INFLUENCE OF TOURIST-TO-TOURIST INTERACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXTUAL FACTORS ON TOURISTS' PRO-ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIORS IN CHINA

By

XIAO YUE

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2022

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Chair : **Yee Choy Leong, PhD**
Faculty : **School of Business and Economics**

Tourists' illegal behaviors are one of the main reasons for the environmental problems of China's tourism industry. In recent years, more tourism researchers began to pay attention to the role of tourists and their actions in the ecological protection of tourist destinations, namely tourists' pro-environmental behaviors. However, previous researches on pro-environmental behaviors usually focused on tourists' individual factors but ignored the impact of contextual interaction factors. Therefore, this thesis tries to fill in the literature gap by exploring the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction and environmental contextual factors on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (PEB).

Taking three important theories such as norm activation model (NAM), social capital theory, and broken window theory as the theoretical basis, this study explains tourists' pro-environmental behaviors from interpersonally and environmentally contextual perspectives. It selects interpersonal ties, group norms, and social trust of tourist interaction and environmental contextual factors as external factors to study their influences on the internal factors of tourists' pro-environmental behaviors. And face-to-face questionnaires are used to collect dates and Partial least squares (PLS), which is a variance-based SEM method to evaluate hypotheses. As a result, the findings of this study revealed that 1) Group norms, personal norms, social trust and environmental contextual factors have a direct impact on the pro-environmental behavior; 2) Ascription of responsibility and group norms have an indirect impact on the pro-environmental behavior via personal norms; 3) while awareness of consequences has an indirect impact on personal norms via ascription of responsibility; 4) interpersonal ties regulate the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors. This study has added value to the social capital theory, broken window theory, and the NAM in their applicability's in explaining tourists' PEB.

Plus, it provided a feasible interaction direction for Chinese tourism managers to guide tourists' PEB.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PENGARUH INTERAKSI PELANCONG KEPADA PELANCONG DAN FAKTOR KONTEKSTUAL PERSEKITARAN TERHADAP TINGKAH LAKU PELANCONG PRO-ALAM SEKITAR DI CHINA

Oleh

XIAO YUE

Julai 2022

Pengerusi : **Yee Choy Leong, PhD**
Fakulti : **Sekolah Perniagaan dan Ekonomi**

Tingkah laku delinkuen pelancong adalah salah satu masalah utama pelancongan alam sekitar di China. Sejak kebelakangan ini, semakin ramai penyelidik telah mula memberikan perhatian terhadap peranan yg dimainkan oleh pelancong dan tindakan mereka terhadap perlindungan ekologi di kawasan pelancong, yang juga dikenali sebagai tingkah laku pelancong pro-alam sekitar. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian terdahulu secara amnya memfokuskan kepada faktor individu yg berkaitan dengan pelancong dan mengabaikan kesan faktor interaksi kontekstual. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah untuk memenuhi jurang literatur dengan meneliti pengaruh interaksi pelancong ke pelancong dan faktor kontekstual persekitaran terhadap tingkah laku pelancong yang pro-alam sekitar (pro-environmental behaviour - PEB).

Kajian ini mengambil kira tiga teori penting, iaitu norm activation model (NAM), the social capital theory and broken window theory, sebagai teori asas untuk menerangkan tingkah laku pelancong pro- alam sekitar ini dari perspektif interpersonal dan kontekstual alam sekitar. Kajian ini juga memilih hubungan interpersonal, norma kumpulan, dan kepercayaan sosial interaksi pelancong dan faktor kontekstual persekitaran sebagai faktor luaran untuk mengkaji pengaruhnya terhadap faktor dalaman tingkah laku pelancong pro-alam sekitar. Kaedah yang digunakan bagi kajian ini adalah kaedah soal selidik secara bersemuka untuk mengumpul data dan Partial least squares (PLS), kaedah SEM berasaskan varians untuk menilai hipotesis. Hasil kajian mendapati 1) norma kumpulan, norma peribadi, kepercayaan sosial dan faktor kontekstual persekitaran secara langsung memberi kesan kepada tingkah laku pro-alam sekitar. 2) Penetapan tanggungjawab dan norma kumpulan secara tidak langsung memberi kesan kepada tingkah laku pro-alam sekitar melalui norma peribadi. 3) Kesedaran tentang akibat secara tidak langsung memberi kesan

kepada norma peribadi melalui penetapan tanggungjawab. 4) Hubungan interpersonal menyederhanakan hubungan antara norma kumpulan dan tingkah laku pro-alam sekitar. Kajian ini menambah nilai kepada social capital theory, broken window theory, dan NAM theoretical model dalam kebolehgunaannya menerangkan tingkah laku pelancong pro-environmental. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyediakan hala tuju interaksi yang boleh digunakan oleh pengurus pelancongan Cina sebagai garis panduan untuk pelancong pro-alam sekitar.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This doctorate study journey was the most challenging decision for me. Looking back on the time I spent studying abroad in the past few years, I can't help but have mixed feelings that are beyond words. This process has carried me too many hardships, but these years have made me feel precious and grateful! In the end, luckily, I reached the study goal I had set in my heart. Hereby, I would love to express my thankful words to people who guided and helped me until the end of my doctorate study journey.

