



Photo, Vlad Vasnetsov, <https://www.pexels.com/photo/assorted-color-plastic-trash-bins-2682683/>

### **The youth are the future but are their intentions future-focused?**

Tourism is the largest human movement in history with a significant impact on the natural environment. Due to global growing environmental concerns, the tourism industry has shifted its focus towards greater sustainability. Tourists and their activities often harm the attraction sites and surroundings visited, often without being aware of the effects of their behaviour. Sustainable tourism includes minimising these negative effects through pro-environmental behaviour. With youth travel being the fastest-growing segment in tourism it is important to understand their pro-environmental behavioural intentions, yet research on the topic is scant.

A study conducted by Lonwabo Njenga, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), investigated the green behaviour of youth tourists when visiting tourist attractions. Travel amongst the youth is often driven by a desire to learn more about cultures and expand knowledge, and they identify as being part of a global community. The question is whether this global citizenship promotes pro-environmental behaviour? At the same time, attractions should provide the necessary facilitating conditions, such as information, rules and regulations, and infrastructure to encourage positive environmental attitudes and behaviour. Are these measures sufficient to encourage pro-environmental amongst youth travellers?

The study extended the theory of planned behaviour by examining a new combination of drivers. The traditional three variables, namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control formed the foundation. In addition, two new variables were included, namely global citizenship and access to environmental efforts.

The quantitative study used data collected from 307 respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 and had travelled to a tourist attraction in the last three years. Multiple regression was used to determine which of the five variables contributed most to travellers' pro-environmental intentions.

The results from the study revealed that global citizenship was the strongest predictor of youth tourists' pro-environmental behaviour intention. This was followed by readily available environmental efforts like recycling bins and public transportation. Behavioural attitude also played a significant role. Interestingly, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control did not significantly contribute to pro-environmental behavioural intentions. Though one may assume that peer approval through subjective norms have an influence, this is not the case. It seems that positive behaviour is primarily driven by a collective identity beyond youth tourists' travel companions. Youth travellers display a willingness to make use of the facilities provided, and have a general positive attitude toward pro-environmental behaviour.

The study conducted contributes to conversation surrounding the youth market as a key segment to grow domestic tourism and contribute to the sustainability of the industry. The study provides insights that tourist attractions and the wider tourism industry can make use of. Tourist attractions need to align their service and product offerings with the values of global citizenship to encourage youth tourists' intended behaviours. They also have to develop and maintain infrastructures and environmental efforts that encourage intended pro-environmental behaviours by being accessible and user-friendly. The most important efforts are recycling bins on site, solar-powered buildings, and water stations to refill bottles. These efforts should be coupled with information provision to make youth tourists aware of the available facilities.

*This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Tourism Management in 2023 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by*

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