is less than 1.96 and/or the *p*-value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) cannot be rejected, indicating that the proposed alternative hypothesis (H_a) is not supported.

Accordingly, the significance of each structural relationship in the proposed model was evaluated using these criteria to determine whether the hypothesized effects among the latent constructs were empirically supported.

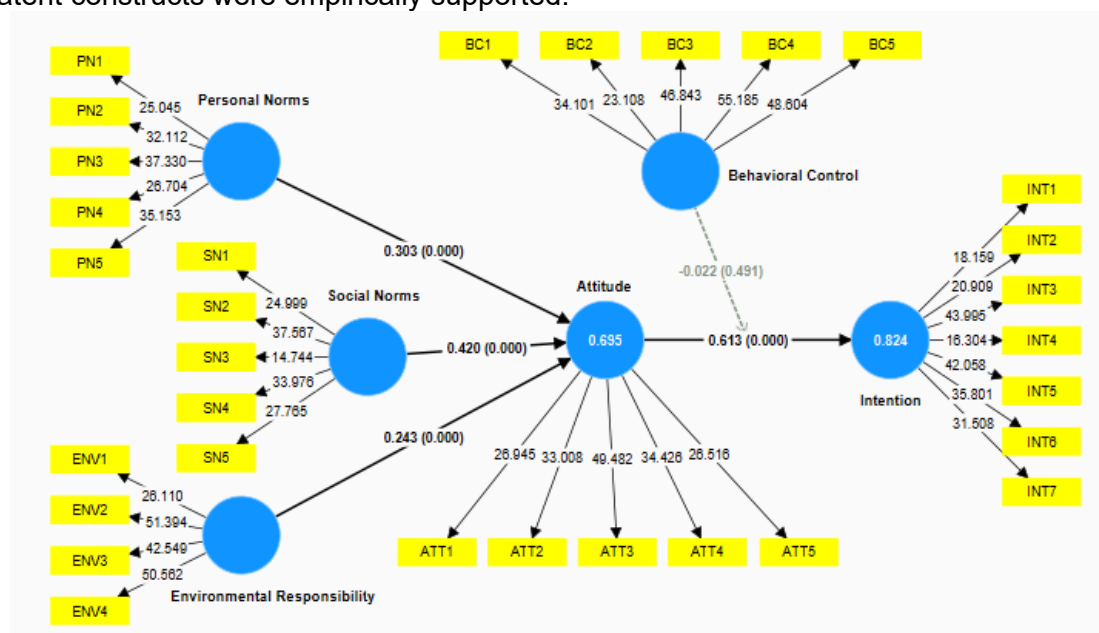


Figure 2: The Structural Model

Table 10 *Hypothesis Testing Direct and Indirect Effect*

Hipotesis	Hubungan Variabel	Path Coeff	T statistics	P values
Direct Effect				
H1	Personal Norms -> Attitude	0.303	3.930	0.000
H2	Social Norms -> Attitude	0.420	6.138	0.000
H3	Environmental Responsibility -> Attitude	0.243	4.461	0.000
H4	Attitude -> Intention	0.613	12.398	0.000
H5	Behavioral Control -> Intention	0.402	9.357	0.000
H6	Behavioral Control x Attitude -> Intention	-0.022	0.688	0.491
Indirect Effect				
H7	Personal Norms -> Attitude -> Intention	0.186	3.378	0.001
H8	Social Norms -> Attitude -> Intention	0.257	4.994	0.000
H9	Environmental Responsibility -> Attitude -> Intention	0.149	4.604	0.000

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses Testing Results: The Effects of Personal Norms, Social Norms, and Environmental Responsibility on Attitude

The results of Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 indicate that personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility have positive and significant effects on attitudes toward community-based eco-travel in small island destinations. The effect of Personal Norms on Attitude was found to be positive and statistically significant. As shown by the path coefficient value of 0.303, a t-statistic of 3.930, and a p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the significance threshold of 0.05, H1 is supported. This finding suggests that tourists' internal moral obligations to avoid environmentally harmful behavior, such as littering in island destinations, contribute significantly to the formation of favorable attitudes toward eco-travel activities.

Similarly, Social Norms were found to exert a positive and significant influence on Attitude, as evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.420, a t-statistic of 6.138, and a p-value of 0.000, thereby supporting H2. This result indicates that social influences from family members, friends, communities, and social media trends concerning the importance of protecting environmentally vulnerable destinations encourage tourists to perceive community-based tourism activities as desirable, responsible, and socially appropriate behaviors.

