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COMPARATIVE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NORMS ON TOURIST BEHAVIOUR IN WILDLIFE

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ABSTRACT

Social norms can be effective factors in promoting environmental behavior. To date, the little research that does exist recommends that there is a discrepancy between what people approve (injunctive norms) of and what people actually do (descriptive norms). Two kinds of norms were compared using PLS (Partial least Square) tool in this survey. The results showed two types of norms were independent and differentiated.

Keywords: Descriptive norms, Subjective norms, PLS-SEM, Focus Theory of Normative Conduct

INTRODUCTION

Norms have a considerable influence on human action; nevertheless, the impact can only properly recognize when researchers separate two types of norms (Injunctive norms and descriptive norms) that at times act antagonistically in a situation (Cialdini et al., 1990). Despite a history of long and extensive use within the discipline, there is no present agreement within social psychology about the explanatory and predictive value of social norms. On the one hand are those who view the concept as vague and overly general, often contradictory, and ill-suited to empirical test (Weir, 2012).

Social norms are the common and accepted behaviours for specific situations (Göckeritz et al., 2010). In the focus theory of normative conduct, Cialdini et. al (1990) differentiated between two categories of normative beliefs. Descriptive normative beliefs, which refer to what an individual thinks others do in certain situations, and injunctive normative beliefs, which describe what an individual thinks others approve or disapprove of. Put more simply, descriptive normative beliefs can understood as norms of is and injunctive normative/subjective norms beliefs as norms of ought (Cialdini et al., 1990).

To date, the little research that does exist suggests that information that there is a discrepancy between what people approve of and what people actually do (Smith et al., 2012, Weir, 2012). This paper highlights the importance of distinguishing between injunctive and descriptive norms, and of considering the way in which these norms interact to influence behaviour. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), specifically Smart PLS (Partial Least Square) was used to analysis the data. The results reveal that from the path coefficient view, descriptive norm had the strongest effect on the intention towards disturbance behaviour while subjective norm had the strongest variance.

Hypotheses

H1. Subjective norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers.
H2. Descriptive norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers.

BODY OF RESEARCH

Subjective Norms/Injunctive norms

An individual's personal estimation of the social pressure on performing or not performing certain behaviour is referred to as subjective norms. Two interacting

components are assumed for subjective norms: normative beliefs which refer to beliefs about how the important others would like the individual to behave, and outcome evaluations which are the positive and negative judgments on the beliefs (Jillian J. et al., 2004). It has been argued that the concepts of subjective norms proposed within the TPB might refer more to the perspective aspects of social influence, and might not completely catch the processes of norm sharing within group (Fornara et al., 2011).
According to social psychology, the individual's behaviour is affected by the subjective norms, i.e. the expectations of other people who are important (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The common understanding of acceptable, obligatory, or forbidden actions is generally termed as social norms (Ostrom et al., 1999). These norms include general behavioural expectations of the society and standards developed from the observation of others' behaviour (Cialdini et al., 1990).

The enforcement of social norms is done by informal institutions, which are independent from judicial laws of the government (North, 2012, North, 1994). People who break social norms will face shame and rejection from the society (Posner & Rasmusen, 1999). According to Fortes (1966), some particularly unacceptable behaviours which may cause community as well as religious entities' displeasure can be categorized as taboo (St John et al., 2011).

Traditional natural resource management systems existing in non-industrial countries can be governed with the help of social norms and taboos (Berkes et al., 2000). Managing natural resources traditionally has been of importance for centuries around the world. For instance, since the 16th century, Indonesians have used a set of traditional rules known as sasi to control fishing and forest product harvesting patterns in Maluku (Harkes & Novaczek, 2002). Similarly, Norwegian Sami reindeer herders have controlled stocking density on communal lands through traditional institutions (St John et al., 2011).

