



PLANNING MALAYSIA:

Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners

VOLUME 23 ISSUE 3 (2025), Page 165 – 179

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED VALUE ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF GREEN TOURISTS IN HULUNBUIR GRASSLAND, CHINA

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Abstract

This paper reviews relevant research on green tourism, extends the Theory of Planned behavior (TPB) model, perceived value, and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, and develops a mechanism model to investigate how perceived value influences green tourists' behavioral intentions in the context of the Hulunbuir Grassland. To address the research gap concerning the underlying mechanisms influencing tourists' behavioral intentions in the context of green tourism, this study collected and analysed data from 311 green tourists. Statistical techniques were employed to examine the data, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses and validate the theoretical framework. Empirical findings indicate that perceived value consists of four dimensions—environmental, emotional, functional, and social value—with environmental value exerting the strongest positive influence on green tourists' behavioral intentions. However, the effects of behavioral attitude and perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention were found to be statistically insignificant, whereas subjective norms exhibited a significant influence. The primary contribution of this study lies in the integrated application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), perceived value theory, and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework to the context of green tourism. This comprehensive theoretical model underscores the pivotal role of perceived value in shaping tourists' behavioral intentions. This provides a scientific basis and practical guidance for policy formulation aimed at green tourism development in Hulunbuir Grassland, thereby promoting its sustainable tourism growth. The novelty of the research stems from its comprehensive analysis of these roles of environmental, emotional, functional, and social values in green tourism through a multidimensional approach to perceived value, addressing gaps in existing literature and enhancing the understanding of factors affecting green tourists' behavioral intentions.

Keywords: Perceived Value, behavioral Intention, TPB, Green Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is one of the most visible and rapidly growing sectors in the global economy, playing a crucial role in driving national economies (Manzoor., 2019). While tourism is recognized for its role in promoting economic advancement, it also brings about significant detrimental impacts. The environmental impacts of the tourism industry have become increasingly prominent. Many studies show that tourism is one of the main causes of global warming (Koçak et al., 2020). Tourism-related direct carbon emissions are estimated to contribute approximately 5% to the world's total carbon output. (Li et al., 2022). These impacts can cause long-term damage to local ecosystems, weakening the sustainability and attractiveness of the tourism industry.

As the concept of sustainable development has penetrated the tourism industry, the concept of green tourism has emerged globally as a key industry for balancing economic development and environmental conservation. As a balanced industry, green tourism expands and strengthens the link between tourism and conservation (Stronza, Hunt, & Fitzgerald ,2022). Green tourism emphasizes environmental protection, sustainable development, cultural preservation, and the promotion of environmental awareness and responsibility among tourists through tourism activities. Once the concept of green tourism was introduced, it was widely recognized by the international community and academics. Staying in green hotels reflects positive environmental behavior (Song & Soopramanien, 2019), green management improves the sustainable performance of the tourism industry (Raharjo.,2019), and green tourism can act as a catalyst for economic restructuring, provide population stability. There is broad scholarly consensus that green tourism, as a sustainable form of tourism, plays a vital role in shaping the growth and competitiveness of emerging tourist destinations. (Lu et al., 2021). In this context, the study of green tourism is crucial to better understand and promote the sustainable development of tourism destinations. This research focuses on analysing the effect of perceived value on tourists' behavioral intentions in the Hulunbuir Grassland, with the objective of constructing a theoretical model to explain the behavioral dynamics of green tourists in this region. The results of this study will provide deeper insights into the tourism industry in the Hulunbuir grasslands and thus facilitate the transition of tourism towards the goal of sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOR model

SOR model holds that external stimuli produce emotional changes through individual subjective active processing. After 1982, some scholars gradually introduced SOR model into marketing and consumer behavior, and established the theory that the stimulus generated by marketing environment or marketing

content affects purchasing decision by changing consumers' internal perception. In this paper, SOR model is used to understand the individual psychological state and physiological state of tourists. Tourists' perceived value to Hulunbuir Grassland is an external stimulus, which is ultimately reflected in tourists' individual behavior (behavioral intention), in which behavioral attitude, behavioral norms and perceived behavior control are organic variables.

