



Perceiving Ecotourism Awareness under Regulatory Fit, Volunteering Experience and Lifestyle

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ABSTRACT: Indonesia has high potencies of ecotourism attractions, including its natural biodiversity and traditional values spreading in various regions of the archipelagos. However, the shortcoming remains exhibited by many individuals showing poorly pro-environment behavior in tourism places regarding to environmentally and socially. Therefore, our study aims to observe the effect of regulatory fit manipulation (promotion-focus vs. prevention-focus) on increasing emotional involvement to improve ecotourism awareness and examine the antecedent factors that influence individuals' attitudes towards ecotourism attitudes, which are volunteering experience and consumptive lifestyle. This research is conducted by experimental research to examine two groups of participants under different regulatory fit manipulations (promotion-focus vs. prevention-focus). Data were analyzed by using the multivariate analysis method. Our study revealed that regulatory fit manipulation affects attitudes towards ecotourism, especially under different volunteering experiences and consumptive lifestyles. Thereby, we reveal that embodying regulatory fit for such an environmental campaign effectively enhances consumers' attitudes toward pro-environmental and ecotourism.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Ecotourism campaign, Regulatory fit, Volunteering experience, Lifestyle



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INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is considered the potentially effective way for sustainable development. This is the main reason why developing countries are now starting to include it in their economic development and conservation strategies (Khaledi Koure et al., 2023; Lasso & Dahles, 2021; Wondirad et al., 2020). Indonesia a developing country in the South East Asia region, has high potencies of ecotourism attractions, including its natural resources, natural biodiversity, and traditional values spreading in various regions of the archipelagos (Büscher & Davidov, 2016; Cheung, 2018; Kia, 2021). As per the 2019 report from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative

Economy, ecotourism constitutes roughly 35% of Indonesia's primary nature tourism offerings. Previous studies have argued that the future success of tourism destinations will be determined by those that enhance the well-being of their society through tourism and embrace new ways of sustainable living. This involves addressing issues of social responsibility and ethical practice, as well as fostering strong partnerships between society, government, and businesses ([Feriyanto et al., 2019](#); [Ismail et al., 2022](#); [Septemuryantoro, 2021](#)).

In light of these considerations, Indonesia must seize the opportunity presented by ecotourism to develop its tourism industry further and promote sustainability, both in terms of the environment and the economy, for the benefit of society in the future.

However, there are significant shortcomings that persist within society. Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in individuals exhibiting poor pro-environmental behavior in tourism destinations, affecting both the environment and the social fabric. Examples of this behavior include disturbing wildlife, littering in mountainous areas, and acts of vandalism. An alarming trend has emerged where many visitors engage in irresponsible photography in natural spots, causing substantial damage to these pristine places ([Lengieza et al., 2023](#); [Putranto et al., 2020](#); [Vaughn, 2022](#); [Wardle et al., 2021](#)). This highlights a concerning lack of awareness within society regarding the principles of sustainable tourism.

Moreover, as pointed out by ([Kia, 2021](#)), the drawbacks within the local community also play a role, with cultural barriers being a significant issue. Apathy and a low level of public awareness have been identified as prominent factors hindering the promotion of sustainable tourism practices. These cultural barriers underscore the need for comprehensive efforts to not only raise awareness but also to foster a deeper sense of responsibility and understanding among both tourists and the local population.

Considering these challenges, it becomes imperative for Indonesia to address these issues comprehensively and implement strategies that not only promote sustainable tourism practices but also enhance awareness, education, and cooperation among all stakeholders involved in the tourism industry.

Numerous previous studies have delved into various aspects of ecotourism, including its impacts and development ([Kia, 2021](#); [Lasso & Dahles, 2021](#); [Wondirad et al., 2020](#)), as well as ecotourist behavior ([Cini & Passafaro, 2019](#); [Perkins & Brown, 2012](#); [Singleton, 2016](#); [Walker & Moscardo, 2014](#)). However, the study investigating ecotourism awareness and attitudes remains relatively limited. Recognizing this gap in the literature, our study aims to address the issue by focusing on identifying more effective ecotourism campaign tools that can enhance awareness among the general populace. This research endeavor seeks to foster more pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors within society.

