

An Exploratory Analysis of the Relationship between Attitudes and Environmental Behaviors exhibited in England

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to statistically model and examine the relationship between various attitudinal factors and pro-environmental behaviours exhibited in England. In doing this, numerous socio-psychological theories and models of human behaviour will be engaged with. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in particular will be utilized. TPB has 3 explanatory components which contribute to behavioural intention and subsequent behaviour. These are:

Subjective Norms: An individual's perception of social normative pressures.

Perceived Behavioural Control: An individual's perceived ease or difficulty of performing a particular behaviour.

Attitude towards Behaviour: Positive or negative evaluation of self performance of the particular behaviour.

Incorporating the TPB model within this study will provide a greater understanding of the attitudinal influences on behaviours as well as a framework of vital components to be included when statistically modelling behaviour. The TPB will also aid in understanding and interpreting the resulting model.

Research Questions

- What is the strength of the relationship between attitudinal factors and environmental behaviours?
- Does the influence of attitudes vary with different forms of pro-environmental behaviour?
- What level of responsibility for environmental improvement is attributed to individuals?

- Which attitudinal components of the TPB have the strongest relationship with pro-environmental behaviour?
- How does the strength of the attitude / behaviour relationship differ by region/area?

Answering such questions would provide a contribution to knowledge on human behaviour and the relationship between society and the natural environment.

Method

The research questions will be answered through secondary data analysis of 'The Survey of Public Attitudes and Behaviors towards the Environment'. This survey was commissioned by The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), together with the Energy Saving Trust and was conducted in 2009. This survey demonstrates a high level of suitability through its comprehensive investigation of environmental behaviours. This is implemented through both a broad examination of generalised environmental behaviour as well as a focus on four specific forms: recycling, travel, home and food. This pre-existing categorisation allows for comparisons to be made between different forms of behaviour with greater ease. The questionnaire also enquires into perceived levels of responsibility for such behaviours (i.e. individual, collective) as well as the frequency of some of these behaviours allowing for an examination of potentially habituated behaviour.

With regards to the measurement of attitudes, the survey consists of questions pertaining to the participants perceived role in improving the environment; their perceived level of control; evaluation of the

current state of the environment as well as how social factors interfere with their ability to perform pro-environmental behaviours. There is as such sufficient data to adequately model environmental behaviour with the use of the TPB as a theoretical framework.

The focus of the study implies a causal relationship between attitudes and behaviours. As such, a form of causal modeling has been deemed the most suitable approach. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a complex method used to estimate and test causal relationships. It is derived from and serves purposes similar to multiple regression, but accounts for, to a greater extent, the modelling of interactions, non-

linearities, correlated independents and measurement error. SEM also combines aspects from multiple regression, path analysis, factor analysis, time series analysis, and analysis of covariance.

Using the TPB as a theoretical framework, variables can be used to generate factors which reflect the explanatory components of the TPB, these can then be subsequently modelled using SEM to establish the strength of the numerous causal relationships between these factors.

This research is in its early stages, any comments or suggests would be much appreciated.