First, I would love to express my greatest appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Yee Choy Leong. I am very fortunate to have met him as my supervisor and pointed out the direction for my PhD studies. It is he who has always affirmed me, encouraged me, helped me, and stood firmly behind me at all times. Without him, I would not have been able to complete my PhD studies so smoothly. His profound knowledge, sharp thinking, innovative academic thoughts and tireless spirit are all models that I will never learn in my life. When I am about to finish my studies, I would like to convey my greatest respects and thanks for her responsible and elaborative guidance.

Second, I would like to pass my gratitude to my supervisory committee members Dr. Choo Wei Chong, Prof. Dr. Sridar Ramachandran and Dr. Haminmah Hassan. They provided very valuable suggestions in helping me to correct improper mindset showed in the first draft of my study. With supports from their valuable comments, my thesis construct had been corrected and improved sufficiently. From them I have learned the knowledge and thinking methods to engage in academic research, which will benefit me for life. Then I would also like to thank Dr. Ng Siew Imm. It was she who taught me the most basic academic methods of doing doctoral research, and helped me in how to think problems from various angles as a researcher. Finally, I would like to thank the Universiti Putra Malaysia and School of Business and Economics, which have a strong academic research atmosphere and have provided me with courage and confidence in my research and exploration.

Lastly, I would like to deliver my warmest thanks to my dearest parents, husband and my son for their continuous supports and cares throughout all these years. Every little bit of growth and progress in my life is the result of their hard work. Thanks to their understanding and support, I can concentrate on completing my studies.

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Yee Choy Leong, PhD
Senior Lecturer
School of Business and Economics
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Choo Wei Chong, PhD
Associate Professor
School of Business and Economics
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Sridar a/l Ramachandran, PhD
Professor
School of Business and Economics
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ZALILAH MOHD SHARIFF, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 13 October 2022

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Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
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Name and Matric No.: _Xiao Yue_____

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This is to confirm that:
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Signature: Name of Chairman of Supervisory Committee:	Dr. Yee Choy Leong
Signature: Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Choo Wei Chong
Signature: Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:	Prof. Dr. Sridar a/l Ramachandran

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PEB	Pro-environmental behavior
GN	Group norm
ST	Social trust
IT	Interpersonal ties
AC	Awareness of consequences
AR	Ascription of responsibility
PN	Personal norm
ECF	Environmental contextual factors
NAM	Norm Activation Model
TTI	Tourist-to-tourist interaction
CCI	Custom-to-custom interaction
PSB	Pro-social behavior

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter discusses the current situation of tourism development and environmental issues relevant to this study in several parts. The first part is about the background of this study, including environmental pollution caused by China's tourism industry and the important role the Chinese tourists play in it. Next the scope and problem statement of this study are properly analyzed and the gaps in this study revealed. Finally, questions, objectives and significance of this study, definition of key terms, and the thesis structure are presented.

1.1 Background of this Study

1.1.1 Tourism and Environmental Pollution in China

As one of the fastest-growing and the most important economic sectors in the world, tourism plays an essential role in the national economic and social development of every country. Based on the WTTC's report in 2019 and 2021, the contribution of tourism to GDP was $8.8 trillion (10.4% of the total GDP) in 2018 and 10.3% of the global GDP in 2019. Due to the epidemic lockdowns worldwide, the share which decreased to 5.3% in 2020 and increased to 6.1% in 2021. It is expected to grow by 3.7% every year, and by 2029, to account for 11.5% of the total GDP. In 2018, tourism created 319 million jobs or 10% of the total employment. In 2020, 62 million people lost jobs, a drop of 18.6%, and merely 271 million were employed across the sector globally compared to 333 million in 2019. Fortunately, 18.2 million jobs were recovered in 2021, a year-on-year increase of 6.7%.

According to the research of WTTC (2021), before the pandemic swept through the world, China's tourism contribution to GDP was 11.6% of the total economic output in 2019. Due to the impact of Covid-19, China's tourism contribution to the national economy has dropped by nearly 62.5%, only 4.3% to GDP in 2020. However, based on the current recovery rate in China, the tourism contribution to GDP increased by 16.9% (4.6% to GDP) in 2021 and was expected to increase by 43.3% in 2022. As shown in Figure 1.1, the direct contribution of tourism to GDP has increased on a year-by-year basis and has become an important means of promoting economic development. In 2018, the tourism created 79,910 jobs (10.3% of total employment), which is expected to create 121,425 jobs by 2029. The total number of tourists in China in 2018 was 5.539 billion, an increase of 10.8% from 2017.