Numerous studies have proposed various strategies for mitigating environmental issues and fostering pro-environment attitudes ([Khetagurova Shotaevna, 2015](#); [Lee et al., 2020](#); [Meyer, 2015](#)). Previous research has underscored the significance of continuous, universal education as a fundamental pillar for establishing an ecological culture within society ([Khetagurova Shotaevna, 2015](#); [Meyer, 2015](#)). ([Lee et al., 2020](#)) have suggested that engaging in episodic future thinking can

play a pivotal role in altering individuals' perception of future events, making them seem psychologically closer. This concept implies that by allowing people to pre-experience climate change-related risk events, environmental consciousness can be heightened. Remarkably, their study revealed a positive correlation between engaging in episodic future thinking, an increased level of risk perception, and a greater inclination toward pro-environmental behavior.

Some scholars have presented evidence that tasks and decisions are assessed more favorably when employing regulatory fit as a framework ([Higgins et al., 2019](#); [Pertiwi et al., 2023](#); [Zhang et al., 2018](#)). Notably, previous research has indicated that regulatory focus can be primed by situational factors. In one such study, the role of regulatory focus was examined in relation to fit and hedonic food preferences. It was discovered that individuals with a high degree of impulsivity tend to spontaneously activate a heightened promotion focus when exposed to hedonically appealing foods, as part of their underlying goal structure. This insight into the influence of regulatory focus on decision-making and preferences highlights the importance of understanding how situational cues can shape our cognitive processes and affect our responses to various tasks and choices.

Hence, our study propose a strategy to enhance emotional engagement as a means to boost awareness of ecotourism and foster pro-environmental attitudes, thus addressing the prevailing issues through the concept of regulatory fit. The impact of regulatory fit has been well-documented in various contexts, such as encouraging healthy behavior changes, persuading consumers to make purchases, and amplifying the effectiveness of messages. By harnessing the power of regulatory fit, we aim to create persuasive and emotionally resonant messages that can inspire individuals to become more conscious of ecotourism's significance and, in turn, encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. This approach holds promise for not only promoting ecotourism but also for tackling broader environmental challenges by leveraging the inherent psychological mechanisms associated with regulatory fit.

Furthermore, our study also seeks to explore the influential factors that may shape individuals' attitudes toward ecotourism, specifically examining volunteering experience and consumptive lifestyle. Previous research has revealed that consumptive behavior significantly impacts both tourism consumption patterns and the inclination to travel more frequently. Additionally, social class and income have shown remarkable influence, particularly in the context of tourism consumption ([Li & Cao, 2022](#); [Malone et al., 2014](#)). Early studies have proposed that volunteers are driven by a combination of altruistic and egoistic value orientations. Altruistic value orientation reflects a concern for the welfare of society and the biosphere, emphasizing harmonious relationships over individual outcomes. Notably, ([Kim & Stepchenkova, 2019](#)) discovered that altruism can trigger environmentally responsible behavior among tourists at their destinations. Building upon this idea, we hypothesize that volunteering experience plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' ecotourism awareness attitudes.

Thus, The purpose of this study encompasses two primary objectives. First, it aims to explore the impact of regulatory fit on individuals' perception of ecotourism awareness attitudes. Second, the study seeks to examine the antecedent factors that can potentially influence individuals' attitudes toward ecotourism, specifically focusing on volunteering experience and consumptive lifestyle.

METHOD

Previous research examined the effect of regulatory fit manipulation and discovered that the effect of regulatory focus is able to increase persuasion, such as motivating healthy behavior change, convincing consumers to purchase their product, or increasing message effectiveness through experimental research. ([Higgins et al., 2019](#)). Thereby, Our study is conducted by using experimental research method and analyzing by multivariate analysis (ANOVA) to examine the robustness of regulatory fit manipulation (RFM) toward perceiving ecotourism attitudes by using pictures and to exhibit which groups of people with different backgrounds of volunteering experience and lifestyle after stimulated by the stimuli would have different attitudes towards ecotourism attitudes. As for the procedure, there are two major parts of the test that are used for the current study which are pre-test and real test procedure. We conduct the pretest to attain the manipulation stimuli for momentary regulatory focus. Moreover, the real test is conducted to investigate the role of regulatory focus.