Stimulus variable: Perceived Value

The concept of perceived value as a stimulus variable in the SOR model derives from consumer behavior theory, which considers consumers' feelings and attitudes to understand their tendency to be attracted to products or services (Y. Yu et al., 2023). This paper is based on an analysis of the current state of green tourism in the Hulunbuir Grasslands. It proposes that the perceived value of green tourists can be divided into four categories: environmental, social, emotional and functional. Bala.(2023) pointed out that environmental value affects people's willingness to buy organic and environmentally friendly products. Therefore, the environmental value of green tourism in this paper refers to the perceived value tourists place on the protection, uniqueness of the natural landscape, biodiversity, and ecosystem. Social value includes the value of the product in enhancing the social status or significance of the consumer in the social circle, including the recognition and appreciation of others (Zhang et al., 2020). Based on these concepts, taking Hulunbuir Grassland as the background, this paper defines tourists' social perceived value of green tourism as the perceived utility of tourists' communication with specific social groups. Emotion is an important factor affecting social behavior (Iweala et al., 2019). In this study, emotional value refers to the affective benefits that green tourists derive from engaging in green tourism activities. Watanabe et al. (2020) believe that the perceived practical value of organic food is closely related to its functional value. The functional value of green tourism mentioned in this paper refers to the value obtained by green tourists when they choose Hulunbuir Grassland as a tourist destination.

Organismic variables: Behavioral Attitudes (BA), Behavioral Norms (BN) and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

TPB is a universally applied and suggested theory for predicting human behavior that claims individuals tend to act by changing their attitudes (Darmansyah et al., 2020). This study adopts TPB as the theoretical basis because it is suitable and able to explain the relationship between the key variables and factors of this study. Based on analyzing the current situation of green tourism in Hulunbuir City, the paper proposes three dimensions of green tourism planning behavior theory: Green Tourism Behavior Attitude (GTBA), Green Tourism Subjective Norms (GTSN), and Green Tourism Perceived Behavioral Control (GTPBC).

Behavioral attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation of a specific behavior, reflecting both positive and negative perceptions, and indicating their tendency to support or oppose engaging in that behavior.

SN is an individual's perception of social pressure when performing a certain behavior. Therefore, individuals' beliefs and behaviors may be shaped by influential figures in their social environment, such as family, religious authorities, or political figures (Ghaderi et al., 2019). Individuals are influenced by important people or organizations around them when deciding whether to perform a behavior, which affects their behavioral decisions.

PBC describes how individuals evaluate the potential obstacles they might face when attempting to carry out a specific behavior. PBC is based on the belief that control is available. These beliefs are related to factors that may promote or hinder the implementation of the behavior, including required skills and abilities, time, money, and other resources (Ajzen, 2020).

Response variable behavioral Intention

Tourists' BI are a critical area of interest for the tourism industry, significantly influencing destination development (Afshardoost & Eshaghi2020). Drawing from existing literature, this paper posits that tourists' green tourism behavioral intentions encompass their tendencies in selecting tourism destinations, engaging in tourism activities, and utilizing environmental resources (Ibnou-Laaroussi et al., 2020). These intentions involve tourists' willingness and behavior concerning their choice of destinations, modes of participation in tourism activities, and efforts in protecting and sustainably using environmental resources (Shen & Shen., 2021).

Research hypotheses

Relationship between PV and BA, SN and PBC

Tran & Le.,(2020) stated that perceived value, as a new paradigm, is a crucial prerequisite for forming behavioral intentions. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that perceived customer value serves as a robust predictor of both customer satisfaction and consumers' purchase intentions. PV encompasses perceived benefit and perceived risk (Loh & Hassan, 2022). An elevated perceived value in green tourism is typically linked to more positive tourist attitudes toward such experiences. At the same time, perceived value is not fixed; it can vary across individuals based on personal needs and contextual factors, and may also be shaped by the influence of others. This is because consumers are affected by their friends, relatives, co-workers, business associates, or others around them.