The findings also demonstrate that Environmental Responsibility has a positive and significant effect on Attitude, thus supporting H3. This relationship is evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.243, a t-statistic of 4.461, and a p-value of 0.000. These results confirm that individuals' perceptions of their responsibility to protect the environment contribute substantially to the development of supportive attitudes toward sustainable tourism initiatives. In other words, awareness of environmental and social responsibility constitutes a valid predictor of pro-environmental attitudes (Nugroho & Purnomo, 2025). When tourists possess a high level of concern regarding environmental issues commonly experienced in island destinations, such as coral bleaching, marine ecosystem degradation, or freshwater scarcity, they tend to develop highly favorable evaluations of tourism programs managed by local communities.

Collectively, these findings suggest that stronger personal moral values regarding environmental conservation, greater social encouragement from significant others, and a heightened sense of environmental responsibility contribute to more favorable attitudes toward sustainable tourism practices. From a theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with extensions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which propose that moral and environmental factors play an important role in shaping individuals' evaluations of a particular behavior (Ajzen, 2020). When tourists perceive environmentally responsible travel as morally appropriate and socially supported, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward such behaviors. Recent studies have similarly demonstrated that personal norms and environmental responsibility are important determinants of pro-environmental attitudes and sustainable tourism behaviors (Han et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Han, 2021).

Within the context of small island destinations, the development of positive attitudes is particularly important because the sustainability of natural resources largely depends on tourists' support for conservation efforts undertaken by local communities. Therefore, community-based initiatives that educate visitors about environmental values and conservation practices can strengthen tourists' normative beliefs and environmental responsibility, ultimately fostering more favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel. Furthermore, in island destinations characterized by strong social cohesion and close community ties, social expectations communicated by community leaders, customary institutions, and local residents may reinforce tourists' perceptions of environmentally responsible behavior as both socially desirable and morally appropriate. In addition, local communities often function as influential agents in shaping tourists' environmental values and behavioral orientations. When tourists observe local residents actively participating in coastal conservation efforts, implementing customary environmental regulations, or maintaining the cleanliness of island environments, they are more likely to internalize these environmental values. Such observations may strengthen both social norms and personal norms, thereby encouraging tourists to transform their sense of environmental responsibility into concrete support for community-based tourism initiatives, such as choosing local guides, purchasing locally produced goods, or avoiding single-use plastics.

Moreover, environmental responsibility emerged as a significant predictor of positive attitudes toward eco-travel. Small island communities are highly dependent on natural resources, including marine ecosystems, freshwater supplies, and coastal landscapes, all of which are vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. Consequently, tourism models that promote environmental conservation and community empowerment are often perceived as aligned with broader sustainability objectives. As tourists become increasingly aware of these environmental vulnerabilities, they are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel, recognizing its potential to support both ecological preservation and local community well-being (Nugroho et al., 2022; Yoon et al., 2021).

Hypotheses Testing Results: The Effects of Attitude and Perceived Behavioral Control on Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that Attitude has a positive and statistically significant effect on Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention. The findings reveal a strong relationship between attitude and behavioral intention, as evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.613, a t-statistic of 12.398, and a p-value of 0.000, thereby supporting H4. Among the direct relationships examined in the model, this path exhibits the largest coefficient, suggesting that attitude serves as the most influential determinant of individuals' intentions to engage in environmentally responsible tourism behavior.

This finding implies that tourists who perceive community-based eco-travel as beneficial, enjoyable, and socially meaningful are more likely to develop a strong psychological commitment to choosing and supporting such tourism activities. Positive evaluations of eco-travel not only enhance tourists' willingness to visit community-based destinations but also increase their likelihood of allocating time, financial resources, and personal effort to participate in sustainable tourism experiences. The more favorable tourists' attitudes toward environmental conservation and community well-being, the stronger their intentions to engage in eco-travel activities within small island destinations.

Furthermore, tourists who hold positive perceptions of community-based tourism are more likely to demonstrate a willingness to visit, support, and recommend such destinations to others. These favorable attitudes emerge because tourists perceive community-based eco-travel as providing not only recreational benefits but also meaningful contributions to environmental conservation and local community development. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that positive attitudes toward sustainability significantly enhance tourists' intentions to select environmentally responsible and community-oriented tourism destinations (Liu et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2024).

