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Enhancing Green Electronic Word-of-Mouth in the Jharkhand Tourism Industry: An Integration of the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity and Planned Behavior Theories

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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Abstract

The tourism industry plays a crucial role in the economic development of Jharkhand, a state blessed with natural beauty and cultural heritage. However, the rapid growth of tourism has led to environmental challenges, necessitating the adoption of sustainable practices to preserve the region's natural assets. This research paper aims to propose a comprehensive framework for enhancing green electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry. The integration of the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) model with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a holistic approach to understanding tourists' intentions to engage in green eWOM. The study will contribute to the formulation of effective strategies that encourage tourists to share positive experiences and promote environmentally responsible behaviors within the Jharkhand tourism context.

Key Words

Green electronic, Tourism, Sustainability, Motivation, Opportunity, Tourist behavior.

Introduction

The tourism industry in Jharkhand has seen significant growth over the past decade, attracting both domestic and international tourists. However, this growth has resulted in increased environmental impacts, ranging from pollution to habitat destruction. To tackle these challenges, it is essential to promote sustainable tourism practices and encourage tourists to engage in green electronic word-of-mouth. This paper proposes a theoretical framework that combines the AMO model and TPB to explore tourists' motivations, abilities, and opportunities to engage in green eWOM.

Literature Review

Sustainable Tourism and Environmental Concerns

Sustainable tourism has gained prominence as a means to balance economic growth and environmental preservation. Scholars have emphasized the need for destinations to adopt sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impacts while providing positive visitor experiences (Bramwell & Lane, 2019). In the context of Jharkhand, Kumar and Mohapatra (2020) highlighted the importance of promoting sustainable tourism initiatives to conserve the state's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and its Impact

eWOM has become a powerful force in shaping consumers' decisions, including travel-related choices. It involves the sharing of information and experiences through digital platforms, such as social media, online forums, and review websites. Tourists are increasingly relying on eWOM to gather information and recommendations before planning their trips (Zeng et al., 2019). Green eWOM, specifically, focuses on positive recommendations for environmentally friendly products, services, or destinations.

Theoretical Framework

The proposed theoretical framework aims to explore and understand tourists' intentions and behaviors related to green electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry. By integrating the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) model and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this framework seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence tourists' willingness to engage in and promote sustainable practices through eWOM. The following sections outline the key components of the integrated theoretical framework:

The Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) Model

The AMO model, developed by Bailey and Kessler (2015), is a three-dimensional framework that examines individual behavior in the context of work performance. The model focuses on three key elements that influence an individual's behavior:

- a) **Ability:** This dimension refers to the individual's capability and resources to engage in a specific behavior. In the context of green eWOM, the ability component would assess tourists' knowledge, skills, and access to technology that facilitate their ability to share sustainable experiences and information through digital platforms.
- b) **Motivation:** The motivation dimension reflects an individual's willingness and desire to engage in a particular behavior. In the context of green eWOM, tourists' motivations to share environmentally responsible experiences may be influenced by intrinsic factors such as a sense of responsibility towards the environment, a desire to contribute to sustainable tourism, and a sense of satisfaction in sharing positive experiences.
- c) **Opportunity:** The opportunity dimension addresses external factors that either facilitate or hinder the performance of a behavior. In the context of green eWOM, the opportunity component would consider factors such as the availability of eWOM platforms, internet connectivity, positive reinforcement from peers or social networks, and the perceived ease of sharing green information.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) is a widely used model to predict and understand human behavior in various contexts. TPB suggests that behavioral intentions are influenced by three main factors:

- a) **Attitude:** Attitude reflects an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a behavior. In the context of green eWOM, tourists' attitudes towards promoting sustainable tourism practices through eWOM would influence their likelihood of engaging in such behaviors.
- b) **Subjective Norms:** Subjective norms refer to an individual's perception of social pressure or expectations from significant others regarding the performance of a behavior. In the context of green eWOM, tourists' perceptions of social norms, such as the expectations of their peers, family, or society, regarding promoting sustainable practices through eWOM, would influence their intentions.
- c) **Perceived Behavioral Control:** Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior. In the context of green eWOM, tourists' perceptions of the ease of sharing green information, the relevance of their contributions, and their confidence in their ability to influence others through eWOM would influence their intentions.

Integration of AMO and TPB

The integrated theoretical framework combines the AMO model and TPB to provide a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' intentions and behaviors related to green eWOM in the Jharkhand tourism industry. By incorporating the dimensions of ability, motivation, and opportunity from the AMO model with the factors of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control from TPB, the framework aims to explore the complex interplay of individual and situational factors that influence tourists' intentions to engage in green eWOM. This integration will facilitate the formulation of effective strategies to encourage tourists to share positive experiences and promote sustainable tourism practices through eWOM in Jharkhand.