Data Collection

Given our research's focus on urban participants from diverse Indonesian cities, we have employed a non-probability sampling approach, specifically convenience sampling. This method has been chosen due to its pragmatic utility in the preliminary exploration phase, facilitating the rapid and efficient acquisition of information, in line with established research methodology principle ([Sekaran & Bougie, 2016](#)).

To appropriately design manipulation stimuli, a pretest was conducted using a questionnaire adapted from Wang and Lee (2006) with participants. Initially, participants were provided with information regarding two distinct frames: promotion focus, characterized by an eager orientation towards messages emphasizing positive outcomes, and prevention focus, characterized by a vigilant approach that centers on averting negative outcomes. In the context of our study on ecotourism, participants were presented with statements evoking emotions related to the environment and society depicted in images, aiming to elicit either eagerness to visit the tourist destinations (for promotion focus) or a sense of concern for the tourist place (for prevention focus).

Following the pretest, we identified three pictures for each manipulation condition that were deemed the most representative. For the promotion focus condition, the selected images included picturesque coral reefs, serene beach scenery, and tourists enjoying their time beside the beach. In contrast, for the prevention focus condition, the chosen images featured scenes of polluted seas, damaged coral reefs, and distressed local children. All these images will be integrated into the actual questionnaire used in the subsequent phases of our research.

Afterward, in a real test, we distributed our questionnaire online. As for our procedure, to begin with, we randomly assigned participants to one of the two questionnaire types according to manipulation pictures condition (promotion vs. prevention). In the first part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to answer ten questions about lifestyle that would indicate their consumptive and modern lifestyle behavior, which was adopted by ([Sham et al., 2015](#)). Secondly,

we asked participants whether they had any volunteering experience or had no volunteering experience. Third, participants were stimulated by manipulation pictures. In promotion-picture conditions, participants would see beach scenery, undamaged coral reefs, and a person lying beside the beach. Moreover, we gave a message about the benefits of ecotourism. Whereas, in the prevention-picture condition, participants would see polluted beaches, destructive coral reefs, and one child with sad expressions. In addition, we gave participants a preventive message about the urging to preserve nature. Fourth, after being stimulated by the manipulation picture condition, we asked participants to answer about their perception towards the environment and ecotourism, which was adapted from Sinnappan and Rahman (2011) and modified to be more contextual about ecotourism. The table shows the reliability of the instrument variables namely consumptive lifestyle, perceiving volunteering experience, and perceiving ecotourism seriousness attitudes. The reliability of the items used to explain the three variables is all above the minimum recommended of 0.6.

Table 1. Reliability Test Analysis

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's, α
Consumptive Lifestyle	10	.800
Ecotourism Awareness Attitudes	5	.812

Source: Research data, 2022

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

237 respondents participated in this study. The table exhibits the general participants' demographic results.

Table 2. General Demographic

Category	N	%
Gender		
Men	103	43%
Women	134	57%
> 36	19	8%
Income		
< Rp.2,000,000	27	11%
Rp. 2,000,000 – Rp. 3,000,000	26	11%
Rp. 3,000,000 – Rp. 5,000,000	90	38%
Rp. 5,000,000 – Rp. 7,000,000	37	16%
> Rp. 7,000,000	57	24%

Source: Research data, 2022

As the first finding, the result of the main effects from regulatory focus manipulation by Univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that participants in the prevention-picture condition paid

more attention to and were greater perceived towards ecotourism attitudes than were those in the promotion-picture condition (M_{prevention}: 12.92 vs M_{promotion}: 12.45, F: 5.363, R² .022, p-value < .05; see table).

Table 3. The result of the main effects of regulatory focus manipulation

	N	M	SD
Regulatory Focus**			
Prevention	110	12.92	1.43
Promotion	127	12.45	1.62

sig: *p < 0.1, sig: ** p < 0.05, sig: *** p < 0.01, sig: **** p < 0.001

Dependent variable: ecotourism awareness attitudes

Source: Research data, 2022

Previous research stated that the regulatory focus can influence and increase people's evaluation such as motivating healthy behavior change, convincing consumers to purchase their product, or increasing message effectiveness (Pertiwi et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2018). Those indicate many ways in which fit can be implemented. Therefore, we extend these results to examine whether the regulatory focus effect may motivate people towards perceiving an ecotourism awareness attitude.