The findings are also consistent with the fundamental propositions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitude is a direct antecedent of behavioral intention. Individuals who evaluate a behavior positively are more likely to develop stronger intentions to perform that behavior. Accordingly, favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel constitute a critical psychological mechanism through which environmental values and sustainability concerns are translated into behavioral intentions.

With regard to Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), the results provide evidence of a positive and significant direct effect on Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention. The analysis yielded a path coefficient of 0.402, a t-statistic of 9.357, and a p-value of 0.000, thereby supporting H5. These findings indicate that individuals' perceptions regarding the availability of resources, opportunities, time, and capabilities significantly enhance their intentions to participate in environmentally responsible tourism activities. In other words, the greater the perceived ability to engage in eco-travel, the stronger the intention to do so.

However, the moderating effect of Perceived Behavioral Control on the relationship between Attitude and Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention was not supported. The interaction term produced a path coefficient of -0.022, a t-statistic of 0.688, and a p-value of 0.491, which exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. Therefore, H6 is not supported. This finding suggests that perceived behavioral control does not significantly strengthen or weaken the relationship between attitude and intention. Instead, attitude and perceived behavioral control appear to exert independent effects on behavioral intention, rather than interacting in a meaningful manner (Han & Kim, 2024; Ebison et al., 2023).

The non-significant moderating effect provides important theoretical insights. Although individuals may possess highly favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel, the strength of the relationship between attitude and intention does not vary according to differences in perceived behavioral control. In other words, positive attitudes contribute to behavioral intentions regardless of whether individuals perceive relatively high or low levels of control over their actions. This finding suggests that attitude and perceived

behavioral control operate as separate psychological mechanisms influencing intention within the context of community-based eco-travel.

From the perspective of small island destinations, the direct effect of perceived behavioral control remains particularly relevant. Island communities frequently face structural constraints, including limited infrastructure, restricted access to financial capital, inadequate transportation networks, shortages of tourism-related skills, and limited institutional support. These constraints may influence individuals' perceptions of their ability to participate in sustainable tourism initiatives. Consequently, residents who perceive that they possess sufficient resources, capabilities, and opportunities are more likely to express stronger intentions to engage in community-based eco-tourism activities.

Nevertheless, the absence of a significant moderating effect suggests that perceived behavioral control does not alter the influence of attitude on intention. This finding implies that even under varying levels of perceived control, favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel continue to exert a relatively stable influence on behavioral intentions. Therefore, while enhancing individuals' perceived control remains important for increasing participation intentions directly, it does not appear to amplify the impact of positive attitudes on those intentions.

Overall, the findings suggest that in the context of small island tourism destinations, Attitude and Perceived Behavioral Control function as independent predictors of community-based eco-travel intention. While both variables significantly contribute to explaining behavioral intentions, the interaction between them is not statistically significant. These results indicate that strengthening positive attitudes toward sustainable tourism and improving individuals' perceptions of their ability to participate are both important strategies for promoting community-based eco-travel; however, the influence of attitude on intention does not depend on the level of perceived behavioral control.

Mediation Analysis: The Role of Attitude

The mediation analysis demonstrates that Attitude significantly mediates the effects of Personal Norms, Social Norms, and Environmental Responsibility on Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention. These findings suggest that personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility do not influence behavioral intentions solely through direct pathways; rather, they also exert indirect effects through the formation of more favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel.

The results of Hypothesis 7 (H7) confirm the significant mediating role of attitude in the relationship between Personal Norms and Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention. The indirect effect is supported by a path coefficient of 0.186, a t-statistic of 3.378, and a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is below the 0.05 significance threshold, H7 is supported. This finding indicates that individuals' internal moral obligations and ethical principles do not automatically translate into behavioral intentions. Instead, these moral values first shape favorable attitudes toward environmentally responsible tourism practices, which subsequently foster stronger intentions to engage in such behaviors. In other words, when individuals perceive environmental conservation as a moral responsibility toward future generations, these beliefs contribute to the development of positive attitudes toward sustainable tourism, which ultimately crystallize into genuine intentions to participate in environmentally responsible activities.

The results for Hypothesis 8 (H8) further highlight the influential role of social expectations in shaping behavioral intentions. The analysis reveals that attitude significantly mediates the relationship between Social Norms and Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention, as evidenced by a path coefficient of 0.257, a t-statistic of 4.994, and a p-value of 0.000. Among the indirect effects examined, this pathway exhibits the largest coefficient, indicating that social norms constitute the strongest antecedent in the formation of favorable attitudes that subsequently influence behavioral intentions. This finding suggests that positive social pressures, such as expectations from family members, peers, community groups, and social networks to engage in environmentally responsible behavior, are internalized by individuals and transformed into supportive attitudes. These positive attitudes then serve as powerful drivers of intentions to participate in sustainable tourism activities and adopt environmentally responsible behaviors.