Figure 1.1: Direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in China.
(Source: WTTC, 2018)

China has made gratifying achievements in the tourism industry in recent years. However, this has posed challenges to environmental protection and socio-economic development, thus hindering the realization of China's sustainable tourism development goals (Zhang et al., 2015). In January 2013, three scenic spots -Zhangjiajie in Hunan Province, Lushan in Jiangxi Province and Wudalianchi in Heilongjiang Province - were given a "yellow card" warning by UNESCO and ordered to correct their tourism development for violating the principles of environmental protection and ecological education. Data of a survey by the Chinese National Committee for Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) show that 22% of nature resources in China currently are damaged by the development of tourism, 11% have severely degraded, and 44% are subject to serious waste pollution and 12% to water pollution. Further, 61% of construction facilities are inharmonious with the landscape environment. In 2017, water quality in offshore areas was detected as "poor" or "extremely poor" (MEE, 2018) in China's most developed provinces and cities (such as Guangdong and Shanghai). According to the report of IQAir (2019), 48 cities in China rank within top 100 most polluted cities, and only 2% of the 400 cities in China meet the WHO's annual PM2.5 target. In 2020, the number of Chinese residents exposed to PM2.5 still more than 3 times the annual guide of WHO. Hotan in Northwestern China became the world's most polluted city (IQAir, 2020). In the *Emission Gap Report 2019* released by the United Nations (Figure 1.2), China has become the largest emitter of greenhouse gas in the world, which has been increasing over the past decade.
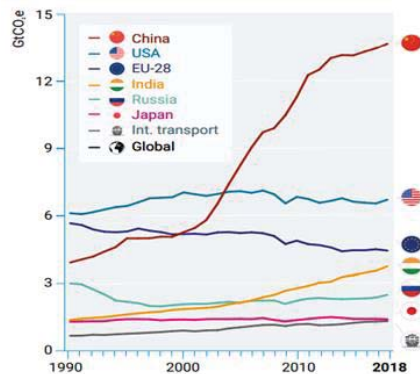
Figure 1.2: Top Greenhouse Gas Emitters.
(Source: UNEP, 2019)

On the one hand, the above data show that the booming tourism in China has delivered considerable economic benefits to the area of the scenic spot. On the other hand, it has also caused many problems to resources and environment. The deteriorating ecological quality of tourist destinations (such as environmental noise, water pollution, reduction of flora and fauna) will significantly reduce the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations and further hinder the sustainable development of local tourism. Therefore, it is an important issue for urgent discussion that how to realize environmental protection and sustainable development of tourism while maintaining the development of the tourism economy in China in the current tourism academia and industry.

1.1.2   Tourists and Environmental Pollution in China

The poor pro-environmental awareness of Chinese tourists is one of the leading causes of environmental problems in the tourism industry (Yao and Long, 2017). Uncivilized behaviors of Chinese tourists have become a big headache of many countries, which made them a bad name abroad. Of these, the environmentally unfriendly behavior is one of the most striking. According to the survey of YouGov Company in 2019, tourists from China are the least popular among residents in the tourist destinations compared with tourists from other parts of Asia. They are even listed as the worst-behaved tourists by six countries in the world. Again according to the survey, nearly two-thirds of Singaporeans classify Chinese tourists as the worst vacationers in the world, and 42% of Indians also have a poor impression of Chinese tourists. Although some foreign media may exaggerate uncivilized behaviors of Chinese tourists, there is no doubt that Chinese tourists have a poor awareness of environmental protection.

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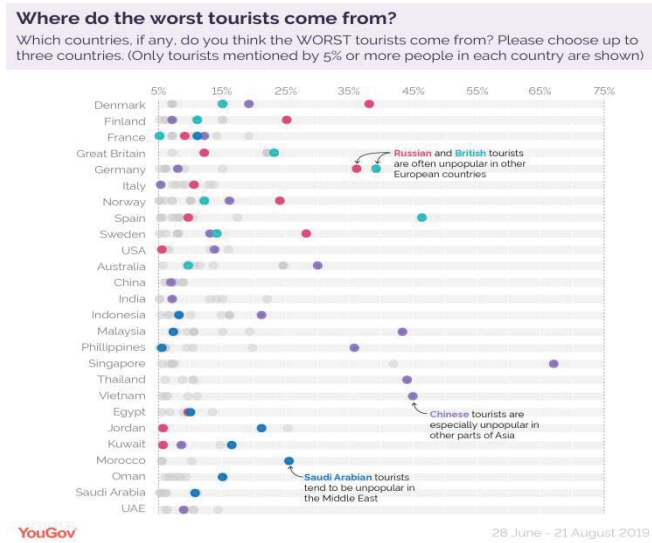
Figure 1.3: Chinese tourists become one of the worst tourists in the world
(Adapted from Smith, 2019)