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated.

- H1: PV positively impacts BA.
- H1a: EV positively impacts BA.
- H1b: SV positively impacts BA.
- H1c: EMV positively impacts BA.
- H1d: FV positively impacts BA.
- H2: PV positively impacts SN.
- H2a: EV positively impacts SN.
- H2b: SV positively impacts SN.
- H2c: EMV positively impacts SN.
- H2d: FV positively impacts SN.
- H3: PV is positively related to PBC
- H3a: EV is positively related to PBC
- H3b: SV is positively related to PBC
- H3c: EMV is positively related to PBC
- H3d: FV is positively related to PBC

The association among PA, SN, PBC and BI

Lee et al. (2020) **found** that both attitude and telepresence **act as mediators** influencing **BI** in the relationship between VR quality factors and **BI**. The findings of Hassan et al. (2021) demonstrated that PA and PBC were key predictors positively influencing BI in ecotourism settings. SN **mean** that individuals are influenced by important people or **organizations** around them in their **behavioral** choices. The more supportive the people or **organizations** around them are, the stronger the willingness to perform, and the less pressure the individual feels. Numerous scholars have argued that individuals' **BI** are significantly influenced by external pressures (Saari et al., 2021). Lin & Roberts. (2020) **conducted an in-depth study** on TPB and proposed that SN **is considered the main predictor** of **BI** influencing food security. In addition to their personal **behavior**, tourists participating in green tourism to the Hulunbuir Grassland are often influenced by their family, friends, colleagues, the media, and other surrounding environmental factors. Positive media representation of the Hulunbuir Grassland, coupled with social support from family and friends, can significantly enhance tourists' willingness to revisit and their likelihood of recommending the destination to others. In contrast, negative media coverage or lack of social endorsement may reduce these intentions. Ajzen. (2020) argues that the behavior of individuals is very complex, and that the behavior of individuals can be affected by other people or factors in addition to their own attitudes and intentions. These factors may hinder or constrain consumers from producing actual **behavior**. Therefore, Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action by incorporating the construct of PBC, thereby enhancing its explanatory power. In tourism-related research, PBC

has been empirically validated as a mediating factor influencing consumers' intention to repurchase hotel mobile payment services Sun et al.(2020). Based on this theoretical foundation and prior findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: PA, SN, PBC positively impact BI

H4a: PA positively impacts BI

H4b: SN positively impacts BI

H4c: PBC positively impacts BI

The influential relationship between PA and BI

It has been argued that analysing behavior through perceived value provides a better understanding of **behavior** (Oriade & Schofield, 2019). Perceived value is the most **critical determinant** of customer **behavior** (Peng et al., 2019). Perceived value tends to influence human behavioral intention by affecting its two main dimensions. A high perceived value of a product or service increases consumers' willingness to reuse it, thus strengthening their intention to revisit. Afshardoost & Eshaghi, (2020) stated that expectations and perceived value **have a greater effect** on **revisit intention** than satisfaction and visitor management. Most of the related literature confirms a significant positive relationship between PA and BI (Ghorbanzadeh et al.,2021). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: PV positively impacts BI

H5a: EV positively impacts BI

H5b: SV positively impacts BI

H5c: EMV positively impacts BI

H5d: FV positively impacts BI

Based on prior research, this study developed a conceptual model, as illustrated in Figure 1.