It has recently shown that social norms are significant in the prediction of re-enrolment to an ecosystem services payment scheme. In a study of investigating the significance of social norms and payment for conservation using stated-choice

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methods and it is found that social norms were the most important with intermediate conservation payment, while they were the least important with the lowest and highest conservation payment levels, i.e. none or all participants would re-enrol. respondents made decisions based on what other farmers did, when they were offered intermediate conservation payment(Chen et al., 2009).

Colding and Folke (2001) have identified six types of taboo (resource and habitat taboos) held by traditional societies which impact on conservation. According to these authors, taboos developed for reasons other than managing natural resources can greatly influence conservation. This type of taboos have played a role in the conservation of endangered species in Madagascar, such as lemurs (Indiridae family), which were believed to represent the ancestors and the carnivorous fosa, thought to feed from the ancestors' bodies buried in the forest (Jones et al., 2008). The taboos mentioned above originate from respect for ancestors and are not related to natural resources management, yet they contribute greatly to the conservation of certain species. However, some taboos may negatively influence conservation, such as spotted eagle owls (Kideghesho, 2008) which are thought of negatively in Madagascar and Tanzania. These negative beliefs can lead to the persecution of these species.

Conservation interventions can lead to the erosion of the taboos or social norms and their enforcing institutions (Jones et al., 2008, Anoliefo et al., 2003). For instance, Jones et al. (2008) showed that the traditional management of Pandans (a plant used for weaving) broke down as a result of designating Ranomafana national Park in Madagascar. The reason for this breakdown was that as the resource became park property, the prevailing norm to keep the tip undamaged while harvesting was greatly ignored. Modernization and religions introduce recently are the other contributing factors that erode local social norms which protected sacred groves and streams in Nigeria and Tanzania (Anoliefo et al., 2003, Kideghesho, 2008). In case of low enforcement capacity, there is a need for conservationists to take care in introducing new rules which might adversely lead to the collapse of social norms which contribute to a level of effective management (Jones et al., 2008).

Descriptive Norms

A person's beliefs about other individuals' behaviour are measured by descriptive norms. These norms are the things that are done, rather than the things that should be done which are the case with subjective norms (Forward, 2009; Agardh et al., 2011). Rivis and Sheeran (2003) conducted a meta-analytic study to examine the effect of descriptive norms in the TPB. They argue that subjective norms are responsible for the influences of injunctive norms, rather than the descriptive norms on people. They found that the inclusion of descriptive norms may be useful in the TPB (Armitage & Christian, 2003). Other studies have shown how descriptive norms represent an additional predictor of behavioural intentions within the TPB, independently of original TBP components (Fornara et al., 2011).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2005), the theory of planned behaviour confirms the impact of descriptive norms as the recent versions of this model has combined subjective norms with descriptive norms. Nevertheless, some studies have not supported the combination and showed a distinction between these two variables and that, sometimes, descriptive norms can predict intention better than subjective norms (Rivis et al., 2009).

Rivis et al. (2009) showed in a meta-analytic study of 14 studies that descriptive norms were overall effective and raised the variance by 5 percent over the other variables included in the model. However, they reported some contradictory findings in their study as well. For example, descriptive norms successfully predicted intention of behaviours such as diet, while they could not predict intentions to perform behaviours such as using a condom. Different reasons have been provided for the conflicting results. One reason is related to the behaviour itself and that it becomes more important in examining the behaviours which are somehow risky. It is argued that risky behaviours are more salient and individuals are more affected by others in these situations (Forward, 2009).

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Focus Theory of Normative Conduct

Activation of social norms can be a powerful tool in promoting environmentally beneficial behaviour (Cialdini, 2003, Weir, 2012). The focus theory of normative conduct emphasizes the importance of social normative influence in affecting behaviour. A major component of the theory is the distinction between Injunctive and Descriptive social norms. Injunctive norms specify what is typically approved of and therefore what out to be done. Descriptive norms refer to what people actually do and consequently provide information as to what is typical or normal behaviour (Kallgren et al., 2000). Both types of norms influence behaviour, but do not do so in all situation.

