

THE EFFECT OF SUSTAINABILITY CONSCIOUSNESS ON TOURISTS' GREEN PRODUCT PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract. Although sustainable tourism is a frequently discussed topic in academia and politics, the development of sustainable tourism is still a difficult issue for developing economies. Sustainable tourism development can promote development by using the social capital of the society. Sustainability awareness, which is the most important of social issues, is the process of learning how to make decisions that take into account the long-term future of the economy, ecology and inequality in all communities. In other words, individuals with high sustainability consciousness are more sensitive about environmental issues when making decisions. Tourists with high sustainability consciousness have a higher potential to contribute to a sustainable future with the environmentally friendly products they demand. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between tourists' sustainability consciousness and green purchase intentions. For this purpose, a survey was conducted on 419 tourists who visited Antalya, an important tourism destination in Turkey, and were selected by random sampling method, and the effect of tourists' sustainability consciousness on green purchase intentions was tried to be determined. SPSS computer package program was used in the analysis of the data. According to the data obtained as a result of the study; supports that tourists with high sustainability consciousness tend to buy more green.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Sustainability Consciousness, Green Purchase Intention

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism development leads to the management of all resources in a way that meets economic, social and aesthetic needs while preserving cultural integrity, basic ecological processes, biodiversity and life support systems (Speier, 2005; 71-72). In addition, as a result of the developments in tourism in the 1990s and the increase in demand for tourism, a close relationship has emerged between sustainability and tourism (Çalan, 2014; 17). The World Tourism Organization defined sustainable tourism in 2005 as tourism that takes into account current and future socio-cultural, environmental and economic impacts while responding to the needs of tourists, the sector, the environment and local people.

Sustainable tourism and sustainability consciousness share a symbiotic relationship that influences and strengthens each other in the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism essentially refers to practices that prioritize environmental protection, respect for local cultures, and fair distribution of benefits among target communities (Boley and Green, 2016; 38). On the other hand, sustainability consciousness is related to individuals' understanding of environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues and their determination to adopt responsible behaviors to address these concerns. An important aspect of their relationship lies in the promotion of responsible behavior (Gulzar et al., 2023; 5).

Tourists' sustainability consciousness is shaped by a number of factors, including their level of education, exposure to sustainability initiatives, socio-economic background and cultural upbringing (Miller et al., 2014; 28). Education plays an important role in raising awareness about environmental issues, social inequalities and the importance of sustainable development in tourism. Exposure to sustainability initiatives through media, educational programs or personal experiences significantly influences tourists' attitudes and behaviours (Gericke et al., 2019; 38).

Green purchase intention is defined as an individual's awareness of the concept of environmental sustainability and their greater preference for green companies, products or services (Mas'od and Chin, 2014; 479-480). The concept of green includes the ecological dimension of sustainable development, which consists of socio-cultural, ecological and economic sub-dimensions. Similarly, such behaviours also integrate environmental concern and belief in environmental protection or consumption of green products or services (Lee et al., 2012; 69). The increase in interest in green products and services has led consumers to develop positive purchase intentions and participate in green campaigns (Mas'od and Chin, 2014; 480). This is consistent with the results of many previous studies showing that consumers with increased environmental concern or environmental awareness have positively affected environmentally friendly purchasing behaviours (Albayrak et al., 2013; 28).

The relationship between green purchase intention and sustainability is complex and multifaceted, representing a dynamic interaction between individual consumer behaviour, market dynamics, industry practices, and broader sustainability goals (Xiao and Li, 2011; 323). Green purchase intention essentially refers to consumers' tendency and motivation to choose products or services that are consistent with their environmental values and desires for a more sustainable future (Chen and Chang, 2012; 502).