In recent years, Chinese tourists themselves have gradually realized their unfriendly behaviors. According to the *Survey of Civilized Behaviors in 2020* participated by China's 1.12 million netizens, spitting, littering, smoking in public, and doodling on the wall of tourist attraction are the main uncivilized tourist behaviors. As shown in Figure1.4, the top three uncivilized behaviors in daily life are littering, queue jumping, and smoking in non-smoking areas. The first national survey of ecological civilization awareness in China found that the overall recognition awareness and practice scores of the public for ecological civilization were 74.8 and 60.1, showing the characteristics of "low cognition and insufficient practice." Their bad behavior and arrogant manner need the active attention of governmental sectors and scholars. Experts believe that most Chinese tourists' low awareness of protecting national cultural relics and the scenic area environment leads to the systematic destruction of tourism resources.
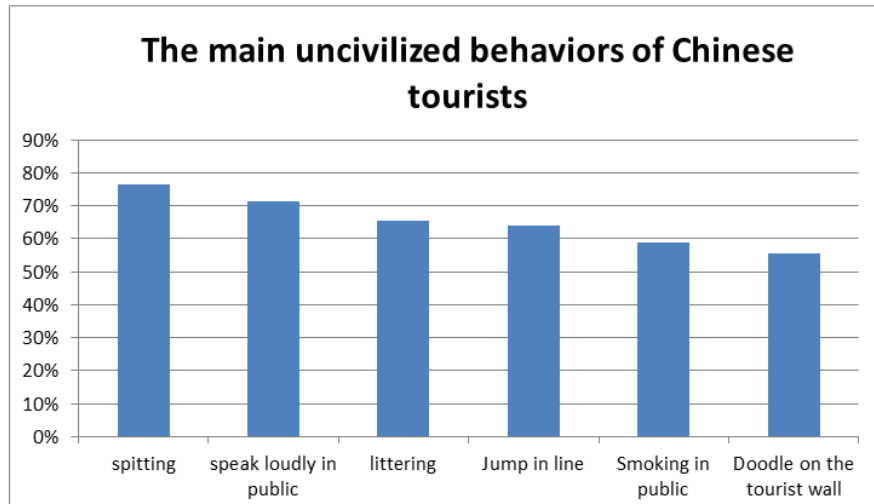
Figure 1.4: The Main Uncivilized Behaviors of Chinese Tourists
(Source: China Capital Civilization Office, 2020)

There is a potential tourist assumption in the current sustainable development path. That is to say, tourists are born "liabilities" of environmental protection in tourist destinations, and tourists visiting scenic spots will inevitably cause damage to the ecological environment (Weaver and Lawton, 2011). Under this assumption, tourism managers can only resolve contradictions between environmental protection and tourism development by introducing restrictive regulations. However, in recent years, some research results in the fields of sociology, environmental psychology, consumer behavior and management have questioned this potential assumption. Because the results show that there are a group of tourists tend to have "pro-environment" behaviors. These tourists can spontaneously show their propensity of cherishing nature and promoting environmental protection in leisure and tourism activities (Dolnicar et al., 2008). They are willing to pay higher tourism costs for unspoiled natural scenic spots and even willing to actively promote the ecological environmental protection in tourist destinations through donations and voluntary activities (Li and Wu, 2020). Besides, tourism destinations can actively guide tourists to establish correct environmental attitudes and protection behaviors through measures such as improving reception facilities, creating environmental protection atmosphere and enhancing tourists' emotional attachment to scenic spots (Mair and Bergin-Seers, 2010). The above research progresses and findings lead tourism researchers to re-examine tourists' role and actions in the ecological protection of tourist destinations and make further exploration and research on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors.

Pro-environmental behaviors (PEB) refer to "Behaviors that harm the environment as little as possible, or even benefit the environment" (Steg and Vlek, 2009, p.309). Researchers believe that there is a "symbiotic relationship" between tourists with spontaneous environmental responsibility and the

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ecological environment protection in tourist sites (Perkins and Brown, 2012). Therefore, if tourists can be guided to protect the environment spontaneously, they will no longer be the "burdens" but the "assets" of environmental protection in the tourist sites (Perkins and Brown, 2012).

In China, group tour has become the main form of tourism for tourists. The proportion of tourists who traveled abroad in groups in 2018 reached 55.24%, and 50.65% of the respondents said that they were willing to join a tour group in their future outbound travels (CTA, 2019). Group tour is still the mainstream form of outbound trips. Chinese tourists' habit of group tour with strangers over the past decades is turning into small and private group tours with family and friends (CTA, 2019). According to the report of Ctrip, domestic tours are characterized by small groups and private groups with personalization and themes (Ctrip, 2020). The proportion of small groups has exceeded 50%, of which 60% are family tourists with children or multiple generations. The number of private groups increased by 30% on a year-on-year basis, and the average number of team members dropped to 3.14 (Ctrip, 2020).

The data show that as opposed to individual tours of Western tourists, Chinese tourists prefer to travel in small groups with 3 or 4 persons. In the process of traveling in a group, individuals' thoughts and behaviors are usually affected by team members (Dolnicar et al., 2019). This is because people are only willing to act when they believe or see others taken similar actions (Bernstein et al., 2018; Dolnicar et al., 2019; Tam and Chan, 2018). Thus, during the trip, tourists' behavior is not only driven by their own internal factors, but also affected by external interpersonal relationship. Therefore, in exploring the formation mechanism of Chinese tourists' pro-environmental behaviors, this study not only focuses on the influence of tourists' internal factors (Awareness of consequences, Ascription of responsibility and personal norms) but also considers the important influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction within the tour group (group norm, social trust and interpersonal ties) and other environmental contextual factors on the tourists' behaviors. This study can be a reference of tourists, employees as well as policymakers in tourism for guiding the further development of tourists' pro-environmental behaviors through thoroughly understanding tourists' environmental behaviors in China.

