

# Forming Responsible Behavior of Tourists in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh: The Mediating Role of Social Norms

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## ABSTRACT

The tourist industry plays a major role in the economies of both wealthy and poor countries. In addition to creating a variety of revenue-generating opportunities, tourism also causes a number of issues for society at large. Tourists may engage in a variety of irresponsible behaviors, such as littering, using unsanitary restrooms, smoking in public, vying for seats, talking loudly, taking pictures without permission, picking flowers from tree branches, etc., which could hinder the growth of sustainable tourism destinations and compromise the dignity of visitors. It's equally critical to comprehend the elements that lead to good tourism practices and the reasons behind irresponsible tourism practices. Therefore, encouraging responsible tourism could be a key priority for countries looking to increase tourism's competitiveness. Yet, scientific research in this field is still neglected. The purpose of this study is to investigate the variables that affect visitors' responsible travel practices in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh. Investigating the connections between attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and social norms in relation to responsible tourism behavior is the aim of this study. This study presents a theoretical framework for responsible tourism behavior using the widely used theory of planned behavior (TPB). The study evaluates the relationship between attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control using social norms as the mediating variable. Convenient sampling was employed to gather data from 421 respondents who had previously visited the Sundarbans using a questionnaire, and PLS-SEM software was utilized for data analysis. The findings show that social norms partially mediate the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and responsible tourism behavior; and attitude, perceived behavioral control, and social norms have a significant direct influence on responsible tourism behavior. Moreover, it has been revealed that while the indirect relationship between subjective norms and responsible tourism through social norms was found to be statistically significant, the direct relationship between subjective norms and responsible tourism behavior is statistically negligible. The findings of this study would contribute to both practitioners and academics to develop better strategies to improve the tourists' behavior in the spots when visiting the tourism destinations.

**Keywords:** Responsible tourism behavior, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, social norms, mediating variable and the Sundarbans.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world with a market size of 1.54 trillion as of 2020 which is estimated to be increased to 1.7 million USD by 2021 (Statista, 2021). This industry is among the fastest-growing, and its expansion has a big impact on the economy of the tourist destinations as it provides most socio-economic benefits for the societies such as job creation, growth opportunities, infrastructural development, etc. (Yfantidou & Matarazzo, 2017; Mangwane, Tshipala, Ntanjana & Makopo, 2019; Galindo & González, 2019 and Naja, Suprayogi, Marfai & Mardianto; 2021).

Responsible tourism promotes moral principles and values that are expected to be accepted by society and discourages or even penalizes those that are not. It encompasses human behaviors related to moral and ethical principles and norms, such as words, ideas, and deeds (Li, Hazra, & Wang, 2023). Effective maintenance should be available to balance conflicting ecological, social, and environmental factors (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations is crucial for responsible tourism, which also benefits host communities, improves working conditions, engages the local community, preserves cultural heritage, and is good for the environment (Leslie, 2012).

An important part of ensuring and maintaining sustainability in tourism is responsible tourism behaviors, which include the responsible behaviors of tourists who accompany the beliefs, emotions, understanding, and duties related to civilization in the process of engaging in tourism-related functions that are aligned with the rules, legislation, laws, and ethics done during the time of visiting and performing tourism functions (Hu, 2016; Huang & Li (2016). Tourists may engage in a variety of careless behaviors, such as littering, using unsanitary restrooms, smoking in public, vying for seats, talking loudly, taking pictures without permission, picking flowers from tree branches, etc., which could hinder the growth of sustainable tourism destinations and compromise the dignity of visitors (Qiu, 2016). Therefore, spot/destination administrators must successfully guide visitors toward appropriate behavior at destinations. Maintaining high-quality environments, increasing tourism's competitiveness, and advancing sustainability all depend on a comprehensive understanding of responsible tourist behavior (Liu, An & Jang 2020).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of international visitors to Bangladesh dropped from 621 million in 2019 to just 135 million in 2021. However, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bangladesh returned last year, increasing by 23% over the previous year and surpassing the pre-Covid figure. According to BTB, in 2023, the nation welcomed 65 million foreign passport holders. The growing number of domestic and international visitors is posing a number of problems for the Sundarbans. The proper conduct of tourists is necessary to preserve all tourist destinations, including the Sundarbans, which were designated a global natural heritage site by UNESCO in 1987. In addition to providing the nation with appealing growth prospects, tourism also presents certain environmental difficulties. Tourists' disregard for the environment diminishes the quality of their visit, undermines the long-term sustainability of beautiful places, and takes away from its attraction (Liu et al. 2020; and Qu, Cao, Ge & Liu 2021). Despite the abundance of tourism resources in the Sundarbans, it is not uncommon to witness tourists dumping trash into the river, spitting on the ground, upsetting animals, picking flowers and tree leaves, and engaging in other similar activities (Haq & Chowdhury, 2014). These kinds of actions can occasionally lead to pollution and damage to tourism facilities, particularly during periods of high tourism demand (Liu et al., 2018). A wide range of human activities, such as heavy boating and fishing, dredging, port and tourism operations, mechanized boat operation, sand excavation from the riverbed, and the construction of coal power plants, pose a serious threat to the Sundarbans (Rakshit, Sarkar, Bhattacharya, Jonathan, Biswas, Mondal & Mitra; 2015). The Sundarbans have also been impacted by human activities that have exacerbated the climate change crisis. Sea level rise has caused the water to become more salinized, which has an impact on the Sundarbans' aquatic and terrestrial flora and wildlife. Despite the fact that the expanding tourism industry boosts the local economy, habitat loss for hotel development, pollution from rubbish disposal, inadequate sanitation, and noise from mechanized boats have all been damaging to the Sundarbans' natural ecosystem. Increased boardwalk building and peat bank erosion due to uncontrolled tourism are expected to alter the substrate's structure, seedling distribution, faunal richness, and species composition (Khanom, Shah & Chaudhary, 2011).

Therefore, this study's primary goal is to investigate the elements that influence visitors' responsible behavior in Bangladesh's Sundarbans mangrove forest. To be more precise, the goals are to: (1) develop a theoretical framework of responsible tourism behavior for travel destinations; (2) evaluate the major determinants of tourists' responsible behavior; and (3) offer inspiring tactics to assist practitioners in encouraging travelers to act in more responsible ways.