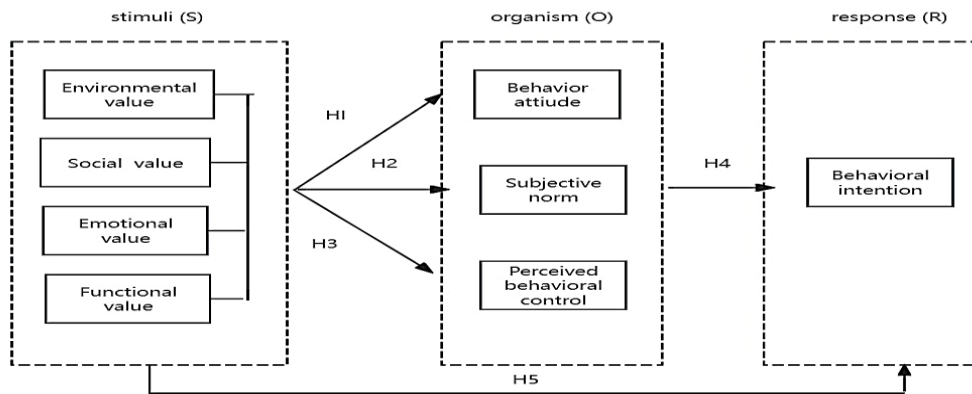


Figure 1: Conceptual model
Source: Author's Analysis

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection

The Hulunbuir Grassland was selected as the study site owing to its abundant ecotourism resources and its prominence as a major green tourism destination that appeals to environmentally conscious travellers. The respondents of this study were green tourists. The study population included Chinese green tourists who had visited or were currently visiting the Hulunbuir Grassland. Since green tourists differ from ordinary tourists and no specific tourism organization in China caters exclusively to them, the AAAA National Wetland Park in the Hulunbuir Grassland was selected for this study due to its high ecological protection requirements. This study involved the design and distribution of a self-administered questionnaire to tourists visiting or travelling to the Hulunbuir Grassland. The data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS software, with SEM methodology providing descriptive and statistical results.

Measures

This study employed a five-point Likert scale for all items, with response options ranging from 1 ("totally disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The formal questionnaire was collected in the AAAA National Wetland Park of the Hulunbuir Grassland, which was primarily frequented by tourists visiting the Hulunbuir Grassland. Three hundred seventy-four people participated in filling out the questionnaire from May 1 to May 15, 2024, of which three hundred eleven questionnaires were valid, resulting in an effective recovery rate of 83.1%. The valid questionnaires were statistically analysed, as shown in Table 1.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic and general characteristics of the 311 respondents who participated in this study. Firstly, the number of men and women is relatively balanced, approximately 9:10. Individuals aged 26 to 55 years make up 80.39%, indicating that the primary demographic engaging in green tourism at the Hulunbuir Grassland is middle-aged individuals. Their incomes are predominantly in the range of 5,000 yuan. Given their age, most hold a bachelor's degree.

Regarding respondents' occupations, 43.9% are employees of enterprise companies, followed by freelancers (17.04%) and students (12.86%). Age, education, and income enable the respondents to have a certain level of knowledge about green tourism and the means to choose green tourism options. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the respondents in this study are representative.

Table1: Sample profile(n=311)

		N	%
Gender	Male	148	47.59
	Female	163	52.41
Age	18-25	40	12.86
	26-35	76	24.44
	36-45	112	36.01
	46-55	62	19.94
	56-65	21	6.75
Educational level	High school or below	42	13.5
	associate degree	121	38.91
	Bachelor's Degree	133	42.77
	Master degree or above	15	4.82
Monthly income (¥)	Less than3,000	65	20.9
	3,000 to 5,000	149	47.91
	5,000 to 10,000	76	24.44
	Greater than 10,000	21	6.75
Job	Student	40	12.86
	Party and Government Organizations	7	2.25
	Institutions	38	12.22
	Employees of enterprises and companies	134	43.09
	Self-employed	13	4.18
	Freelancers	53	17.04
	Farmers	1	0.32
	Retirees	20	6.43
	Military Personnel	4	1.29
	Others	1	0.32