1.2   Problem Statement

The negative impacts of tourism activities include the destruction of environmental resources such as land degradation, air & noise pollution, traffic jams, littering and waste problems that have seriously threatens on the sustainable development of the local environment (Zhang et al., 2019). Intentional and unintentional travel behaviors of tourists may cause damages to the ecosystem of the scenic spots (Wang et al., 2020). For example, air pollution and noise pollution in tourist destinations are caused by the exhaust gas and noise of tourists' vehicles (Lang, 2018). A large number of tourists repeatedly

trample the soil and vegetation, leading to serious damage to the soil and vegetation (Zhang et al., 2019). Against such background, more and more tourism researchers begin to pay attention to the role of tourists and their actions in the ecological protection of tourist destinations, known as tourists' pro-environmental behaviors.

As an vital part in people's daily life, social interaction has a significant influence on their behaviors (Wolske et al., 2020). A vital core idea in Chinese traditional culture is "collective interest comes first", and even personal interest is given up for the collective good (Liu et al., 2021). This highly collectivistic culture encourages strong group harmony and group influence (Hofstede, 2001). Under this Chinese collective culture, the impact of fellow tourists becomes a key factor in urging Chinese tourists to take environmental actions (Lin et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2021). However, even though the interaction among tourists is recognized as one of the most positive contextual factors closely related to tourists' behaviors (Wang et al., 2019b; Dolnicar et al., 2019; Tam and Chan, 2018; Bernstein et al., 2018), it has always been ignored in recent studies on pro-environmental behaviors (Cho and Kang, 2017; Dolnicar et al., 2019; Landon et al., 2017). Since group tour is the most popular form of tourism for Chinese tourists (CTA, 2019), it is of significance to expand the research perspective of tourists' environmental behaviors from the individual level to the group level (Liu et al., 2019) and discuss the influence of the interpersonal interaction within the tourist group on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (Lin et al., 2022;Xu, Yang and Lin, 2022; Wang et al., 2019b; Dolnicar et al., 2019) in China. Thus, this study has bridged the gap by identifying different factors of tourist-to-tourist interaction (group norm, interpersonal ties and social trust) so as to help improve tourists' PEBs.

Previous studies have demonstrated that interpersonal ties can greatly facilitate the spread of normative actions (Abrahamse and Steg, 2013), but in environmental studies, few studies can be found about the impact of interpersonal ties on enhancing the relationship between norms and behaviors. High levels of interpersonal interaction can help build a society that highlights social integration and norm compliance (Ostrom, 2000) because it stresses majority rules and weakens personal preferences, thereby reinforcing the impact of social norms on behaviors (Xu et al., 2022). Given the fundamental effect of interpersonal relationships on individual perceptions and behaviors (Hargreaves and Middlemiss, 2020), if the unique role of interpersonal contextual mechanisms is ignored, this may cover up the substantial dynamics of norm influences on behaviors (Xu et al., 2022), resulting in failed comprehensive understanding of the norm-PEB link boundary conditions (Wang et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2018). To fill in this gap, this study aims to investigate whether and how the interpersonal ties in tourist interactions moderate the relationship between norms and PEB, which will be a rich entry point for the research on PEB.

Environmental contextual factors, including the health of natural scenery, neatness of the main street and cleanliness of the public areas, have always

been the concern of different behavioral studies (Wang et al., 2019b). The unity of man and nature is a foundational value with far-reaching influence and a long history in traditional Chinese culture (Zhang et al., 2020a). Chinese people have long attached great importance to living in harmony with nature (Chan, 2001), meaning that Chinese people make different choices based on the surrounding situation (Zhang et al., 2020a). Hence, it is of great significance to explore the influence mechanism of environmental factors on the pro-environmental behavior of Chinese tourists. In the studies of PEB, however, most believe that individual factors are the most important (Chiang et al., 2019; Pearce et al., 2022; Sharma and Gupta, 2020) but ignore the impact of environmental factors on individual behaviors (Lu et al., 2021; Qin and Hsu, 2022; Wu et al., 2021b). So many scholars suggest that further exploration be made on how external and individual factors interact in pro-environmental behaviors (Qin and Hsu, 2022; Qiu et al., 2018a). And researchers suggest that in future research on PEBs, more contextual factors should be further investigated (Ertz et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019b; Wang et al., 2018a). To fill in this gap, this thesis chooses environmental contextual factors as important contextual factors to explore their impact on tourists' PEBs.