Through the development of theoretical knowledge on responsible tourism behavior and the proposal of possible policies for tourist sites, this study aims to support the tourism sector. It is anticipated that this

research would ultimately contribute to the development of excellent tourism ecosystems, hence guaranteeing sustainable tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### Responsible Tourism Behavior

Responsible tourism is defined as travel that is healthy for the environment, maintains cultural heritage, improves working conditions, engages the local community, and benefits host communities (Leslie, 2012). It seeks to reduce the harm that tourism does to communities, the environment, and individuals. Since its inception in the 1980s, research on this subject has tended to concentrate on the actions of careless tourists and the identification of the elements that influence these actions in an effort to forecast future behavior or the motive behind it (Huang & Li, 2016; Zhou, Li & Zhu, 2014). Many in the tourist industry, especially scholars who study tourism, have become interested in responsible tourism (Leslie, 2012). With the main goals of ending poverty, protecting the environment, and ensuring prosperity for all, it addresses several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN- 2017). It has been a crucial component in attaining sustainable tourism development, and several research have approached it in different ways, with no universally accepted definition (Liu et al., 2020). Responsible tourism promotes moral principles and values that are regarded as socially acceptable and discourages or even penalizes those that are not. Therefore, human conduct (i.e., thoughts, speech, and deeds) that relates to moral and ethical norms and regulations is ethically defined as an essential component of responsible tourism. (Hazra, Li, and Wang, 2023). In order to handle problems like sufficient and suitable amenities that can make trips simpler and more pleasurable, responsible tourism necessitates proactive management and workable solutions.

One of the major issues facing the tourism business is the careless behavior of visitors. When tourists behave irresponsibly, they violate social standards and engage in bad behavior while visiting, which damages the resources and humanistic atmosphere of tourist destinations (Bhati, 2023). In many nations and areas, irresponsible tourism is fairly common. Some examples include: walking off-trail (Goh, Ritchie & Wang, 2017); destroying local cultural traditions and customs (Bhati, 2023); littering; destroying cultural relics and historic sites (Frey & Briviba, 2021); making noises, disturbing others (Li, Chen, Huang, Wanichwasin & Cui, 2021); and more. These activities contribute to the degradation of the ecosystem, reduce the pleasure of the place by other visitors, and increase the cost of maintaining the recreational space (Wan, Hui, & Qiu 2021; Su, Cheng, Wen, Kozak & Teo; 2022).

In order to preserve the destination's ecology and culture, it is thought to be crucial to encourage tourists to travel responsibly (Qu, Cao, Ge & Liu, 2021). The phrase "responsible tourism behaviors" describes a set of tourist behaviors that adhere to laws, regulations, and ethics when performing tourism-related tasks and that are supported by the culturally associated beliefs, emotions, comprehension, and obligations (Hu, 2016; Huang & Li, 2016). Pro-environmental practices, which include actions that protect the environment or reduce the negative effects of human activity on the environment through routine activities or particular outdoor settings, are also considered to be part of responsible tourism (Miller, Merrilees & Coghlan, 2015; Qiu, Fan & Zhao, 2018). Tourists that engage in inappropriate behavior, such as spitting, littering, urinating, screaming, upsetting small animals, stomping on the grass, etc., cause discomfort for other visitors and create an untidy atmosphere that could impede the destination's sustainable development (Wang, Zhang, Sun, Chen & Yang, 2020). The basic values of tourists are frequently revealed by their polite tourist behaviors, which include maintaining a clean and orderly environment, abiding by the law, maintaining ecological balance, safeguarding historically significant sites and cultural artifacts, using public facilities with caution, respecting the rights of others, being courteous, and maintaining healthy entertainment (Ali, Amin & Momo, 2018; Liu et al; 2020). Actions that help the environment or cause the least amount of environmental harm are referred to by various terms, including pro-environmental conduct, green behavior, environmentally responsible behavior, eco-supportive behavior, ecological behavior, and environmentally friendly behavior (Steg & Vlek, 2009; Han, 2015).

The TPB and NAM theories have been extensively employed in the study of tourist behavior, and various research have examined various factors associated with either theory or the combination of the two (Manosuthi, Lee & Han; 2020). Similar studies could be conducted to identify particular responsible tourism

practices in other domains, such as safeguarding historical landmarks and cultural artifacts (Liu et al., 2020). According to Ham, Jeger, and Ivković (2015), social norms and descriptive norms are two subsets of subjective norms that may indicate potential paths for the marketing and economic operations of socially conscious conduct. Therefore, it is important to understand how social norms impact the link among attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and the propensity to travel responsibly. Previous studies on responsible travel behavior have largely focused on the traits of visitors. These traits include attitude, perceived behavioral control, subjective norm, and environmental behavioral intentions in relation to TPB (Rhodes, Beauchamp, Conner, Bruijn, Kaushal & Latimer-Cheung; 2015).

### **Attitude and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H1)**

According to Juvan, Omerzel, and Maravić (2017), attitude is commonly defined in research as the relationship between significant attributes of an object (e.g., how the characteristics of a tourist destination can affect how people perceive it) or, more broadly, as a general attitude. Gnoth (1997) calls for a deeper comprehension of attitudes in connection to morals and emotions. Because it must also take into account the visitors' emotions at the time of the measurement, figuring out how they feel about the travel companies' services, destinations, and brand names can be difficult. The primary indicator or forecast of future traveler behavior is the behavior of current travelers. Tourist behavior is consumer behavior in the context of buying, using, and stopping travel services. The choice, purchase, and utilization of a good or service to fulfill an individual's needs and desires is known as consumer behavior. When doing this task, the consumer wants to save time and maximize rewards. There are many different types of components that affect consumers. There are a number of factors that are taken into account, including social factors like family and social standing, cultural factors like beliefs, customs, and attitudes, individual characteristics like gender, lifestyle, age, and education, psychological traits like talents and perception, and economic conditions like purchasing power and price (Cobble, 2011).

The TPB is one of the most widely used research theories for classifying personal behaviors (Zhang, Cui, Wu, & Wu, 2017). Three antecedents—attitudes toward conduct, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—determine an individual's behavioral intentions, according to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) theory. TPB has been widely used to explain various forms of environmentally friendly activities, such as visiting green hotels (Verma & Chandra, 2018), bike-sharing during vacations for cycling in urban areas (Kaplan, Manca, Nielsen, & Prato, 2015), and picking up trash in protected areas and maintaining the cleanliness of the destinations (Brown, Ham, & Hughes, 2010).

According to Ajzen (1991), an individual's attitude toward behavior is the extent to which they perceive the advantages and disadvantages of a particular behavior in a favorable or unfavorable light. Therefore, when choosing whether to engage in a particular action, a person is likely to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the conduct (Han, Jae, & Hwang, 2016). According to Giebelhausen, Chun, Cronin, and Hult (2016), consumers are more likely to adopt eco-friendly practices if they experience some kind of internal joy or favorable effect from the behavior. In other words, a visitor will seem to have a positive attitude and be more inclined to engage in a certain behavior consistently if they think it would result in positive outcomes. According to this, developing behavioral intentions for responsible tourism may require a positive outlook. Therefore, tourists are more inclined to adhere to responsible tourism practices when they believe that doing so will improve their travel experiences and help preserve the forest, river, and ecosystems. This study therefore proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Attitudes have important and positive impact on responsible tourism behavior.