Source: questionnaire survey & Author's Calculation

Reliability and Validity analyses

Table 2 reports a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.936 for the questionnaire, indicating excellent internal reliability based on SPSS 22.0 analysis. This value exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.900, suggesting excellent internal consistency of the instrument. CR values for each dimension of the research constructs exceeded the threshold of 0.70, suggesting satisfactory internal consistency and overall reliability of the questionnaire. As shown in Table 3, the overall KMO of the questionnaire in the KMO Bartlett's test is 0.936. This high value, approaching the upper bound of the scale, indicates excellent sampling adequacy and confirms that the data are appropriate for conducting factor analysis, suggesting that meaningful underlying factors can be extracted. KMO measures for each variable dimension are above 0.685, reflecting a suitable level of sampling adequacy and confirming the robustness of the questionnaire's construct validity. Combining the above analyses, further modelling can be done. The analysed parameters for each dimension of model reliability and validity are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The summary table of reliability and validity analysis parameter

Factors and Items	Item	Standardized Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	KMO
Environmental Value(EV)	EV1	.79	.87	.83	.62	.74
	EV2	.79				
	EV3	.79				
Social Value(SV)	SV1	.79	.90	.86	.60	.84
	SV2	.76				
	SV3	.78				
	SV4	.76				
Emotional Value(EV)	EV1	.79	.93	.88	.60	.91
	EV2	.75				
	EV3	.79				
	EV4	.79				
	EV5	.76				
Function Value(FV)	FV1	.79	.90	.84	.58	.85
	FV2	.74				
	FV3	.75				
	FV4	.77				
Behavioral Attitude(BA)	BA1	.78	.90	.85	.59	.85
	BA2	.75				
	BA3	.76				
	BA4	.79				
Subjective Norms(SN)	SN1	.78	.88	.84	.64	.74
	SN2	.79				
	SN3	.84				
	PBC1	.77	.86	.82	.60	.74
	PBC2	.80				

Factors and Items	Item	Standardized Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	KMO
Perceived behavioral Control(PBC)	PBC3	.77	.936	.90	.64	.91
	BI1	.79				
behavioral Intentions(BI)	BI2	.84				
	BI3	.81				
	BI4	.81				
	BI5	.75				

Source: questionnaire survey & Author's Calculation

Correlation analysis

In order to test hypotheses H1 to H5, this paper uses AMOS24.0 software to draw the influence paths between each variable based on the conceptual model constructed in Figure 1, and fits the model using maximum likelihood method. Table 3 presents the model fit indices, all of which fall within acceptable thresholds, suggesting that the structural equation model demonstrates a satisfactory overall fit.

Table 3: Model adaptation level

Targets	Numerical value	Fit criteria	Fit result
CMIN (Chi-Square Minimum Discrepancy)	87	-	Better
DF (Degrees of Freedom)	501.738	-	Better
CMIN/DF (Chi-Square Minimum Discrepancy / Degrees of Freedom)	1.227	<3	Better
GFI (Goodness-of-Fit Index)	0.909	>0.9	Better
NFI (Normed-of-Fit Index)	0.934	>0.9	Better
IFI (Incremental Fit Index)	0.987	>0.9	Better
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.027	<0.05	Better
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.985	>0.9	Better
RFI (Relative Fit Index)	0.985	>0.9	Better
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.987	>0.9	Better

Source: questionnaire survey & Author's Calculation

Before performing SEM, it is essential to evaluate the model's goodness-of-fit to ensure its adequacy for representing the observed data. In this study, a series of widely accepted fit indices were employed, including CMIN, degrees of freedom (DF), CMIN/DF, GFI, NFI, IFI, RMSEA, TLI, CFI, RFI, and CFFI. According to the results presented in the model fit table, the value of CMIN/DF is 1.227, which is well below the recommended threshold of 3, indicating a good fit. The values of other fit indices are as follows: GFI = 0.909, NFI = 0.934, IFI = 0.987, TLI = 0.985, RFI = 0.925, and CFI = 0.987—all exceeding the commonly accepted cutoff value of 0.90, suggesting that the model

demonstrates strong goodness-of-fit. Moreover, the RMSEA value is 0.027, which is below the recommended maximum of 0.05, further supporting the model's suitability. Taken together, these fit indices indicate that the structural equation model developed in this study fits the empirical data well. The model specification is therefore deemed appropriate for subsequent hypothesis testing and path analysis.