The relationship between sustainability consciousness and green purchasing intentions is becoming increasingly important in understanding consumer behaviour in the tourism industry. Sustainability consciousness refers to tourists' awareness and concerns about the environmental, social and economic impacts of their travel choices (Gericke et al., 2019; 35). This awareness is often reflected in behaviours such as choosing environmentally friendly accommodations, participating in conservation efforts and supporting local businesses that prioritize sustainability. These behaviours are crucial in developing a sustainable tourism ecosystem. Moreover, there is a remarkable relationship between these practices and green purchasing intentions. Because these practices not only contribute to a sustainable tourism infrastructure but also affect tourists' purchasing decisions (Miller et al., 2014; 27). This relationship emphasizes the role of environmental consciousness in shaping purchasing decisions and suggests that increasing tourists' sustainability consciousness can effectively promote more sustainable consumption patterns in the tourism sector. In this context, increasing tourists' sustainability consciousness may be an important strategy to encourage more environmentally responsible consumption in the tourism industry (Miller et al., 2014; 28).

METHODOLOGY

In the research, a survey technique from quantitative data methods was used. The sustainability consciousness scale prepared by Gericke et al. (2019) was used to measure the sustainability consciousness of tourists, and the green purchase intention scale prepared by Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas (2020) was used to measure green purchase intentions. The research was conducted on tourists visiting Antalya, one of Turkiye's important tourist destinations. In this context, a face-to-face survey was conducted with 419 tourists.

The sustainability consciousness scale prepared by Gericke et al. (2019) used in the research consists of knowledge, attitude and behavior dimensions.

Table 1

Dimensions and Statement Numbers of the Sustainability Consciousness Scale

| No | Dimensions | Statement Number |
|----|------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Knowledge | 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 |
| 2 | Attitude | 10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18 |
| 3 | Behaviour | 19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27 |

The green product purchase intention scale prepared by Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas (2020) consists of 5 items in a single dimension.

Table 2

Statement Numbers of the Green Product Purchase Intention Scale

| No | Statement Number |
|----|------------------|
| 1 | 28,29,30,31,32 |

2.1. Reliability Analysis

Scales with a Cronbach Alpha value above 0.7 are reliable scales (Hair et al., 2011). The reliability of the scales used in the study was revealed to be at a high level as a result of the analysis.

Table 3

Cronbach Alpha Value of Scales

| | <i>Cronbach Alpha (α)</i> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Sustainability Consciousness Scale | 0,963 |
| Green Product Purchase Intention Scale | 0,933 |

1.2. Demographic Information

Frequency analysis was performed to reveal the demographic characteristics of the participants. The results of the analysis are given in the table below.

Table 4

Demographic Information

| Features | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender | Female | 221 | 52,7 |
| | Male | 198 | 47,3 |
| Date of Birth | 1996 and later | 220 | 52,5 |
| | 1981-1995 | 150 | 35,8 |
| | 1961-1980 | 47 | 11,2 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----|------|
| | 1960 and before | 2 | 0,5 |
| Marital Status | Married | 136 | 32,5 |
| | Single | 283 | 67,5 |
| Educational Status | Primary | 3 | 0,7 |
| | High School | 65 | 15,5 |
| | Bachelor | 266 | 63,5 |
| | Master/Doctorate | 85 | 20,3 |
| Occupation | Student | 100 | 23,9 |
| | Retired | 11 | 2,6 |
| | Housewife | 11 | 2,6 |
| | Freelance | 131 | 31,3 |
| | Officer | 88 | 21,0 |
| | Unemployed | 23 | 5,5 |
| | Others | 55 | 13,1 |
| Income | 11.500 TL and less | 117 | 27,9 |
| | 11.501 – 22.000 | 99 | 23,6 |
| | 22.001 – 30.000 | 77 | 18,4 |
| | 30.000 TL and above | 126 | 30,1 |

As a result of the frequency analysis conducted to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, it was found that 52,7% of the participants were female and 47,3% were male. It was seen that 52,5% of the participants were born in 1996 and later. It represents more than half of the participants. The analysis revealed that 67,5% of the participants were single and 32,5% were married. In terms of educational status, it was concluded that 63,5% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 20,3% had a master's or doctorate degree, 15,5% had completed high school and 0,2% were primary school graduates. The rate of freelance participants is 31,3%, unemployed are 5,5% and retired and housewife participants are 2,6%.