### **Subjective Norms and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H2)**

Ajzen (1991) defined subjective norms as the perceived social pressure to engage in or abstain from a particular behavior. Put another way, a visitor is likely to consistently engage in a behavior in order to satisfy the expectations of those who hold a special place in their heart or who are close to them. Numerous research have clearly shown how crucial subjective norms are in directing an individual's behavioral intentions. Quintal, Thomas, and Phau (2015) found that subjective standards of acceptable quality have a large and positive influence on tourists' propensity to return to Australian and American vineyards. Subjective norms have a



favorable and significant impact on travelers' inclination to return to green hotels, according to Verma and Chandra (2018). People make an effort to consider other people's unique perspectives on a given conduct (Song, You, Reisinger, Lee & Lee, 2014).

According to research, as ecological civilization construction progresses, green purchase behavior—a responsible tourist practice—is significantly influenced by subjective norms (Wang, Zhang, Yu & Hu, 2018). When consumers learn that other members of the group are more likely to buy green products, they get subtly interested in them and increase their propensity to buy. As an example, the descriptive norm, which is a subset of the subjective norm, describes how most persons are perceived by others. Because to individual convergence psychology, people usually behave in a similar way to others in groups, a phenomenon known as conformity behavior (Hmielowski, Boyd, Harvey & Joo, 2019).

Because environmental behavior, especially in the area of environmental protection, has a moral appeal, descriptive criteria can more successfully alter an individual's environmental intention (Onwezen, Antonid & Bartels, 2013). Customers will consciously think about whether their own behavior is consistent with the group when they observe that individuals around them care about the environment. Customers will deliberately use the broad green purchasing technique to prevent this disparity and potentially even perform better when it occurs. According to Salmivaara, Lombardini, and Lankoski (2021), intended and actual decision preferences were strongly correlated with descriptive norms. As a result, we think that consumers will have outstanding green purchase intentions under the descriptive norm. An injunctive norm, on the other hand, is a behavior that a person acknowledges while feeling under pressure to determine whether or not other people think it acceptable. Consequently, moral behavior is usually exhibited when injunctive norms have an effect on an individual. According to Vinnell, Milfont, and McClure (2019), the injunctive norm increased public support for the legislation. In fields related to the environment and health, the importance of injunctive standards has been shown time and time again (Göckeritz, Schultz, Rendón, Cialdini, Goldstein & Griskevicius; 2009). If the majority of the group dislikes or blames irresponsible tourism activity while supporting and appreciating appropriate tourism behavior, visitors will conclude that the group gains more from conduct overall.

There are greater ethical advantages to responsible tourism than to irresponsible tourism. Morality will serve as an unseen restriction, making people yearn for beauty. Consumers often engage in communal appreciation behavior to prevent collective exclusion. Additionally, they often modify their desire to behave responsibly as tourists in reaction to the expectations of others toward ecological conservation. Ajzen looked at potential relationships between ATT, SN, and PBC. People may change their minds about taking a certain action when they realize that well-known examples have a particular SN. This would enable SN to influence ATT.

Furthermore, when someone feels that the resources (such time, money, etc.) needed for that action are not available, they are less likely to be motivated to engage in that behavior and are therefore more vulnerable to being influenced by others in the community. Accordingly, PBC benefits ATT and SN (Hou, Liang, Meng & Choi, 2021). Previous studies have experimentally examined a causal link between SN and ATT (Ryu & Jang, 2006; Han & Kim, 2010). While Han and Kim (2010) demonstrated that SN influences ATT in a hospitality setting, Ryu and Jang (2006) proposed that SN is linked to people's ATT toward a conduct in a service context.

Therefore, a tourist is more likely to satisfy their parents, spouses, coworkers, friends, and other travel companions by engaging in responsible tourism if they believe that they have a tendency to judge whether it is a desired or advantageous activity. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2:** Subjective norms have important and positive impact on responsible tourism behavior.

### **Perceived Behavior Control and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H3)**

Perceived behavioral intention, according to Ajzen (1991), indicates how simple or complex a certain action is believed to be to perform. Therefore, if a tourist feels they have the time, means, and opportunity to engage in an activity, they will do so. Studies show a substantial correlation between tourists' desire to act sustainably and their opinions of their capacity to control their behavior. A visitor's perception of having the ability, knowledge, opportunity, and competence to engage in a certain conduct is known as perceived behavioral

control (Brown et al., 2010). They showed how this positively influenced the behavior of picking up litter. If a tourist discovers that there is sufficient time, money, and opportunity to carry out a particular task readily, he or she will carry it out eagerly.

Numerous researches have demonstrated a significant correlation between tourists' intentions to engage in environmentally friendly activities and their feeling of behavioral control. The study by Rambalak, Balaji, and Charles (2019) found that travelers' behavioral intentions toward green hotels are positively impacted by perceived behavioral control. However, in India, a study at Australia's Blue Mountains National Park found that perceived behavioral control has no discernible effect on visitors' willingness to break the law (Goh et al., 2017). Chen and Tung (2014) found that when people in Taiwan feel they have more behavioral control over their stay, they are more likely to plan to stay at green hotels. However, the perceived behavioral control depends on the capacity, experience, ability and resources to conduct a specific action.

It is possible that tourists will be less inclined to engage in responsible tourism practices if they are confronted with a lack of resources or possibilities. On the other hand, their behavioral intentions toward responsible tourist activities will be higher if they think that the necessary opportunities and resources are available and that they have control over the obstacles. For example, while beachgoers are having a great time, they may not have the time or energy to dispose of their rubbish in a trash can that is too far away. To put it another way, when tourists lack the resources they need to engage in certain actions, their behavioral intentions to do so will decline. Conversely, tourists are more likely to actively participate in responsible tourism activities if they believe they have greater control over obstacles (Liu et al., 2020). Past behavior and emotions have been somewhat covered in the research on environmental psychology. These variables were either not considered in conjunction with other variables such as attitudes, social norms, and perceived control, or they were operationalized differently for the purpose of predicting ecological behavioral intentions. Rather, to the best of our knowledge, empirical studies on ecological behavior have never explicitly addressed desire, a potentially important component (Carrus, Passafaro & Bonnes, 2008).

There are no new connections between service quality and TPB. For instance, Han and Kim (2010) discovered that a significant predictor of ATT and BI in the hotel sector was the quality of service. This supports the rationale that when consumers believe a service to be of higher quality, their opinions of it should also improve. Similarly, when consumers think a service is better, their subjective norms are likely to be stronger since their friends and family are more likely to support them. This is also true for how they are seen to be managing their conduct, since providing a better service could encourage clients to use it (Hou et al., 2021). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Perceived behavioral control has important and positive impact on responsible tourism behavior.

### **Social Norms and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H4)**

Social norms are seen as both individual opinions on particular group behavior and collective representations of acceptable group behavior. "Rules and standards that are accepted by members of a community and that direct and/or regulate human behavior in the absence of laws" is how social norms are defined (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Social norms are regarded as both collective representations of appropriate group behavior and individual viewpoints on particular group actions. They can be seen as cultural goods, which include customs, beliefs, and behaviors that reflect people's fundamental perceptions of what other people do and ought to do. The definition of social norms in sociology is "unwritten laws that direct how people behave in a society."