Similarly, the results of Hypothesis 9 (H9) demonstrate that Environmental Responsibility exerts a significant indirect effect on Community-Based Eco-Travel Intention through the mediating role of attitude. The indirect relationship is supported by a path coefficient of 0.149, a t-statistic of 4.604, and a p-value of 0.000. Although this indirect effect is comparatively smaller than those associated with personal norms and social norms, its high level of statistical significance confirms the important role of environmental responsibility in shaping sustainable tourism intentions. These findings suggest that individuals who perceive a strong responsibility for environmental protection are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward conservation-oriented tourism initiatives. Such positive attitudes subsequently encourage stronger intentions to support, participate in, and contribute to environmentally sustainable tourism practices.

Collectively, these findings indicate that when tourists possess a strong moral commitment to environmental protection, receive social support for sustainable behavior, and perceive themselves as responsible for environmental conservation, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward community-based eco-travel. These favorable attitudes subsequently enhance their intentions to participate in sustainable tourism activities. The results therefore reinforce the notion that attitude functions as a critical psychological mechanism that bridges environmental values and behavioral decision-making. Recent studies in the sustainable tourism literature similarly report that attitude plays a significant mediating role between moral and environmental factors and sustainable tourism intentions (Xu et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2024).

Within the context of small island destinations, local communities play a strategic role in fostering positive attitudes among tourists through environmental interpretation, conservation education, and the provision of authentic tourism experiences. Active community participation enhances tourists' perceptions that tourism activities generate tangible benefits for both environmental conservation and local livelihoods. Community members therefore contribute significantly to strengthening the mediating role of attitude by creating meaningful experiential tourism opportunities. Activities such as cultural workshops, mangrove restoration programs, marine conservation initiatives, and traditional ecological education enable tourists to develop stronger emotional and cognitive connections with sustainability values. Consequently, tourists perceive their decision to visit and support community-based tourism destinations as both meaningful and socially responsible.

The findings further reveal an important psychological mechanism: social pressures and environmental responsibility do not automatically generate behavioral intentions without first undergoing a process of cognitive evaluation. In the context of small island

destinations, individuals do not simply respond mechanically to social expectations or moral obligations. Rather, external influences, such as social norms, and internal motivations, such as personal norms and environmental responsibility, must first be transformed into favorable evaluations of sustainable tourism practices. Only after individuals become convinced that community-based eco-travel is beneficial for environmental conservation, community welfare, and destination sustainability do strong behavioral intentions emerge. In this regard, attitude functions as a “psychological bridge” that converts normative values and environmental concerns into concrete intentions to act (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that the formation of community-based eco-travel intentions in small island destinations is influenced by a combination of moral, social, environmental, and attitudinal factors. Consequently, sustainable tourism development strategies should position local communities as central actors in several key areas, including promoting environmental conservation values among tourists, fostering social norms that support sustainable tourism practices, increasing awareness of environmental responsibility through educational initiatives, and creating tourism experiences that cultivate positive attitudes toward sustainability. Furthermore, improving accessibility, service quality, and tourism facilities can enhance individuals’ willingness and ability to participate in community-based tourism activities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that local community participation contributes not only to the environmental sustainability of island destinations but also to the formation of tourists’ intentions to support and engage in community-based tourism. The results also provide important practical implications for destination managers and policymakers. Specifically, strengthening community participation cannot rely solely on awareness campaigns or moral appeals aimed at promoting environmental responsibility. Policymakers and tourism stakeholders must also enhance individuals’ perceived behavioral control through capacity-building programs, environmentally friendly infrastructure development, entrepreneurship training, and supportive institutional frameworks. By creating enabling conditions that facilitate participation, the positive attitudes fostered through social norms and environmental responsibility can be more effectively translated into meaningful and sustained engagement in community-based eco-tourism initiatives

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide several important theoretical and empirical conclusions. First, personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility were found to be significant antecedents of tourists’ positive attitudes toward community-based eco-travel in small island destinations. These factors function as key psychological drivers that encourage tourists to perceive community-based ecotourism as a desirable, responsible, and meaningful form of travel. The results confirm that moral obligations, social influences, and environmental concerns play a critical role in shaping favorable evaluations of sustainable tourism practices.