Most studies focus on only one norm and do not compare the influence of different norm types on the same behaviour. This constitutes a large gap with regard to the applicability of the focus theory normative conduct. There has been little exploration into the relative influence of the various types of norm on pro-environmental behaviour. There is a need for studies that examine the differential influences, and thus saliency, of norms in particular applied setting. Distinguishing between injunctive and descriptive norms is crucial because both types can exist simultaneously in a setting and can have either congruent or contradictory implication for behaviour (Weir, 2012). In this study, it is explored the role of norms (descriptive and injunctive norms) in intentions towards disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers.

METHODOLOGY

The target population is 421 Malaysian birdwatchers. Data was collected from March 2013- August 2014. To answer research questions of the paper the quantitative survey method is employed to identify what extent of dependent variable (intention) is explained by the independent variables as (a) subjective norm (b) descriptive norm. Structural Equation modeling (SEM), Smart PlS (Partial Least Square) version 2

(retrieved from http://www.smartpls.com), was used to analyse the data. The importance performance matrix analysis was done to improve interpreting of implication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypotheses

Subjective Norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers.

Subjective norms had a positive, significant effect on intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds (β=0.219, p=0.001). Subjective norms for explaining intention had an f^2 effect size of 0.081, which is considered a medium effect size.

There was a controversy among studies on the contribution effect of subjective norms on intention (Forward, 2009). The result of this study was consistent with other studies based on the TPB, which showed a significant relationship between subjective norms and intention (Ajzen and Sheikh, 2013; Yaghoubi, 2010; Smith et al., 2012). According to Terry and colleague (1999) the effectiveness of subjective norms was dependent on whether the individual identified themselves with the target group, which was consistent with our results. Consistent with the results of the current study, subjective norms were important in predicting pro-conservation behaviours such as farm forestry, farm conservation and obeying boating speed limits in manatee areas (Zubair & Garforth, 2006). Artimage and Conner (2003) suggested that the weak influence of subjective norms in studies using TPB was primarily a legacy of poor methodology and measurement (Marzano & Dandy, 2012).

Descriptive norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers.

Descriptive norms had a positive, significant effect on intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds (β = 0.222, p = 0.001). Descriptive norms for explaining

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intentions towards disturbance behaviours on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers had an f^2 effect size of 0.078, which was considered a medium effect size.

The finding of the current research was consistent with previous studies. There was a significant relationship between descriptive norms and intention. Further, other studies also showed that descriptive norms should be included in the model (Rivis & Sheeran, 2003; Forward, 2009; Nolan et al., 2008; Fornara et al., 2011). Descriptive norms were considered an additional norm for the prediction of intention towards disturbance behaviour of birdwatchers. A large number of studies showed a strong correlation between descriptive norms and behavioural intention as well as actual behaviour (Göckeritz et al., 2010; Fornara et al., 2011). Nolan et al. (2008) found that descriptive, normative beliefs were the strongest predictors of an individual's decision to conserve energy in their home (r=0.45). On the other hand, in this paper, after subjective norms, descriptive norms were the strongest predictors and had the strongest effect on intention towards disturbance behaviour on birds. These findings were illustrative of a large body of research that showed normative beliefs were strongly predictive of both behavioural intentions and behaviour (Göckeritz et al., 2010).

COLLINEARITY ASSESSMENT

For collinearity assessment of each predictor construct's Variance Inflammation Factor (VIF) should be lower than 5. Otherwise, one should consider eliminating constructs, merging predictors into a single construct, or creating higher-order constructs to treat collinearity problems (Hair Jr et al., 2013). The VIF (Variance Inflammation Factor) calculated for these two constructs (Subjective Norms and Descriptive Norms) and results also confirmed that there was no serious multi collinearity. In other word, these two constructs were independent, see table1.