Social norms are typical or desirable patterns of behavior that people in a community try to adhere to (Burke & Young, 2011). A standard, custom, or ideal behavior pattern that members of a social group want to follow is called a social norm. Even though social psychology has a long and diverse history of applying social norms, there is presently disagreement within the field over their explanatory and predictive ability. Other social psychologists have claimed that the concept is too vague, too general, and too challenging to investigate empirically, despite the fact that some have highlighted the significance of social norms in understanding people's social interactions (Berkowitz, 1972; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; McKirnan, 1980; Pepitone, 1976; Sherif, 1936; Staub, 1972; Triandis, 1977; Darley & Latane, 1970; Krebs, 1970; Krebs & Miller, 1985; and

Marini, 1984). People may follow social standards and behave more responsibly if they receive social benefits (Handgraaf, Jeude & Appelt, 2013). One may argue that standards are maintained via a variety of internal and external factors, the significance of which varies according to the situation (Burke & Young, 2011). Hence, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Social norms have an important and positive impact on responsible tourism behavior.

### **Attitude, Social Norms and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H5)**

According to Bobek, Hageman, and Kelliher (2013), the fundamental ethical principles are connected to how people's social norms—including their personal norms—affect subjective norms and other elements that influence behavioral intention to do something. The TPB and NAM theories have been extensively employed in the study of tourist behavior, and various research have examined various factors associated with either theory or the combination of the two (Manosuthi et al., 2020). Similar studies could be conducted to identify particular responsible tourism practices in other domains, such as safeguarding historical landmarks and cultural artifacts (Liu et al., 2020).

The most significant predictor or indicator of future tourism is the conduct of current visitors. When considering the visitor's social role, one tourist's actions might also serve as a proxy for other people's actions. By their actions, travelers establish the social standards for conduct in the travel sector. These characteristics are also met by other clients, including individuals who do not currently travel or have touristic tendencies. When it comes to purchasing, utilizing, and discontinuing tourism services, tourist behavior equals customer behavior (Juvan et al., 2017). Understanding tourist behavior has practical benefits for all tourism stakeholders (Pearce, 2005).

What is learned between the time the intention was formed and the time the conduct is carried out can still be considered a source of knowledge, according to extensive research activities based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Krueger, 2009). Many people agree that social norms are a powerful instrument for examining how environmentally conscious travelers behave (Thøgersen, 2006; Stern, 2000; Abrahamse & Steg, 2013; Gossling, Arana & Aguiarquintana, 2019). Social norms define what is considered typical or generally accepted behavior within the group (McDonald & Crandall, 2015). Through the use of externally administered rewards and/or sanctions (real or perceived), they are employed to subtly influence or limit people's behavior (Farrow, Grolleau & Ibanez, 2017; Thøgersen, 2006).

On the other hand, research has shown that people frequently underestimate how much norms affect their behavior. This is true even though there are a lot of reasons why people might adhere to social norms (Cialdini, 2007). These findings imply that rapid, emotional, and intuitive mental heuristics are usually how social norms work. Additionally, recent evidence suggests that the scientific community has historically underestimated the role that social norms have in influencing behavior. The efficacy of the default option framing bias and some of the explanatory power previously ascribed to Theory of Planned Behavior components (Everett, Caviola, Kahane, Savulescu & Faber; 2015) are partially explained by social norms, according to study (Thøgersen, 2014).

The degree to which societal norms are absorbed into personal norms by various individuals is also influenced by cultural differences (Jansson, Savikko, Kautiainen, Roitto & Pitkälä, 2020; Culiberg & Elgaied-Gambier, 2016; Kallgren, Reno & Cialdini, 2000). Social norms have been used to describe both the common actions and the attitudes that promote adherence to these behaviors. Nonetheless, in contemporary study, social norms are generally understood as common guidelines for behavior that are partially reinforced by approval and disapproval (Elster, 1989). Bicchieri and Muldoon (2014) define them as "the widely converging unplanned, unexpected result of people's interactions that determine what is acceptable and what is not in a community or group."

Developing nations typically exhibit lower levels of environmental preferences and higher rates of environmental deterioration in comparison to wealthier nations. According to Culiberg and Elgaied-Gambier (2016), pro-environmental norms can lessen the influence of injunctive norms from significant others in some

nations but not in others. Although governments around the world have different formal structures and ideologies, they all appear to recognize the importance of tourism as a tool for development and have taken a more active and interventionist approach to the tourism sector than to other areas (Hall, 2005; Ruhanen, 2013).

One of the most well-known concepts in the social psychology literature that considers social norms is the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Three different approaches to integrating social norms into the Theory of Planned Behavior were described by White, Smith, Terry, Greenslade, and McKimmie (2009). Even while social norm treatments have been shown to be an effective means of behavior modification, there are still a lot of unanswered questions about them (Farrow et al., 2017). Therefore, we join other authors in advocating for more research on the best ways to employ social norms, despite the fact that it is evident that they are a reliable indication of pro-environmental behavior.

Additionally, scholars have observed that the TPB allows for the expansion of the model by the addition of new variables or concepts (Ajzen, 1991; Qiu, Wang, Morrison, Kelly & Wei, 2022). The notion that people retain social traits has been mainly disregarded by the TPB (Chen & Gao, 2020). We connect with and are impacted by other individuals and organizations; we are not isolated entities. Scholars studying tourism are aware that our social networks influence our views, behavior, and thought processes (Cho & Kang, 2017; Li & Wu, 2020). Therefore, social interactional factors like trust, societal norms, and interpersonal relationships should be considered when analyzing the motivations behind pro-environmental behavior.

Future social norms research should concentrate on several areas, as we still lack a scientific understanding of how policies affect social norms and how antecedent social norms affect policy outcomes (Kinzig, Ehrlich, Alston, Arrow, Barrett, Buchman & Saari, 2013). For instance, they contend that academic research ought to be more directly linked to real-world occurrences by incorporating more plausible network architecture and policy measures in study issues. Furthermore, we contend that future research should focus on how social norm interventions interact with other forms of financial and non-financial interventions. Future studies could examine how well different theories explain empirical findings and how social norms affect behavior through both conscious and preconscious cognition in order to address the variety of approaches to social norms found in the theoretical literature (Crusius, Van Horen & Mussweiler, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to comprehend how social norms impact the connection between attitudes and the desire to practice responsible tourism. From this observation, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Social norms have an important impact in the relationship between attitude and responsible tourism behavior as a significant mediator.

### **Subjective Norms, Social Norms and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H6)**

According to Ajzen, the originator of the TPB, people's behavioral intentions are greatly influenced by their understanding of social norms and their desire to agree with others (1991). Ajzen also acknowledges the individual's "social rationality," which significantly influences their behavior. Many academics argue that personal subjective norms and attitudes are not independent factors, based on Ajzen's theory. However, people's general attitudes toward implementing particular behaviors can be influenced by the opinions of others and the standards of sharing in social ties. As a result, people's intention to implement certain behaviors can be indirectly influenced by these factors (Zhang, Yu, Cheng, Chen & Liu, 2017; Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Han, Hsu & Sheu, 2010; Ryu & Jang, 2006; Fielding, McDonald & Louis, 2008).