While 30,1% of the participants have an income of 30.000 Turkish Liras and above, 27,9% have an income of 11.500 TL and below, 23,6% have an income of 11.501-22.000 TL and 18,4% have an income of 22.001-30.000 TL.

1.3. Frequency Analysis

Table 5

Frequency Analysis of the Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Knowledge

| Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Knowledge | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|---|----------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| 1 | Reducing water consumption is essential for sustainable development. | 2,86 | 1,91 | 5,01 | 26,01 | 64,20 | 4,4678 | 0,965 |
| 2 | Preserving species diversity in nature is essential for sustainable development. | 2,15 | 3,10 | 1,91 | 20,05 | 72,79 | 4,5823 | |
| 3 | For sustainable development, people need to be educated on how to protect themselves against natural disasters. | 3,10 | 2,86 | 5,01 | 23,39 | 65,63 | 4,4558 | |
| 4 | The peaceful resolution of conflicts in societies is essential for sustainable development. | 2,63 | 3,58 | 7,64 | 30,31 | 55,85 | 4,3317 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| 5 | Respect for human rights is essential for sustainable development. | 2,86 | 3,82 | 5,97 | 27,45 | 59,90 | 4,3771 |
| 6 | To ensure sustainable development, all people in the world must have access to good and quality education. | 2,39 | 3,82 | 8,11 | 27,92 | 57,76 | 4,3484 |
| 7 | To ensure sustainable development, companies must treat their employees, customers and suppliers fairly. | 2,86 | 2,63 | 7,16 | 30,07 | 57,28 | 4,3628 |
| 8 | Sustainable development requires the equitable distribution of basic human rights, such as food and health care, among all people in the world. | 2,86 | 3,34 | 6,92 | 26,01 | 60,86 | 4,3866 |
| 9 | Ending world poverty is essential for sustainable development. | 4,06 | 5,73 | 14,08 | 30,55 | 45,58 | 4,0788 |

When the responses to the statements in the knowledge dimension of sustainability consciousness are examined, it is seen that all of the statements, except for one statement, are strongly agreed by over 50 percent. According to this result, we can say that the sustainability consciousness of the tourists participating in the survey is strong in terms of knowledge.

Table 6

Frequency Analysis of the Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Attitude

| Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Attitude | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| 10 | Using natural resources in excess of our needs does not threaten human health or our future well-being. | 1,91 | 3,82 | 4,06 | 26,01 | 66,83 | 4,4940 | 0,965 |
| 11 | I think stricter laws and regulations are needed to protect the environment. | 2,15 | 3,34 | 4,77 | 20,05 | 53,46 | 4,3556 | |
| 12 | I think it is important to do something about the problems related to climate change. | 2,63 | 4,53 | 5,49 | 23,39 | 58,23 | 4,3580 | |
| 13 | I think everyone should be educated on how to live sustainably. | 2,63 | 4,06 | 6,68 | 30,31 | 52,51 | 4,2983 | |
| 14 | We must ensure that those who come after us have the same abundance of resources that we have today. | 2,39 | 3,34 | 7,16 | 27,45 | 60,14 | 4,3914 | |
| 15 | I believe that women and men should have equal opportunities for education and employment everywhere in the world. | 2,86 | 5,01 | 7,64 | 27,92 | 60,86 | 4,3461 | |
| 16 | I think companies have a responsibility to reduce the use of packaging and disposable items. | 3,10 | 3,10 | 12,41 | 30,07 | 54,89 | 4,2697 | |
| 17 | I think it is important to reduce poverty. | 2,15 | 3,58 | 9,07 | 26,01 | 53,94 | 4,3126 | |
| 18 | I think that big companies should provide the same conditions for their employees in poor countries as in rich countries. | 3,58 | 4,53 | 12,17 | 30,55 | 50,36 | 4,1838 | |

When we look at the responses of tourists to the statements regarding the attitude dimension of sustainability consciousness, it is seen that more than half of the participants responded “strongly agree” to all statements. This clearly tells us that more than half of the tourists who participated in the survey have adopted sustainability consciousness as an attitude.