NAM is regarded as the most influential theory in the environmental field (Han et al., 2019). Awareness of consequences(AC) and ascription of responsibility(AR) are considered to be the critical and essential determinants in the NAM for PEB (Gao et al., 2017). Yet, this is controversial between their relationships and personal norms (PN) (Li and Wu, 2019a; Sharma and Gupta, 2020), especially under the influence of fellow tourists. Chinese culture implicitly exerts enormous pressure on Chinese people by requiring group conformity and group coherence (Wang and Zhang, 2020a). Chinese are intend to follow the thoughts and behaviors of influential people around as their reference to think and behave (Teng et al., 2021). When travelling in groups, tourists may be vulnerable to the different environmental perspectives of team members, which may challenge their own environmental thinking and actions (Macias and Nelson, 2011). Therefore, it is very important to explore the relationship between AC, AR, PN and PEB (Gao et al., 2017; Li and Wu, 2019a; Onwezen et al., 2013) in the context of social interaction. Some scholars found that PN can regulate the relationship between AR and PEB, AC and PEB (Kiatkawsin and Han, 2017; Setiawan et al., 2021; Sharma and Gupta, 2020), but others were convinced that PN has proven not to be a mediator in the relationship between AC and PEB (Gao et al., 2017; Li and Wu, 2019a; Onwezen et al., 2013). Consequently, this study is designed to fill in the research gap by examining the mediating effect of PN in the relationship between AC, AR, and PEB based on the norm activation theory to develop the logical connotation of NAM from the perspective of social interaction.

As an important mediator, though personal norm is frequently studied to explore its mediating effect on the relationship between various norm elements and pro-environmental behaviors (Doran and Larsen, 2016; Han et al., 2018c; Kim and Seock, 2019), the influence of normative compliance still lacks researches and understanding (Bicchieri et al., 2020) in the different contexts of environmental

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behaviors (Cialdini and Jacobson, 2021). The personal norm that plays an important mediator in NAM from the perspective of social interaction is still far from being thoroughly studied (Qiu et al., 2018a; Landon et al., 2017), especially the relationship of the norm-behavior relationship within the tourist group in China. Therefore, this study has provided a novel perspective on studying the mediating effect of personal norms with group norms as an independent variable and pro-environmental behaviors as a dependent variable in NAM under the context of tourist interaction.

The research on pro-environmental behaviors (PEB) has attracted great attention of Western scholars, but tourists' PEB in China fails to receive enough attention (Qiu et al., 2018b). Therefore, PEB in China's tourism situation needs further research (Li and Li, 2018). Furthermore, many scholars in China apply the scales and findings of foreign scholars directly (Cai and Zhu, 2021; Qiu and Zhou, 2017; Zhou et al., 2014), without considering the uniqueness of Chinese tourists (such as the prohibition of demonstrations, election of candidates with environmental commitments, and participation in public assemblies). Based on this, relevant research conclusions may not have the same explanatory power in the Chinese context (Li, 2015), which may lead to incorrect experimental results and research conclusions (Qiu et al., 2018b). Because of this, this thesis has studied the tourists' pro-environmental behaviors in the context of China based on the PEB measurements of Chinese tourists.

To short, this study expands the Norm Activation Model (NAM) from the perspective of tourist interaction and environmental context to fill in these gaps. Through exploring how the tourist-to-tourist interaction and environmental contextual factors factors affect tourists' PEB in the context of China, it can provide a more comprehensive explanation for tourists' PEB decision-making and a feasible direction in Chinese tourism managers guiding tourists' PEB.

1.3   Scope of the Study

This quantitative study explores the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction (group norms, interpersonal ties and social trust) and environmental contextual factors on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors. Dependent variables are tourists' pro-environmental behaviors and independent ones are group norms, social trust, environmental contextual factors, ascription of responsibility and awareness of consequences. Mediating variables mainly include ascription of responsibility and personal norms, while moderating ones include interpersonal ties which have moderating effect on the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors.

The contents discussed in the previous sections have emphasized the importance of tourists' pro-environmental behaviors in China. West Lake Scenic Area in Hangzhou, China is the object of this study because it is one of the most

popular tourist attractions boasting all kinds of tourism resources that can meet different needs of Chinese tourists. Now it is confronted with serious environmental problems mainly caused by the unfriendly behaviors of tourists (Sun and Liu, 2020). Since tourist sites in China are facing serious environmental problems, this study concentrates on improving Chinese tourists' pro-environmental behaviors to protect the environment.

As discussed above, the influence from fellow tourists under the Chinese collective culture is a key factor in promoting Chinese tourists to take actions to protect the local tourism environment (Teng et al., 2021). Since group tour is the most popular form of tourism of Chinese tourists (CTA, 2020), it is important to explore the influence of the interpersonal interaction within the tourist group on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (Wang et al., 2019a; Xu et al., 2022) in China. Given this, this study discusses the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction on the tourists' pro-environmental behaviors in China. In this study, tourist samples are selected using the purposive sampling technique. Chinese tourists traveling with companions for more than two days in the past year and understanding the survey questions will be selected as the respondents. It is usually considered that at least two days of travel duration is required to judge the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction on tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (Yan, 2017). The respondents are a group of Chinese tourists traveling with their companions in the West Lake Scenic Area in China with the travel duration of more than two days.