The two branches of subjective norms—descriptive norms and social norms—may indicate potential paths for the marketing and economic operations of socially conscious conduct (Ham et al., 2015). However, according to the authors of the TPB model, Ajzen and Fishbein (2020), people's general attitudes regarding implementing particular behaviors can be influenced by the opinions of others and the standards of sharing in social relationships. As a result, people's intention to implement certain behaviors can be indirectly influenced. It has also been underlined how crucial "social rationality" is to people's critical decision-making processes.

The rational behavior theory was initially used to highlight the direct correlation between attitude and behavioral intentions. However, a growing body of empirical research has shown that attitudes' ability to



explain intentional behavior is not as perfect as initially thought. Stated differently, attitudes are only theoretically utilized to describe how passengers' intents are influenced by behavioral control cognition and subjective norms. However, there is a discrepancy between reliable empirical analysis results and (Bagozzi, 1992; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001; Fry, Drennan, Previte, White & Tjondronegoro, 2014). New variables are supplied for different study contexts in order to bridge this gap. Additional factors should be considered in order to increase the model's predictive ability (Zhang et al. 2017; Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Zhou et al., 2014).

Subjective norm, social norm, perceived benefit, and past behavior were found to be the most significant predictors of individual dining styles (IDS) by Huang, Chu, and Zhao (2022). Other predictors, including breaking habits, communal dining culture, perceived behavioral control, perceived health risk, and social risk, had negligible effects on the intention to adopt IDS. The results showed that the two social signals that had the biggest effects on behavior intentions were perceived advantage and social norm and subjective norm. The study's objective is to ascertain how social norms function as a mediating factor in the relationship between subjective norms and the desire to practice responsible tourism. From this observation, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Social norms have an important impact in the relationship between subjective norms and responsible tourism behavior as a significant mediator.

### **Perceived Behavioral Control, Social Norms and Responsible Tourism Behavior (H7)**

According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioral control refers to a person's perception of how simple or complex a particular behavior is for them to perform. It is believed that perceived behavioral control may be influenced by past experiences as well as potential issues and challenges. The TPB found that behavioral intention is predicted by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and social norms. The term attitude refers to a person's positive or negative assessment of carrying out a particular conduct (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), societal norms emphasize the perceived social pressure to engage in a particular conduct.

Every TPB component has been found to have favorable relationships with health-related goals in U.S. TPB research (Reid, Cialdini & Aiken, 2010; Tsang, Kohn, Chow & Singh, 2013). However, Asian research often yields inconsistent findings. In one of the first attempts, positive associations were discovered. Behavioral control perception and social norms were shown to be positively connected, while attitudes and social norms were found to be negatively correlated (Guo, Johnson, Unger, Lee, Xie, Chou & Pentz, 2007).

According to a study conducted by Bresnahan, Lee, Smith, Shearman, Nebashi, Park, and Yoo (2007) using cross-national Asian samples, attitudes were positively correlated with intention irrespective of nationality. Conversely, social norms turned out to be irrelevant. More interestingly, perceived behavioral control was negatively correlated in Korean participants but positively correlated in Japanese people. Further research on the TPB in Asia is necessary in light of these conflicting findings. Furthermore, this study argues that when the communication traits of media attention and interpersonal contact are included, the TPB can provide an additional rationale for Singaporeans' desire for a healthy lifestyle. Often, intentions are not well predicted by social norms, which include the perceived expectations of relevant individuals about behavioral possibilities. Conner and Armitage (1998) explain this lack of influence by acknowledging the distinction between social standards and intentions. They believed in a mediating process wherein intentions are determined by the internalization of societal norms, which in turn generates a personal moral standard. They showed how moral standards significantly affect PBC and intention. From this observation, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

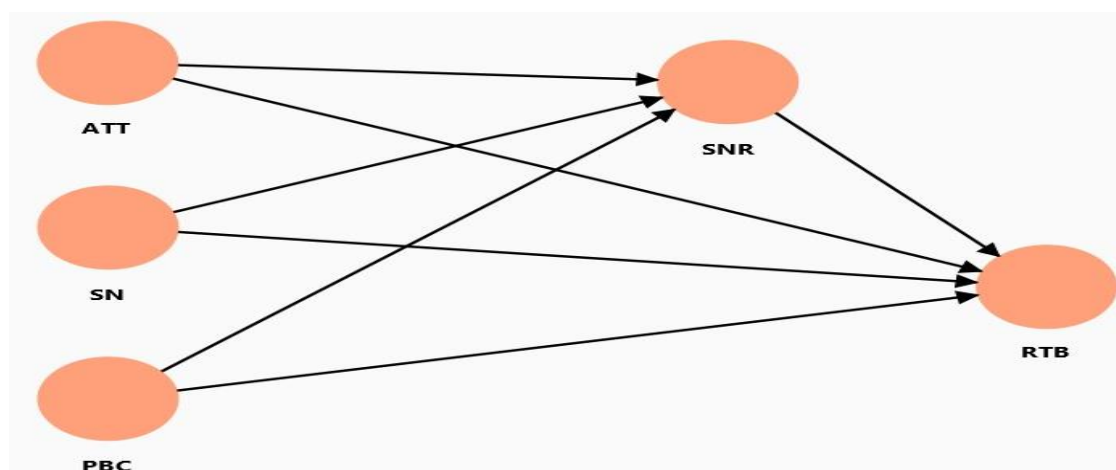
**H7:** Social norms have an important mediating effect in the relationship between perceived behavioral control and responsible tourism behavioral intentions.

### **Research Framework**

People's behavior toward specific topics has been categorized using a variety of hypotheses (Berenguer, 2010). The two most widely used theories to explain environmentally friendly acts are the theory of planned behavior

(TPB; Ajzen, 1991) and the norm activation model (NAM; Schwartz, 1977) (Zhang, Chen, Zhang, Buhalis & Lu, 2018). These theories are also applied to the behavior of tourists as customers. Because of its inherent flexibility, the Theory of Planned Behavior enables researchers to expand and incorporate a new predictor into the model (Ajzen, 2011). A number of responsible behaviors are also well explained by this theory, such as recycling, ecological conservation, specific environmental responsibility, and, of course, not littering (Abdullah, Samdin, Teng & Heng, 2019; Fenitra, Tanti, Gancar, Indrianawati & Hartini, 2021; Nguyen, Lobo & Dao, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). However, the TPB's use in Bangladesh to explain responsible behavior is still relatively recent, and the majority of these earlier studies were carried out in developed nations (Yuriev, Dahmen, Paillé, Boiral & Guillaumie, 2020). This study suggests using solely the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the foundational theory for understanding responsible tourism activities, even though both theories might be used to illustrate behaviors.

Based on the literature, underlying theory, and variables identified, the research model uses four pre-drive variables—attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and social norms—as well as the final investigation variable, tourists' responsible tourism behavior.