Table 1 Collinearity assessment for Subjective Norm and Descriptive Norm intentions toward disturbance behaviour on birds

Construct	Tolerance	VIF
Descriptive norms	0.591	1.691
Subjective norms	0.634	1.577

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Firstly, the hypotheses (H1and H2) were accepted. H1: Subjective Norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers because the relationship between Subjective norms and Intention is significant. H2: Descriptive norm predicts intention toward disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian birdwatchers. The relationship between Subjective Norms and Intention was significant. The relationship between Descriptive norms and Intention also was significant.

Secondly, from the path coefficient view, the effect of predictors on intention was as following: Descriptive norms (β = 0.222)>subjective norms (β = 0.219).
Thirdly, from the F^2 effect size (variance) view, Subjective norms (r = 0.081)> Descriptive norms (r = 0.078)> Then, the results from path coefficient section are slightly different from the results for F^2 effect size. As we compare these two values, it could be seen Descriptive norms had the strongest effect on the intention in the model of study from the path coefficient view while subjective norms had the strongest variance in the model of study.

Next, the Importance Performance Matrix Analysis of intention towards disturbance behaviour on birds revealed that the subjective norm was primary importance for establishing intentions. In addition, its performance was above average. Descriptive norms had almost low Performance and Importance comparing subjective norms.

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Finally, the VIF values showed these two constructs (Subjective Norm and Descriptive Norm) were independent.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

From theoretical implication, to date, the little research that does exist suggests that, there is a discrepancy between what people approve of and what people actually do (Smith et al., 2012).

This current results supported the meta-analysis study by Rivis and Sheeran (2003), the other studies by Artimage and Christan (2003) and Fornara, e.t al. (2011) that descriptive norms represented an additional variance within the TPB. From previous studies, different reasons have been provided for the conflicting results for including descriptive norm as an additional predictor to theory of planned behaviour (Forward, 2009). This research revealed descriptive norms had also additional variance on intention towards disturbance behaviour of Malaysian birdwatchers on birds.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

From a management perspective, the results of this study showed that manager should focus on norms, including subjective and descriptive norms, as effective predictors of intentions towards disturbance behaviour on birds to decrease these behaviours.

The Importance Performance Matrix Analysis results of intentions towards disturbance behaviours (such as feeding birds, bird watching with noisy group, spot light using, etc.) of Malaysian birdwatchers on birds showed, subjective norm was of primary importance with performance above average for defined negative activities. Descriptive norm, on the other hand, had less relevance because of low importance as

well as low performance comparing to subjective norms. Our research highlights the importance of distinguishing between injunctive and descriptive norms and of considering the way in which these norms interact to influence behaviour.
Thus, firstly managers should focus on subjective norms (opinion of others), then on descriptive norms (acceptable or unacceptable behaviours towards birds). For example, feeding wild birds is considered disturbance behaviour. Many birdwatchers are interested in feeding birds to attract birds to the place of bird watching. Leaders or experienced birdwatchers who conduct the events should inform bird watchers that feeding birds is not always acceptable. Some people do not know that their activity can hurt birds. The leader should display the correct thoughts and actions to people who follow them for birding. Because birdwatchers are usually people who want to conserve wildlife, when they realize that their actions have adverse effects on birds, they may change their behaviour.

In addition, we should consider what messages should be disseminated to behaviour change agents about how they can use norms effectively. First, it is important to consider the framing of the message. The current research suggests that norms will be the most effective predictors of disturbance behaviours of Malaysian birdwatchers. The present research sought to further understand the way in which information about what others do and approve of can guide and shape behaviour. It is clear that norms are powerful determinants of our behaviour, but the power is precarious, as we are bombarded by normative messages from multiple sources; we may often receive conflicting normative information from multiple sources. If we wish to fully harness the power of norms to promote positive (and prevent negative) actions, we need to gain a more complete understanding of how individuals respond to the contradictory normative messages they receive. Our research highlights the importance of distinguishing between injunctive and descriptive norms, and of considering how these norms interact to influence behaviour.

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CONCLUSION

The results shows subjective norm and descriptive norm were two different and independent constructs for the study on intentions towards disturbance behaviour on birds among Malaysian bird watchers.

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