Data are collected through a survey in thesis questionnaire form, which consists of eight instruments to determine the dependent, independent, moderating, and mediating variables, and some demographic-based questions. This study is a cross-sectional-based to better investigate the impact of human interaction and physical environment on pro-environmental behaviors and focus on tourists' behaviors in a given time slot. The data analysis is performed by SEM-PLS and the results have a potential value for Chinese government departments and managers of Chinese tourist attractions to provide them with helpful information in managing and guiding tourists' environmental behaviors. Therefore, this study investigates the tourists in a representative tourist attraction in China: West Lake Tourist Scenic Area.

1.4   Research Questions

To better understand the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction (group norm, social trust and interpersonal ties) and environmental contextual factors on Chinese tourists' pro-environmental behaviors, this study presents the following questions:

1.   Do group norm, social trust, personal norm and environmental contextual factors affect pro-environmental behaviors?

2. Do Awareness of consequences and Ascription of responsibility affect personal norms?
3. Does Ascription of responsibility regulate the relationship between awareness of consequences and personal norms?
4. Do personal norms regulate the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors?
5. Do personal norms regulate the relationship between ascription of responsibility   and pro-environmental behaviors?
6. Do interpersonal ties moderate the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective is to analyze the influence of tourist-to-tourist interaction (group norms, social trust and interpersonal ties) and environmental contextual factors on Chinese tourists' pro-environmental behaviors, as follows:

1. To evaluate the influence of group norms, social trust, personal norm and environmental contextual factors on pro-environmental behaviors.
2. To examine the influence of Awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility on personal norms.
3. To determine the mediating role of Ascription of responsibility in the relationship between awareness of consequences and personal norms.
4. To determine the mediating role of personal norms in the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors.
5. To determine the mediating role of personal norms in the relationship between ascription of responsibility and pro-environmental behaviors.
6. To investigate the moderating role of interpersonal ties in the relationship between group norms and pro-environmental behaviors.

1.6 Significance

This study has contributed both theoretically and practically to this study of PEB, with detailed contributions described in the following parts:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study mainly lies in the theoretical application and the integration of interdisciplinary theories as shown in the following five aspects:

First, it provides a new perspective of social interaction to study the driving factors of tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (PEB). Most studies on PEB are centered around internal factors (Han et al., 2017a; Miller et al., 2018), and usually ignore external factors such as the social interaction (Cho and Kang, 2017; Dolnicar et al., 2019). This study has introduced a new perspective of tourist interaction into the research of tourists' PEB. On one part, it discusses this influence on tourists' PEB in terms of relational level (interpersonal ties), collective level (group norms), and generalized level (social trust); on the other part, it integrates the two perspectives of "interaction" and "normalization" by combining the social capital theory with NAM model theory. In this way, the factors that affect the internal decision-making mechanism of tourists have been discussed from the perspective of "relationship level" and the theoretical research on the influence of social interaction on tourists' PEB thus enriched.

Second, enriches the research on the impact of environmental contextual factors on PEBs. At present, the studies on tourists' PEB mainly focus on tourists' internal factors to the neglect of the impact of environmental factors of tourist attractions on tourists' PEB (Lu et al., 2021; Qin and Hsu, 2022; Wu et al., 2021b). Since the environmental contextual factors are an essential part of the scenic spots, the environmental conditions around an individual may positively affect his/her environmental behaviors (Jamme et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2017). Through incorporating the environmental contextual factors into tourists' PEB and integrating the broken window theory with the NAM, this study has assessed the positive effects of environmental contextual factors on tourists' PEBs in an empirical way, which is of significance to provide a more comprehensive explanation for tourists' PEBs.

Third, the norm-behavior gap is further studied by introducing moderator-interpersonal ties and mediator-personal norms. Previous studies have demonstrated that interpersonal ties can greatly facilitate the spread of normative actions (Abrahamse and Steg, 2013), but limited environmental studies are aimed at the impact of interpersonal ties on enhancing the relationship between norms and behaviors. Personal norm is often shown to

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partially mediate the relationship between norms and pro-environmental behaviors, but from the angle of social interaction it is still far from being thoroughly studied (Qiu et al., 2018a; Landon et al.,2017). This study provides a holistic view in studying the group norms and pro-environmental behaviors under the backdrop of studies in China by looking at potential tourist interaction factors, the moderating effect of interpersonal ties and the mediating effect of personal norms which have been rarely studied before.

Fourth, develops the logical connotation of NAM. Awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility are considered to be the essential determinants in the NAM for pro-environmental behaviors (Gao et al., 2017). However, this is controversial about their relationship with personal norms (Li and Wu, 2019a; Sharma and Gupta, 2020) within the tour group. This study further explores the relationship between personal norm, awareness of consequences and ascription of responsibility in the context of Chinese tourist groups. It thus enriches the environmental research perspective and broadens NAM logical connotation and application context from social interaction, which is provided with specific significance in theoretical development and interdisciplinary theory fusion research.

Finally, enriches the theoretical research of tourists' PEB in China. The research on PEB has lured much attention from Western researchers. While tourists' pro-environmental behaviors in China has not received enough attention (Qiu et al., 2018b). Some measurements of PEB fail to meet China's national conditions (He et al., 2017; Li, 2015). Therefore, this thesis studies the tourists' PEB in the context of China by applying the measurements of PEB based on the characteristics of Chinese tourists. It can provide a new research model to explain the tourists' environmental behaviors in China and a new theoretical and comprehensive perspective for this study of Chinese tourism.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

On a practical level, this thesis focuses on cultivating and inspiring tourists' spontaneous pro-environmental behaviors. The study on this practical problem is helpful in promoting the sustainable development of China's tourism.