Hypothesis testing

As illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 4, the hypothesized relationships were confirmed among the stimulus variable (PV), the organismic variables (BA, SN, and PBC), and the response variable (BI). All four dimensions of PV positively impact BA, SN, and PBC although the strength of these effects varied. Specifically, FV ($\beta = 0.261$, $p < 0.001$) and SV ($\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$) were identified as the most significant factors influencing BA. EV ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$) and EMV ($\beta = 0.184$, $p < 0.01$) also demonstrated significant beneficial effects, though their influence was relatively weaker.

Table 4: Path coefficients of structural equation model

Hypothetical	Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardization coefficient
H1a	EV→BA	0.154	0.07	2.217	0.027	0.16
H1b	SV→BA	0.28	0.066	4.217	***	0.286
H1c	EMV→BA	0.172	0.06	2.864	0.004	0.184
H1d	FV→BA	0.266	0.066	4.02	***	0.261
H2a	EV→SN	0.347	0.084	4.147	***	0.324
H2b	SV→SN	0.16	0.077	2.079	0.038	0.148
H2c	EMV→SN	0.14	0.071	1.977	0.048	0.135
H2d	FV→SN	0.248	0.077	3.204	0.001	0.22
H3a	EV→PBC	0.086	0.082	1.051	0.293	0.084
H3b	SV→PBC	0.136	0.077	1.77	0.077	0.131
H3c	EMV→PBC	0.321	0.072	4.46	***	0.326
H3d	FV→PBC	0.262	0.077	3.379	***	0.244
H4a	EV→BI	0.114	0.079	1.438	0.151	0.099
H4b	SV→BI	0.314	0.069	4.539	***	0.303
H4c	EMV→BI	-0.04	0.069	-0.577	0.564	-0.037
H5a	EV→BI	0.268	0.083	3.232	0.001	0.241
H5b	SV→BI	0.096	0.076	1.264	0.206	0.085
H5c	EMV→BI	0.109	0.071	1.535	0.125	0.102

H5d	FV→BI	0.127	0.079	1.603	0.109	0.108
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Source: questionnaire survey & Author's Calculation