Table 7

Frequency Analysis of the Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Behavior

| Sustainability Consciousness Dimension of Behaviour | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|--------|----------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| 19 | I recycle as much as I can. | 3,58 | 6,68 | 19,09 | 37,23 | 33,41 | 3,9021 | 0,965 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| 20 | Whenever possible, I separate household waste as separate waste. | 4,30 | 9,55 | 19,33 | 35,80 | 31,03 | 3,7971 |
| 21 | I try to produce less waste (such as throwing away less food and not wasting paper). | 3,58 | 6,21 | 16,47 | 33,89 | 39,86 | 4,0024 |
| 22 | When I chat, text and play games on the computer and phone, I treat people with the same respect as I do in real life. | 4,30 | 5,49 | 7,40 | 29,36 | 53,46 | 4,2220 |
| 23 | I support a charity organisation and an environmental group. | 3,34 | 7,16 | 21,00 | 39,14 | 29,36 | 3,8401 |
| 24 | I respect men and women equally. | 2,63 | 5,97 | 6,21 | 26,49 | 58,71 | 4,3270 |
| 25 | I do things to help poor people. | 4,06 | 4,06 | 15,99 | 34,84 | 41,05 | 4,0477 |
| 26 | I buy second-hand goods online or in shops. | 13,84 | 21,48 | 20,05 | 26,25 | 18,38 | 3,1384 |
| 27 | I avoid buying products from companies that have a bad reputation towards their employees and the environment. | 5,01 | 5,25 | 15,27 | 29,83 | 44,63 | 4,0382 |

The frequency analysis of the responses of tourists to the statements on the behavioral dimension of sustainability consciousness shows us that, although not strongly, the sustainability consciousness of tourists is reflected in their behavior.

Table 8

Frequency Analysis of the Green Product Purchase Intention

| Green Product Purchase Intention | | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|------|----------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % | | |
| 28 | I am willing to choose environmentally friendly tourism products/services when travelling to Antalya. | 5,0 | 3,1 | 13,8 | 32,7 | 45,3 | 4,10 | 0,932 |
| 29 | I plan to choose environmentally friendly products/services when travelling to Antalya. | 3,8 | 4,1 | 16,0 | 34,8 | 41,3 | 4,06 | |
| 30 | I make an effort to purchase environmentally friendly products and services when travelling to Antalya. | 4,5 | 5,0 | 15,3 | 33,9 | 41,3 | 4,02 | |
| 31 | I buy products/services that are considered to be less harmful to the environment in Antalya. | 4,1 | 4,1 | 15,3 | 33,7 | 43,0 | 4,07 | |
| 32 | I avoid purchasing products and services that could potentially damage Antalya's tourist attractions. | 3,3 | 2,4 | 11,9 | 29,8 | 52,5 | 4,26 | |

In the frequency analysis of the responses to the statements about tourists' intention to purchase green products, it is seen in the table that the majority marked the answers "I agree" and "I strongly agree". This means that tourists' intention to purchase green products is high.

1.4. Correlation Analysis

Table 9

| | | Correlation Analysis | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| | | Gender | Date of Birth | Marital Status | Education | Income |
| Gender | r | 1,000 | 0,033 | -0,028 | -0,036 | 0,184 |
| | p | | 0,500 | 0,569 | 0,468 | 0,000 |
| Date of Birth | r | 0,033 | 1,000 | -0,543 | 0,009 | 0,416 |
| | p | 0,500 | | 0,000 | 0,854 | 0,000 |
| Marital Status | r | -0,028 | -0,543 | 1,000 | 0,004 | -0,323 |
| | p | 0,569 | 0,000 | | 0,927 | 0,000 |
| Education | r | -0,036 | 0,009 | 0,004 | 1,000 | 0,272 |
| | p | 0,468 | 0,854 | 0,927 | | 0,000 |
| Income | r | 0,184 | 0,416 | -0,323 | 0,272 | 1,000 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------|--------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| | P | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | 0,000 | |
| Sustainability Consciousness | r | -0,214 | 0,106 | -0,074 | 0,076 | 0,034 |
| | p | 0,000 | 0,030 | 0,132 | 0,118 | 0,494 |
| Green Product Purchase Intention | r | -0,177 | 0,095 | -0,091 | 0,117 | 0,016 |
| | p | 0,000 | 0,052 | 0,063 | 0,016 | 0,746 |

There is a significant relationship between sustainability consciousness and gender ($r=-0.214$; $p<0.01$), it can be said that female tourists have higher sustainability consciousness. There is a positive and significant relationship between sustainability consciousness and age ($r=0.106$; $p<0.01$), it can be said that as tourists get older, their sustainability consciousness becomes higher.