Moreover, we further examine the role of regulatory focus towards participants' lifestyle and volunteering experience by conducting three interacting effects we used a 2 (manipulation picture: promotion versus prevention) x 2 (consumptive lifestyle: higher versus lower) x 2 (volunteering experience: with versus without) between-subject design ANOVA.

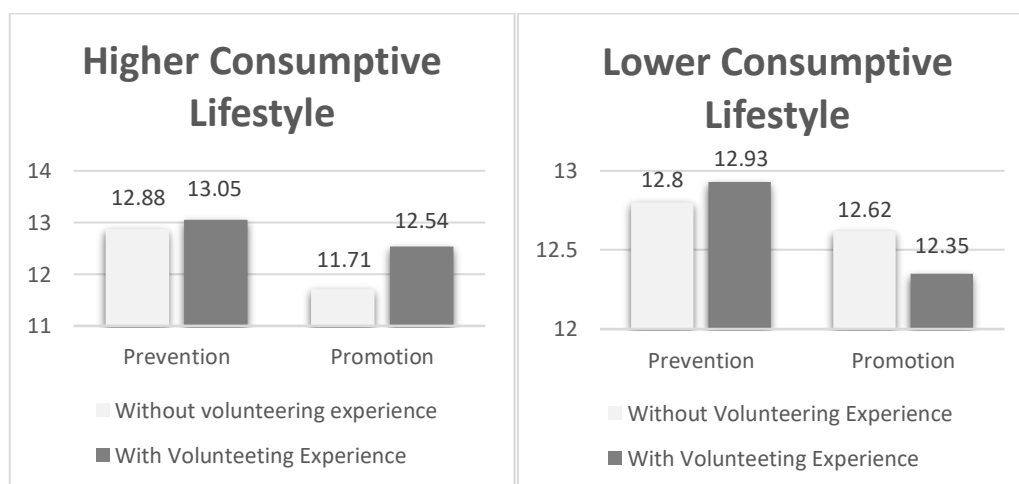


Figure 1. Comparison between Higher and Lower Consumptive People in Perceiving Ecotourism Attitudes

Source: Research data, 2022

In general, our result shows that participants with higher consumptive lifestyles have greater perceiving ecotourism attitudes score when they were stimulated by the prevention picture, no

matter if whether they never had volunteering experience or had volunteering experience before. Likewise, the participants with lower consumptive lifestyles also showed greater perceiving ecotourism attitudes score when they were stimulated by the prevention picture, no matter whether they never had volunteering experience or had volunteering experience before as the figure is shown below. It revealed that there is no interacting effect between lifestyle, volunteering experience, and regulatory focus ($F: .936$, $R^2: .040$, $p\text{-value} > .30$). As mentioned by previous research, ([Kvasova, 2015](#)) revealed that the Big Five personality traits dimensions namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism are associated positively with pro-environmental tourist behavior yet no significant relationship between them. Therefore, our findings extend that the relationship between consumptive lifestyle, volunteering experience, and regulatory fit also show insignificant differences.

Specifically, participants with lower consumptive behavior showed insignificant differences towards perceiving ecotourism attitudes, whether they have any volunteering experience or without volunteering experience and either stimulated by prevention or promotion pictures. ($F: 1.676$, $R^2: .019$, $p\text{ value} > 0.1$). On the other hand, the notable finding was shown by the group of participants who had a higher consumptive lifestyle without volunteering experience. Specifically, our result also shows that only participants with higher consumptive lifestyles are affected significantly by regulatory focus manipulation towards perceiving ecotourism attitudes than those participants with lower consumptive lifestyles. The participants with higher consumptive lifestyle and those without volunteering experience significantly show greater ecotourism attitude intention when stimulated using the prevention frame than using the promotion frame ($F: 3998$, $R^2 .188$, $p = .05$). Conversely, when participants who have higher consumptive lifestyle without volunteering experience were stimulated by promotion picture, the result towards ecotourism attitude was decreased ($F: 5.974$, $R^2: .057$, $p\text{-value} < .0.05$). Our finding shows that consumptive value plays a role in perceiving ecotourism awareness behavior.