**Figure-1:** Research Framework

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sample and Population

The population for this study consists solely of local visitors who are at least eighteen years old and have previously visited the Sundarbans. Each visitor who meets these requirements has been regarded as a member of the community (Yan, Tourangeau & McAloon, 2015). It is impossible to determine the exact population size for the study because the number of visitors to the Sundarbans is unclear, but it may exceed one million because over 20 million tourists visit the Sundarbans year (BTB, 2023). Here, a non-probability judgmental/purposive sampling strategy was used to easily pick participants from the intended audience (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The population is unknown and may exceed one million, according to the BTB report 2023, hence the sample size for the current project is greater than 384, as per Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. According to Roscoe (1975), sample sizes should generally be between 30 and 500 for most studies. In multivariate research, which includes multiple regression analyses, the sample size should be several times (ideally ten times or more) larger than the number of variables in the study.

### Measurement and Questionnaire

The constructs for the suggested research model were measured using a variety of items. This study used items from other studies and made minor adjustments to match responsible tourism practices in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the measuring items. The measurement variables are shown in Table 2. With slight wording changes, the eight-item scale created by Ajzen (1991), Deng, Sun, Zhao, Han, Yang & Feng (2016), and Chen & Gao (2020) was used to measure behavioral attitude. Eight questions from the scale

created by Ajzen (1991), Deng et al. (2016), and Ham et al. (2018) were used to measure subjective norms. This list of seven things has to do with recycling, which is part of being environmentally conscious. Perceived Behavioral control was measured using the scale developed by Ajzen (1991); Renger and Reese (2017) & Ashraf, Ali, Zahir, Ashraf & Asghar (2019) that consists of six items. Social norms are measured using the scale developed by Thøgersen (2006) that consists of seven items related to recycling behavior which is included in environmentally responsible behavior. Responsible Tourism Behavior is measured by using the scale developed by Azen (1991) and Wang et al. (2018) that consists of several items related to responsible tourism. In summary, this study used 39 items for the five constructs. All variables were rated on a five-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement instruments were reviewed by academic experts, and a pretest was conducted in order to check the validity of items.

### Data Collection Method and Respondents' Profile

Data were collected with the self-administrated survey questionnaire. Questionnaires were circulated both online and offline mode (directly placing printed questionnaires) to the selected respondent randomly. For this purpose, 380 survey questionnaires were distributed among the target group and 329 questionnaires were found valid after scrutiny by the researcher. 300 questionnaires were also sent to respondents through web based media and a total of 121 responses were recorded and 92 responses were valid. So, a total of 680 questionnaires were sent out and 421 responses from the respondents were recorded. The response rate is about 62%. Among the 421 returned responses from the specific respondents, after scrutinizing 421 become valid for analysis. The respondents' profile is depicted in table 1.

**Table-1: Respondents' profile**

Characteristics	N=421	Percentage
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	237	56.3
Female	184	43.7
<b>Age:</b>		
18 - 27	136	32.3
28 - 37	54	12.8
38 - 47	128	30.4
48 - 57	73	17.3
58 – above	30	7.1
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
Married	296	70.3
Unmarried	122	29.0
Widowhood	3	.7
<b>Occupation:</b>		

Govt. Service	26	6.2
Non-govt. Service	170	40.4
Business person	38	9.0
Housewife	37	8.8
Student	118	28.0
Retired	14	3.3
Others	18	4.3
<b>Educational Qualifications:</b>		
Below SSC	3	.7
SSC/ O Level	8	1.9
HSC /A level	23	5.5
Bachelor/BBA	87	20.7
Masters/MBA /PhD	300	71.3
<b>Family Type:</b>		
Nuclear Family	259	61.5
Joint Family	162	38.5
<b>Family Size/ No. of Family Members:</b>		
1-2	18	4.3
3-4	215	51.1
5-6	188	44.7
<b>Income Level:</b>		
Tk. 20,000 and below	31	7.4
Tk. 20001-40000	56	13.3
Tk. 40001-60000	74	17.6
Tk. 60001-80000	66	15.7
Tk. 80001-100000	75	17.8



above Tk. 100000	119	28.3
<b>Residence:</b>		
Dhaka	359	85.3
Rajshahi	13	3.1
Sylhet	4	1.0
Chottogram	12	2.9
Barisal	7	1.7
Rangpur	6	1.4
Mymensing	2	.5
Khulna	8	1.9
Outside Bangladesh	10	2.4
<b>No. of Visit:</b>		
1	347	82.4
2	52	12.4
3 and above	21	5.0

## Data Analysis Method

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used in this study to test the suggested conceptual framework empirically. More precisely, this work followed Anderson and Gerbing & Anderson (1988) by employing a two-stage technique for SEM, a measurement model that used a structural model and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Measurement Model

Factor analysis was conducted to assess the measurement model. The goodness of fit indicators ( $R^2 = .642$ ,  $Q^2_{predict} = 0.609$ ,  $RMSEA = .628$ ,  $MAE = 0.461$ ) revealed that the model is appropriate and acceptable. A measure of reliability and validity of measures is presented in Tables 2 and 3. Item reliability was tested by factor loading (Organ, Koenig-Lewis, Palmer & Probert, 2015). All factor loadings were higher than 0.5, which demonstrates that all items effectively measured their corresponding construct. As for construct reliability, the composite reliability (CR) surpassed the generally accepted threshold of 0.7 for all constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012), suggesting sufficient measurement reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE). All AVE values were higher than the recommended level of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), suggesting sufficient convergent validity. Additionally, the square root of AVE of each construct exceeded the corresponding correlation between constructs, providing evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Cronbach Alpha( $\alpha$ ) value for each construct is also higher than the reference value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2006). Thus, the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher was reflected for inner consistency in this study.

**Table-2: Result of factor analysis**

Construct and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach Alpha( $\alpha$ )	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Attitude</b>		<b>0.807</b>	<b>0.867</b>	<b>0.565</b>
Responsible tourism behavior is valuable	<b>0.762</b>			
Responsible tourism behavior is wise	<b>0.703</b>			
Responsible tourism behavior is beneficial	<b>0.788</b>			
Responsible tourism behavior is pleasant	<b>0.731</b>			
Showing responsible tourism behavior is respectful	<b>0.773</b>			
<b>Subjective Norms</b>		<b>0.722</b>	<b>0.826</b>	<b>0.544</b>
Most people who are important to me think I should engage in responsible tourism behavior	<b>0.740</b>			
Most people who are important to me would want me to engage in responsible tourism behavior	<b>0.745</b>			
Most people who are important to me support my idea to engage in responsible tourism behavior	<b>0.763</b>			
Other people will follow me if I show responsible tourism behavior	<b>0.699</b>			
<b>Perceived Behavioral Control</b>		<b>0.773</b>	<b>0.868</b>	<b>0.687</b>
I am confident that if I want, I can engage in responsible tourism behavior when travelling	<b>0.815</b>			
It is easy for me to engage in responsible tourism behavior when travelling	<b>0.844</b>			
If I want to, I could easily engage in responsible tourism behavior in the spot	<b>0.828</b>			
<b>Social Norms</b>		<b>0.833</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.543</b>
I strictly comply with the requirements of responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.748</b>			