There is a significant relationship between green purchase intention and gender ($r=-0.177$; $p<0.01$), it can be said that female tourists have higher green purchase intention. There is a positive and significant relationship between green purchase intention and education ($r=0.117$; $p<0.01$), it can be said that as tourists' educational status increases, their green purchase intention increases.

CONCLUSIONS

The study was conducted to reveal the effect of sustainability consciousness of tourists visiting Antalya on their green purchasing intentions. In broader terms, the relationships between the sub-dimensions of sustainability consciousness, namely sustainability knowledge, attitude and behaviour, and green product purchasing intentions were examined.

As a result of the comparative analyses, it was revealed that tourists' sustainability consciousness and green purchasing intention differed according to gender. As a result, the study revealed that sustainability consciousness has a significant effect on green purchasing intention. No study was found in the literature examining the effect of sustainability consciousness on green purchasing intention in the field of tourism.

The relationships supported in the study show how great the effect of sustainability consciousness of tourists on green purchasing intentions while on holiday is. In this respect, it is concluded that individuals with high sustainability consciousness have high green purchasing intentions in this direction. As a result of this positive and significant relationship between green purchasing intention and sustainability consciousness, it is concluded that tourists tend more towards environmentally friendly tourism products and services in holiday destinations. In addition, it has been concluded that tourists are willing to buy environmentally friendly products and services if their sustainability consciousness is high, not only during the time they spend in the destination but also during their travel to the destination. With this relationship, it can be suggested that studies can be carried out to make tourists gain sustainability consciousness in order to minimize the damage given to the environment in tourism.

With all this, it is a remarkable result that the gender of the tourists differs in terms of sustainability consciousness and green purchase intention as a result of the study. The fact that female tourists have more sustainability consciousness and green purchase intention than males can be interpreted as women thinking more about the future, the motivation to survive and protect their children or family, and perhaps due to their maternal characteristics. This result supports the results of the studies conducted by Akdoğan (2021), D'Souza and Taghian (2005), Anvar and Venter (2014), Jain and Kaur (2006), Aydoğan and Dinar (2019) that women have a higher green purchase intention than men. In addition to gender, it was concluded that tourists' sustainability consciousness increases with the increase in education level, but it was observed that it did not significantly affect green purchase intention. This situation can be interpreted as arising from compulsory consumption. For example, in order for a tourist's consumption and meeting their needs during their trip to be sustainable, sustainability tools must be widespread throughout the country. If an individual cannot easily access these sustainable vehicles or if accessing these vehicles is costly for them, their prefer ability may remain low. As a result, differences may be observed in individuals' green purchasing intentions.

After the concept of sustainability has gained importance in recent years, the impact of changing holiday habits and tourist behaviours on the tourism sector is inevitable. According to the results of this study, the differences in the attitudes and behaviours of tourists with sustainability consciousness have been revealed. In this sense, it will be effective for businesses operating in the sector to benefit from these results and add green services and products to their services or products. In particular, the emergence of the intention of tourists with sustainability consciousness to purchase green products has had effects on the sector such as the increase in the consumption of products and services that have the least impact on the environment, the emergence of a tendency towards local people, and the importance of local and typical markets. In this respect, it can be recommended within the scope of this study that the tourism sector focuses on environmentally friendly products and services. In addition, it would be appropriate for local people to conduct studies aimed at tourists with sustainability consciousness in order to have a positive economic impact on tourism.

In this research, the effect of tourists' sustainability consciousness on green purchasing intention was revealed as a result of a survey conducted on tourists visiting Antalya.

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