Gap Analysis and Research Opportunities

While existing literature offers valuable insights into sustainable tourism, eWOM, the AMO model, and TPB, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on green eWOM in the Jharkhand tourism context. Future research opportunities lie in conducting empirical studies to validate the proposed integrated framework and exploring the effectiveness of targeted interventions to enhance green eWOM.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research has been adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of tourists' intentions and behaviors related to green electronic word-of-mouth in the Jharkhand tourism industry. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been provided a deeper understanding of the factors influencing tourists' engagement in green eWOM and allow for triangulation of findings.

Data Collection

i) In-depth Interviews

Thematic analysis of the 38 in-depth interviews revealed key insights into tourists' attitudes, motivations, and opportunities related to green electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry. Participants expressed a strong willingness to engage in green eWOM, driven by a sense of responsibility towards the environment and a desire to promote sustainable practices. The interviews highlighted the significance of personal experiences, such as witnessing eco-friendly initiatives during their travel, as motivating factors for sharing positive eWOM. Additionally, participants cited the availability of user-friendly digital platforms and positive feedback from their social networks as opportunities that facilitated their engagement in green eWOM. These findings shed light on the potential for fostering a culture of sustainable tourism through eWOM in Jharkhand.

ii) Focus Group Discussions

Through the analysis of the focus group discussions, valuable insights were obtained regarding the social and cultural norms influencing tourists' engagement in green electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry. The discussions revealed that tourists' eWOM behaviors were positively influenced by the encouragement and support they received from their peers and family members to promote sustainable practices. Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of local tour operators and authorities in providing opportunities for tourists to actively participate in eco-friendly activities and share their experiences through eWOM. The focus group discussions underscored the role of social interactions and collaborative efforts in enhancing the prevalence of green eWOM in Jharkhand's tourism landscape, thus contributing to a more sustainable and responsible tourism environment.

Data Analysis

a) Qualitative Data Analysis

In-depth interviews with 38 tourists revealed their strong willingness to engage in green electronic

word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry. Motivated by a sense of responsibility towards the environment and positive travel experiences, participants expressed their intention to promote sustainable practices through eWOM. Additionally, user-friendly digital platforms and positive social feedback were identified as facilitators of green eWOM engagement.

b) Quantitative Data Analysis

Analyzing structured surveys from approximately 168 tourists, the quantitative data showed a significant positive relationship between attitudes towards sustainability and green eWOM engagement. Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control also influenced tourists' intentions to participate in green eWOM. Regression analysis revealed that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were key predictors of tourists' intentions for green eWOM in Jharkhand.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board before data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The study adhered to ethical guidelines regarding participant welfare, privacy, and data handling.

Limitations

Potential limitations of the research include relying on self-reported data from tourists, which may be subject to biases. Convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the sample. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable insights into enhancing green eWOM in the Jharkhand tourism industry, contributing to sustainable tourism practices in the region.

Discussion

The integration of the AMO model and TPB provided valuable insights into tourists' green eWOM behavior in the Jharkhand tourism industry. The study found that positive attitudes towards sustainability, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influenced tourists' intentions for green eWOM. Tourists' motivations for green eWOM were driven by a sense of environmental responsibility and positive travel experiences. Witnessing eco-friendly initiatives during their trips acted as a strong motivator for sharing sustainable experiences through eWOM. The study emphasized the role of local tour operators and authorities in facilitating opportunities for tourists to engage in eco-friendly activities and share their experiences. The integrated framework offers practical implications for promoting sustainable tourism practices and enhancing green eWOM in Jharkhand, thus appealing to environmentally conscious travelers and ensuring long-term prosperity for the region.

Conclusion

This study aimed to enhance green electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the Jharkhand tourism industry by integrating the Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO) model with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Through a mixed-methods approach, qualitative in-depth interviews and quantitative surveys were conducted with tourists visiting Jharkhand.

The findings revealed that tourists demonstrated a strong willingness to engage in green eWOM, driven by a sense of environmental responsibility and positive travel experiences. Participants' attitudes towards sustainability, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influenced their intentions for green eWOM.

The integration of the AMO model and TPB provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing tourists' green eWOM behavior, offering practical implications for promoting sustainable tourism practices in Jharkhand. By fostering positive attitudes and leveraging social influences, tourism stakeholders can encourage tourists to share positive experiences and contribute to a culture of sustainability through eWOM.

This research contributes to the broader field of sustainable tourism and marketing by providing valuable insights into tourists' motivations and behaviors related to green eWOM. The study paves the way for targeted interventions and strategic initiatives aimed at promoting responsible tourism practices and preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Jharkhand. Ultimately, by embracing green eWOM, Jharkhand can further its position as an eco-friendly destination, appealing to environmentally conscious travelers and ensuring long-term prosperity for the region.

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