I am conscious about responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.729</b>			
I personally believe in responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.781</b>			
I strictly maintain the government policy for responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.737</b>			
I strictly observe the organization's discipline to maintain responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.755</b>			
I believe that government can enhance responsible tourism behavior.	<b>0.666</b>			
<b>Responsible Tourism Behavior</b>		<b>0.927</b>	<b>0.939</b>	<b>0.606</b>
I would be willing to protect the ecological environment	<b>0.787</b>			
I would be willing to protect the tourism resources	<b>0.799</b>			
I would be willing to obey public order	<b>0.737</b>			
I would be willing keep the local environment clean when travelling	<b>0.827</b>			
I would be willing protect the local cultural relics when travelling	<b>0.819</b>			
I would be willing to protect historical sites of the place when travelling	<b>0.812</b>			
I have great respect for local customs where I do travel	<b>0.767</b>			
I have great respect for cultural traditions of the place where I visit for tourism purpose	<b>0.801</b>			
I have great respect for religious beliefs when travelling	<b>0.740</b>			
I am very polite to others when travelling	<b>0.683</b>			

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity: Fornell and Larcker Method**

	<b>Att</b>	<b>PBC</b>	<b>RTB</b>	<b>SN</b>	<b>SNR</b>
<b>Att</b>	0.752				
<b>PBC</b>	0.394	0.829			

<b>RTB</b>	0.535	0.488	0.778		
<b>SN</b>	0.416	0.378	0.385	0.737	
<b>SNR</b>	0.456	0.536	0.591	0.462	0.737

[Note 1: The diagonal values are the coefficients of correlation values between constructs; whereas the bold values of the diagonal represent the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the constructs indication the highest in any row or column. Note 2: Att= Attitude, GP= Government Policy, PBC= Perceived Behavioral Control, RTB= Responsible Tourism Behavior, SN= Subjective Norms, SNR= Social Norms].

### Structural Model

Structural equation modeling was used to assess the proposed hypotheses. As seen in Fig. 2 and Table-3, attitude had a positive relationship with responsible tourism behavior ( $\beta = 0.152$ ,  $p = .001$ ), perceived behavioral control is positively related to responsible tourism behavior ( $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $p = .034$ ), and social norms also had a positive relationship with responsible tourism behavior ( $\beta = 0.158$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but subjective norm has insignificant relationship with responsible tourism behavior ( $\beta = 0.044$ ,  $p = 0.237$ ). Thus, the hypotheses H1, H3 and H4 are fully supported by the results of the SEM model. However, the hypothesis H2 is not supported by the findings. More interestingly, in this study, the coefficient of determination (R square) 0.642 suggests that 64.20% variance in responsible tourism behavior is explained by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control which is depicted in table-5.

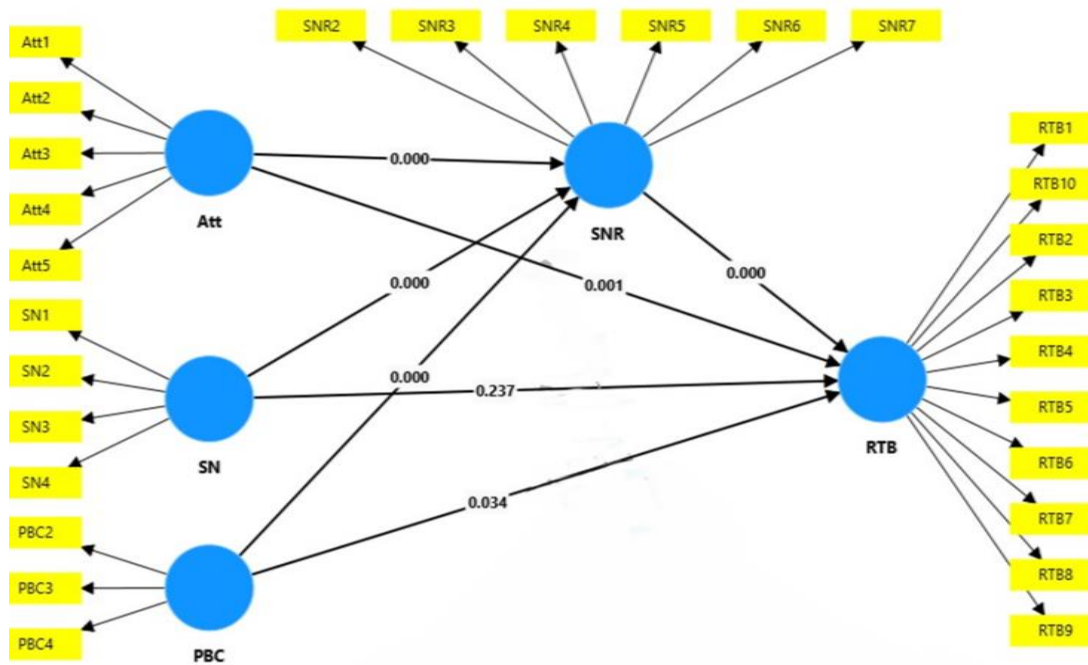
**Table-4: Direct relationship among the variables**

Hypothesis	$\beta$ Values	Std. Dev	T Values	P Values	Confidence intervals		Decision
					2.50%	97.50%	
H1: Att -> RTB	0.152	0.044	3.429	0.001	0.067	0.24	Supported
H2: SN -> RTB	0.044	0.037	1.182	0.237	-0.028	0.115	Not Supported
H3: PBC -> RTB	0.085	0.04	2.119	0.034	0.008	0.164	Supported
H4: SNR -> RTB	0.158	0.044	3.585	0.000	0.072	0.246	Supported

**Table-5: Value of R Square (R2)**

	R-square	R-square adjusted
RTB	0.642	0.635
SNR	0.401	0.397





**Figure-2: Hypotheses testing of the structural model**

### The Mediating Role of Social Norm

To test the mediating effect of social norms in the relationship between attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control; and responsible tourism behavior, this study utilized the bootstrapping method under SmartPLS to determine the significance of estimated path coefficients. As shown in Table 6, social norms mediate the relationship between attitude and responsible tourism behavior as the value of  $\beta = 0.038$  and the value of  $p = .005$ . Again, social norms mediates the relationship between subjective norms and responsible tourism behavior as the value of  $\beta = 0.034$  and the value of  $p = .008$ . And finally, social norms also mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and responsible tourism behavior as the value of  $\beta = 0.057$  and the value of  $p = .001$ . Hence, the findings support the hypothesis H5, H6 and H7 as depicted in table-6. In this study, the coefficient of determination (R square) 0.401 suggests that 40.10% variance in responsible tourism behavior is explained by social norms which is depicted in table-5.