CONCLUSION

This current study unveils several noteworthy findings. Firstly, it emerged that urban societies exhibited more favorable attitudes towards the environment and ecotourism when exposed to prevention-focus pictures rather than promotion-focus pictures. However, it's important to note that the impact of regulatory fit was contingent upon individuals' consumptive lifestyles. Specifically, the study demonstrated that regulatory fit had a significant influence on those with higher consumptive lifestyles but did not yield a discernible effect on individuals with lower consumptive and modern lifestyles.

A related insight can be drawn from the work of ([Maeng et al., 2013](#)), who suggest that the efficacy of regulatory fit manipulation may vary based on environmental conditions. For instance, they propose that delivering messages emphasizing harm avoidance (prevention focus) might be more persuasive to shoppers in crowded environments, while messages highlighting benefits (promotion focus) could be more effective for shoppers in less crowded environments. These findings underscore the nuanced interplay between regulatory fit and contextual factors, shedding light on the potential applications of these principles in diverse settings.

Additional findings from this study illuminate the relationship between perceived volunteering attitudes and ecotourism attitudes. Interestingly, we did not find support for the hypothesis that having volunteering experience would lead to a greater inclination towards ecotourism attitudes compared to those without such experience. Surprisingly, there was no significant difference between these two groups in terms of their attitudes. Furthermore, when examining the results of the three-way interaction, our findings revealed noteworthy distinctions among individuals who lacked volunteering experience and had high consumptive lifestyles when exposed to regulatory focus manipulations. Specifically, this group exhibited differential responses: they appeared to be less persuaded towards ecotourism attitudes when exposed to promotion-focused stimuli but more receptive when presented with prevention-focused stimuli. These nuanced interactions highlight the complexity of factors influencing ecotourism attitudes, shedding light on the interplay between volunteering experience, regulatory focus, and consumptive lifestyles in shaping individual perceptions.

Therefore, this result gives us a new finding in regulatory focus research, that regulatory focus only affects people who have highly consumptive modern lifestyles and do not have engaged in any volunteering experience before. It indicates that showing prevention pictures will increase their intention towards ecotourism attitudes, whereas will decrease when showing promotion pictures.

To sum up, our study revealed that the factors which are lifestyle, regulatory focus, and volunteering experience play different roles. Firstly, for consumptive value, only those with a high consumptive lifestyle are easily controlled by regulatory focus. They perceive a lower attitude towards ecotourism when stimulated by the promotion frame. They perceive a greater attitude toward ecotourism attitudes after being stimulated by the prevention frame, even much greater although they do not have any volunteering experience. Secondly, regulatory focus plays a significant role when people need low processing involvement, therefore, it effectively increases ecotourism attitudes in society. People who have volunteering experience, no matter whether they have been stimulated by promotion or prevention frame, mostly choose more environmental concern activities. Whereas, those without volunteering experience, are easier to drive. For instance, in general, they are more preferred with tours that have more hedonic activities. However, once they were stimulated in prevention conditions, they partially changed their alternative and chose less hedonic and more environmental concern activities. These insights emphasize the nuanced interplay between regulatory focus, lifestyle choices, and prior volunteering experience, offering valuable contributions to our understanding of how these factors intersect to shape individual attitudes and behaviors.

Our study offers a valuable contribution to the field of ecotourism, particularly in the realms of ecotourism campaigns and marketing tools. Through our research, we provide insights into enhancing message persuasiveness, which can be instrumental for destination management organizations (DMOs) aiming to bolster pro-environmental and ecotourism attitudes among their target audience.

Specifically, our findings suggest that incorporating a prevention-focused message into environmental campaigns can effectively elevate consumers' attitudes towards pro-environmental and ecotourism initiatives. This revelation has the potential to guide DMOs in crafting more impactful and resonant messages.

Furthermore, DMOs may also consider organizing volunteering activities encompassing charitable endeavors, environmental conservation efforts, or community support initiatives. Such initiatives have the potential to positively influence consumers' attitudes towards ecotourism, thereby fostering a more favorable outlook on sustainable travel practices and environmental stewardship.

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