First, it provides a direction in destination managers cultivating tourists' pro-environmental behaviors (PEB) in tourist interaction. The present studies mainly focus on tourists' individual factors, and the corresponding practical countermeasures are primarily designed from the driving factors to improve tourists' PEB. However, this has neglected the influence of other tourists on some tourists' PEB and the path and mechanism of these interactive subjects' impact. This study aims to explore the mechanism of tourist interaction on the PEB of Chinese tourists and the internal mechanism of cognitive psychology that influences tourists in implementing PEB by interpersonal relationships, group

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norms and interpersonal trust. Moreover, it provides a knowledge base and practical reference for tourism managers to cultivate and stimulate tourists' spontaneous environmental protection behaviors relying on innovative management strategies such as tourist relationship management, group normative intervention, and environmental protection atmosphere cultivation.

Second, provides some suggestions on the destination managers in guiding tourists' PEB by improving the environmental contextual factors. According to the broken window theory, a good environmental condition can discourage peoples' inappropriate behaviors and protect the environment (Weele et al., 2017). Environmental factors can strongly affect people's behaviors and make them behave in a specific way (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). This study explores the mechanism of environmental contextual factors on the tourists' PEB as well as the driving mechanism of cognitive psychology that influences tourists in implementing PEB. This has provided a practical direction for tourism destination managers to develop corresponding environmental protection measures based on the environmental quality of scenic spot break the window-breaking effect, and cultivate the environmental behavior of tourists from the perspective of the environmental contextual factors.

Finally, provides a knowledge base for the intervention of Chinese government in tourists' PEB. The majority original ideas of the existing behavior policies of tourism environment originate in the theoretical research of Western scholars (Qiu et al., 2018b). However, the Western research findings on which these policies rely cannot always correctly explain the environmental behavior of Chinese tourists (He et al., 2017; Li, 2015). Therefore, taking Chinese tourists as the survey object, in this study, NAM is used as the theoretical basis to deeply study the internal driving mechanism of Chinese tourists' pro-environmental behaviors. Besides, the impact of problem consequences, environmental responsibility, and personal norms on tourists' environmental behaviors is analyzed. The results show that this study can provide a practical basis for Chinese tourism policymakers to formulate localized governance mechanisms of pro-environmental behaviors.

1.7   Definitions of Key Terms

Totally 11 key terms have been used in this thesis. Definitions of these key terms are adopted from early researchers. See Table 1.1 for the detailed definitions.

Table 1.1: Definitions of the terms

No	Construct	Definition	Source
1	Awareness of consequences	"Beliefs that environmental conditions pose threats to other people, other species, or the biosphere."	Stern et al., 1999, p. 85
2	Ascription of responsibility	"Actions they (individuals) initiate could avert those (negative)consequences."	Stern et al., 1999, p. 85
3	Personal norm	"Feelings of moral obligation for environmental preservation."	Schwartz and Howard, 1981, p. 191
4	Pro-environmental behavior	"Behavior that harms the environment as little as possible, or even benefits the environment."	Steg and Vlek, 2009, p.309
5	Tourist-to-Tourist Interaction	"The information exchange process between tourists through direct or indirect communication under the same tourism situation."	J. Huang, 2017, p. 13
6	Social capital	"Features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action."	Putnam, 1992, p.167
7	Interpersonal ties	"A presence of ongoing interpersonal networks, how members in a network relate to each other."	Cho and Kang, 2017, p. 287
8	Group norm	"A shared perception of social norms guiding what each member is supposed to feel obligated to do or not to do."	Cho and Kang, 2017, p. 287
10	Social trust	"Individuals' expectations of other members of society to act and behave in a way that is beneficial to these individuals or at least not detrimental to them."	Kwon, 2019, p.19
11	Environmental contextual factors	"Environmental situation of tourist site includes the health of the natural scenery, the neatness of the main street and the cleanliness of the public areas."	Wang et al., 2019b, 2019, p. 815

1.8   Organization of this thesis

For easy reading, this thesis is divided into six chapters. In Chapter 1, the research background, problem statement, questions, purpose, significance and scope of this study are introduced. Chapter 2 offers a literature review of some essential concepts, such as the theoretical literature of tourists' pro-environmental behaviors and tourist-to-tourist interaction. Chapter 3 outlines the conceptual framework of the research and proposes research hypotheses. Chapter 4 introduces the research methods and tools to analyze the data and Chapter 5 discusses the results of the data analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the main findings, discussion, limitations, and conclusions.

1.9   Conclusion

This Chapter introduces this study background, highlights the problem statement, and lists the scope, purpose, questions and significance of this study. The last part discusses the definitions of the variables used in the thesis. The next chapter introduces some important literature reviews used to form this research framework.

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