Second, the study highlights the central mediating role of attitude in the formation of community-based eco-travel intentions. Attitude serves as a crucial psychological mechanism through which personal norms, social norms, and environmental responsibility are translated into behavioral intentions. The findings indicate that moral values and environmental responsibility do not automatically lead to intentions to participate in sustainable tourism activities. Rather, these factors must first foster positive

evaluations and favorable attitudes toward community-based eco-travel before intentions can be effectively developed.

Third, the mediation analysis confirms that attitude significantly mediates the relationships between personal norms, social norms, environmental responsibility, and community-based eco-travel intention. This finding reinforces the theoretical proposition that attitude functions as an essential cognitive and affective pathway through which normative and environmental factors influence behavioral intentions. Consequently, the development of positive attitudes represents a critical prerequisite for encouraging tourists' participation in sustainable tourism activities.

In the context of small island tourism destinations, the findings further demonstrate that local community participation constitutes a central element in strengthening social norms, enhancing environmental responsibility, fostering positive tourist attitudes, and creating sustainable tourism experiences. Local communities function not merely as providers of tourism services but also as environmental educators, custodians of natural resources, and key drivers of destination sustainability. In essence, the active involvement of local communities represents the epicenter of the entire community-based eco-travel ecosystem.

Local residents play a dual role as providers of normative guidance through community-based conservation practices and as facilitators of behavioral support through the provision of environmentally responsible tourism facilities and services. When communities actively engage in natural resource conservation, tourism management, environmental education, and the delivery of authentic tourism experiences, tourists are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward the destination. These positive attitudes subsequently strengthen tourists' intentions to visit, participate in conservation activities, and support the long-term sustainability of the destination.

Therefore, the development of tourism in small island destinations should adopt a community-based tourism approach that positions local communities as primary stakeholders and active participants rather than merely passive beneficiaries of tourism development. Empowering local communities to take leadership roles in tourism planning, environmental conservation, and destination management can contribute significantly to enhancing sustainability outcomes while simultaneously strengthening tourists' support for environmentally responsible and community-oriented tourism initiatives.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

1st Author

Sri Ismulyaty is an Associate Professor in the Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia, and currently serves as the Director of Universitas Terbuka Bandar Lampung. She completed her undergraduate education at Institut Manajemen Koperasi Indonesia in 1987 and earned her Magister Sains degree from Universitas Gadjah Mada in 1999. Her academic and research interests encompass operations management, quality management, strategic management, service quality, digital transformation, MSME development, creative economy, community-based tourism, and rural economic empowerment. Her scholarly work has addressed digital customer experience, banking service quality, customer participation, MSME digitalization, tourism development, and community-based economic empowerment. She has contributed to academic journals, books, research reports, and other scholarly publications in management and business studies.

Email: srismu@ecampus.ut.ac.id

2nd Author

Ginta Ginting is a Professor of Management in the Management Study Program at Universitas Terbuka. She earned her Doctoral degree from Universitas Padjadjaran in 2014 and her Bachelor of Economics degree from Universitas Brawijaya in 1984. Her academic and research interests include strategic marketing, marketing management, digital marketing, consumer behavior, strategic entrepreneurship, green economy transformation, entrepreneurship education, MSME development, sustainable business, and community-based economic empowerment. She has been involved in research and community engagement activities related to green economic transformation, entrepreneurship and innovation learning, zero waste management, digital marketing development, ecotourism, product development strategy, and BUMDes service management. Email: ginta@ecampus.ut.ac.id

3rd Author

Andriyansah is an Associate Professor in the Management Study Program at Universitas Terbuka. He earned his Doctor of Economics degree from Universitas Diponegoro in 2018, after completing his Master of Management degree at Universitas Islam Indonesia in 2004 and his undergraduate degree in Economics at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Widyia Wiwaha in 2002. His academic and professional interests include strategic marketing, marketing management, research methodology, digital entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, SME competitiveness, green competitiveness, service value, customer trust, customer loyalty, and digital payment development. He has been involved in research on sustainable tourism modelling, SME product value and sustainable green competitiveness, hotel marketing performance, customer trust and loyalty, and ergo-iconic service value. He has also contributed to community engagement programs related to digital payment assistance, entrepreneurship mentoring, digital marketing development, tourism English public speaking, village digital governance, literacy and numeracy improvement, and community-based entrepreneurship empowerment. Email: andri@ecampus.ut.ac.id