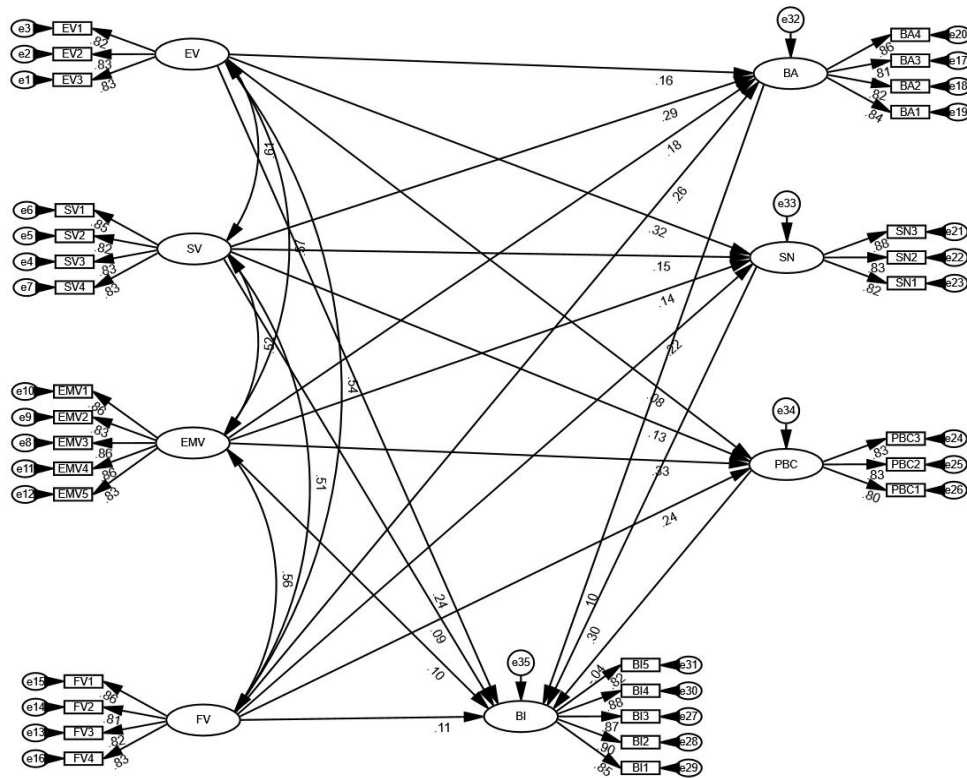


Figure 2: The influence mechanism model of the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention

Source: questionnaire survey & Author's Calculation

Among the four dimensions of PV influencing SN, EV exerted the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < 0.001$). Although FV ($\beta = 0.220$, $p < 0.01$), SV ($\beta = 0.148$, $p < 0.05$), and EMV ($\beta = 0.135$, $p < 0.05$) also had statistically significant impacts, their effects were comparatively weaker than that of EV.

Regarding PBC, PV ($\beta = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$) and FV ($\beta = 0.244$, $p < 0.001$) played a dominant role. In contrast, SV ($\beta = 0.131$, $p = 0.077$) and EV ($\beta = 0.084$, $p = 0.293$) had relatively limited effects, with SV being significant at the 0.1 level and EV not being significant. All four dimensions of PV exhibited positive influences on BA, SN, and PBC, albeit to varying extents. Notably, the strength of these effects and their relative contributions differed across the respective dependent variables.

According to the results presented in Table 4, a meaningful favorable association was found between SN and BI ($\beta = 0.303$, $p < 0.001$), whereas no significant influence was detected for BA ($\beta = 0.099$, $p = 0.151$) and PBC ($\beta = -0.037$, $p = 0.564$).

As shown in Table 4, EV exerted the strongest direct effect on BI ($\beta = 0.241$, $p < 0.01$), providing partial support for Hypothesis H5. Although Functional Value ($\beta = 0.108$, $p = 0.109$), EMV ($\beta = 0.102$, $p = 0.125$), and SV ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.206$) also demonstrated positive effects, none of these reached statistical significance.

CONCLUSION

By applying a questionnaire-based approach combined with SEM, this paper explores the influence of PV on tourists' BI in the context of Hulunbuir Grassland. The results are summarized as follows:

PV—comprising EV, EMV, FV, and SV—positively influences GTBI. Among these, EV demonstrates the most pronounced impact, indicating that a heightened sense of environmental responsibility and ecological awareness directly motivates individuals to engage in green tourism activities. To this end, the Hulunbuir Grassland government should strengthen environmental protection efforts, such as restoring grassland and wetland ecosystems, addressing pollution problems, and implementing policies to mitigate human impacts. Finally, SN is the most significant factor affecting BI. These findings highlight that the opinions and expectations of significant others have a considerable influence on tourists' decisions to engage in green tourism. In the context of Chinese culture, the influence of social norms on BI is particularly strong, and collective norms and social expectations are influential. By contrast, neither BA nor PBC demonstrates a statistically significant direct influence on BI. Moreover, this study provides both theoretical support and practical guidance for formulating policies aimed at advancing green tourism in the Hulunbuir Grassland, thereby fostering the sustainable development of the local tourism industry.

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Received: 6th February 2025. Accepted: 19th May 2025