**Table-6: Indirect relationship among the variables**

Hypothesis	$\beta$ Values	Std. Dev	T Values	P Values	Confidence intervals		Decision
					2.50%	97.50%	
H5: SN -> SNR -> RTB	0.038	0.014	2.78	0.005	0.014	0.068	Supported
H6: Att -> SNR -> RTB	0.034	0.013	2.652	0.008	0.012	0.062	Supported
H7: PBC -> SNR -> RTB	0.057	0.018	3.265	0.001	0.025	0.094	Supported

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Summary of the Results

Investigating the connections between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, social norms, and responsible tourism behavior was the main goal of this study. The findings suggest that attitudes,

perceived behavioral control and social norms are important determinants of responsible tourism behavior. Additionally, they show that the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and responsible tourism behavior is partially mediated by social norms. Specific findings from the study are also provided; these are discussed in more detail below. First, responsible tourism behavior was strongly influenced by attitude, perceived behavioral control, and personal standards. These factors then reinforced and activated responsible tourism behaviors at tourist sites (Liu et al., 2020). Travelers are more likely to embrace responsible behavior when they have a favorable outlook about it. Conformity behaviors can be reinforced and subsequently activate responsible behaviors at tourist locations when travelers are accompanied by significant persons who encourage responsible tourism behavior (Liu et al., 2020). Second, studies show that as ecological civilization construction progresses, green purchase behavior—a responsible tourist practice—is significantly influenced by subjective norms (Wang et al., 2020). However, this study found that responsible tourism behavior is not positively impacted by subjective norms. Third, responsible tourism behavior is positively impacted by perceived behavior control. Therefore, if a visitor feels they have the opportunity, time, and resources to engage in responsible behavior, they will do so. Fourth, the association between attitude and responsible tourism behavior, subjective norms and responsible tourism behavior, and perceived behavioral control and responsible tourism behavior as well as civilized tourism conduct was partially mediated by social norms. Fifth, a variety of elements work together to create responsible tourism behavior rather than just one of them—attitude, subjective norm, or perceived behavioral control. A variety of intricate and all-encompassing behaviors make up responsible tourism conduct. Accordingly, this conduct is influenced by both external and internal elements, including the opinions of significant individuals, social norms, and other factors, in addition to the tourists' personal factors, such as attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Therefore, to comprehend and encourage travelers' responsible tourism behavior, an integrated strategy from several angles is required.

### **Theoretical Implications**

First, this study offers a number of novel insights into responsible tourism practices. This study revealed that attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and social norms are important factors in the development of responsible tourism behavior. It also showed that tourists' responsible behavior is influenced by their own beliefs and opinions as well as the actions of others who share those beliefs. Although the impact of social norms has been overlooked, previous research has examined how self-interest motives affect responsible tourist behaviors, concentrating on attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control (Qiu, 2016, 2017). Social norms have been shown to influence tourists' pro-environmental behavior (Liu et al., 2020). The current study verifies that social norm has a positive effect on tourists' responsible behaviors.

Second, the current study didn't find any positive effect of subjective norms on responsible tourism behavior that contradicted the study of Qiu (2016, 2017 and Liu et al. (2020)

Third, the study finds that social norms play a mediating role in the relationship between responsible tourism behavior, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Prior research has examined the impact of personal and subjective standards on responsible tourist behavior (Qiu, 2016, 2017 & Liu et al., 2020); however, the mediating function of social norms in the aforementioned relationship was not taken into consideration. According to the results of this study, social norms have a significant mediating role in the relationships between attitude and responsible tourism behavior, as well as between subjective standards and responsible tourism behavior and perceived behavioral control. In other words, through social norms, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control indirectly influence responsible tourism behavior.

### **Managerial Implications**

In addition, this research offers a number of useful recommendations for encouraging responsible tourism in the Sundarbans' mangrove wilderness. First, this study demonstrated that attitudes had a favorable impact on the behavioral intentions of responsible visitors, indicating that positive views help travelers adopt responsible activities. Governments should enhance responsible tourism education through awareness campaigns, emphasizing the importance of sustainable travel behaviors through compelling messages, including images of environmental degradation, to encourage visitors to act responsibly. Additionally, destination management

ought to create provocative slogans and displays that inspire travelers to reflect on the significant harm that irresponsible actions do and, as a result, act responsibly. To serve as a warning and encourage visitors to conduct responsibly, images of a filthy beach covered in plastic trash, for instance, could be put up at riverside locations. Moreover, destination managers should implement policies that improve tourists' perceived control over responsible behavior, such as providing adequate waste disposal facilities and ensuring accessibility to sustainable travel options.

Second, this study shows that perceived behavioral control positively influences the behavioral intentions of responsible tourists, showing that a tourist will eagerly complete a task if they find that they have enough time, money, and opportunity to do it. Travelers are more likely to actively participate in responsible tourism activities if they believe they have greater control over obstacles (Liu et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to promote responsible tourism, the government and spot manager should set up these kinds of facilities at the tourist site. Rewarding responsible tourists and penalizing careless behaviors can reinforce pro-environmental actions also.

Third, this study shows that ethical tourism behavior is positively impacted by social norms. Tourists' pro-environmental conduct can be effectively analyzed using social norms (Thøgersen, 2006; Stern, 2000; Abrahamse & Steg, 2013; Gossling, Arana & Aguiarquintana, 2019). Social norms define what is considered typical or generally accepted behavior within the group (McDonald & Crandall, 2015). Through the use of externally delivered rewards and/or sanctions (real or perceived), they are employed to subtly influence or limit people's behavior (Farrow et al., 2017; Thøgersen, 2006). Therefore, in order to promote responsible tourism, there should be a system of rewards for travelers who behave responsibly or in a pro-environmental manner and a system of penalties for careless travelers. Furthermore, the aforementioned recommendations are not intended to be used alone but rather in concert, as responsible tourist practices are not the result of a single element. Thus, the managers, tourism planners and local and central government should take proactive actions to encourage the tourists in showing responsible tourism.

### Limitations and Reference for Future Research

Notwithstanding these contributions to theory and practice, this study has many drawbacks. First off, as the study primarily gathered data from the Sundarbans, Bangladesh, its findings could not be immediately transferable to other locations. Future research should compare the data to particular interior tourism areas and gather data from additional forests locations to verify the relevance of these findings. Second, this study focuses on the general habits of responsible tourists. Future research can examine some responsible tourism behaviors more precisely, such safeguarding historical places and cultural artifacts, because different types of responsible tourism behaviors are driven by distinct impact processes. Lastly, this study investigates the mediating function of social norms; nevertheless, additional moderating factors might also play a significant impact. Gender, education, and cultural background are all important variables of the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions toward responsible tourism that might be investigated in future research. Moreover, this research employed convenient sampling method but more scientific sampling method could be adopted for further research which includes representative elements from every sector involved in responsible tourism practices.

<p><b>Abbreviations</b></p>    <p>BTB</p> <p>IDS</p> <p>SDGs</p>	          <p>Bangladesh Tourism Board</p>
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UN	Individual Dining Styles
	Sustainable Development Goals
	United Nations

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