

## From the Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Perspectives, a Survey of Future Tourism Entrepreneurs' Attitudes toward Environmental Issues: Sample of Akdeniz University

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### Abstract

*Environment is a value playing a key role in the existence of all living things. The presence of a healthy environment is important for tourism entrepreneurs of both today and tomorrow. This research was conducted with 100 students who study at Alanya Faculty of Business, Alanya Chamber of Commerce & Industry Vocational School and Gazipasa Vocational School of Akdeniz University in the spring semester of the 2013-2014 academic year. In the preparation of the questionnaire, the ecocentric and anthropocentric approach scales developed by Bjerke & Katlenborn (1999) and Aytaç & Öngen (2012) were used. As a result of the study, it was determined that participants exhibit ecocentric attitudes in a general sense. In contrast, among the participants there are also individuals with anthropocentric attitudes. Female participants constitute the majority of these individuals. The most striking findings of this study are that the participants are rather disinterested in environmental issues, most of their support for the protection of the environment remains as an idea, and this issue can not be transformed into behavior. New application-oriented courses should be organized in the areas of environmental protection & environmental sensitivity to ensure an increase in environmental awareness of young tourism entrepreneurs.*

**Keywords:** Alanya, anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, environmental attitudes, tourism and hospitality

### Introduction

Environment is defined as all kinds of biotic & abiotic (social, cultural, historical, climatic, physical) factors affecting a living organism or a vibrant community, the duration of life [16]. In very general terms, environmental issues are defined as adverse effects of the artificial environment created by people on the natural environment [3]. In spite of the fact that the first culprit of environmental pollution has been identified as the emerging industrial sector, tourism, called a smokeless industry, also negatively affects the environment [2, 14]. Tourism has become an industry that is rapidly evolving, and its growth rate cannot be avoided today. According to the estimates made by UNWTO (2011), as of 2020, the worldwide number of people participating in international tourism is expected to reach 1.6 billion people [7, 15]. This uncontrolled growth also brings a number of drawbacks. One of these problems is the negative effects of tourism establishments towards environment [7]. For the use of natural resources, ensuring the conservation-use balance is of particular importance for the tourism sector potentially saved to the extent the protection of natural assets [2, 6].

By using nature-centered (ecocentric) & human-centered (anthropocentric) approaches, Robyn Eckersley places environmental movements on an available wide range; at one end, the human-centered & economic ethics, and at the other end, environment-centered ethics, which is more comprehensive and holistic [8, 12]. According to Dunlap & Van Lier (1978), if a person sees the world as an independent value, one believes that nature should be protected without keeping his own interests at the forefront and acts accordingly, all of which mean such a person has ecocentric thoughts. Such people can see plants and animals are equally important and valuable as people.

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Anthropocentric people want to preserve environment as it is vital for survival of people and for raising the quality of people's lives. According to them, an efficient use of natural resources is required to stay energized and not to decrease our quality of life in the future [10, 13].

For people today, if there are significant natural environmental issues, the first way to deal with them should be a training to raise awareness in publicizing and in taking precautions for them [5]. The purpose of this training is development of environmentally sensitive and positive attitudes & behaviors about environmental protection, as the goal is to achieve a high level of knowledge for all individuals in the society [9, 15]. Deterioration of natural environment and the tendency to lose its appeal are putting the future of tourist facilities established by large investments at a risk. Negative consequences of this situation are not limited only to the tourism sector [1]. Degraded environment causes a decline in local people's quality of life and healthy living conditions. Moreover, local people blaming tourism for this situation may adopt a negative attitude and take a stand against tourism activities [4]. The way to minimize all these potential problems or usual risks is to create an environmental awareness for the future of tourism entrepreneurs (employee-manager-academics, etc.) yet at their stage of education, and to sustain this consciousness movement when they take their place in the sector. It is expected that especially those trained people have high sensitivity in these matters than the general population when evaluating problems related to environmental risks & possible issues that may arise [11, 15].

### **Methodology and Findings**

The purpose of the study is to determine the students of Alanya Business Administration Faculty, Alanya Chamber of Commerce & Industry Vocational School, and Gazipasa Vocational School of Akdeniz University and their attitudes towards environmental issues. The study includes students who continue their education at Alanya Business Administration Faculty, Alanya Chamber of Commerce & Industry Vocational School, and Gazipasa Vocational School of Akdeniz University in the spring semester of 2013-2014 academic year. In this context, the the survey was conducted with 100 students in total. Surveys were subjected to reliability analysis as a priority. Accordingly, the reliability of the survey was determined to be  $\alpha = 0.794$ . After ensuring reliability surveys, validity was tested. The data obtained in this context was subjected to factor analysis. As an axis rotation method, Varimax method was used, and the survey questions with factor load remaining under 0.50 were excluded from the analysis. The KMO was determined as 0.782, additionally 1 proposition from the ecocentric attitude scale & 3 propositions from the anthropocentric attitude scale, remained outside of the analysis, as a result of restrictions of the factor loadings. The analysis results are given in table 3.

In the demographic profile of the respondents, 52% of schoolboys and 48% of the schoolgirls are seen. Referring to the participants according to their age, 22-year-old and older participants take place in the first ranks compared to the total participants. Citing the participants according to the school; with 41% ratio, the students of ALTSO VS are distinguished at the first rank among the total participants (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants**

Gender	N	%	Age	N	%
Schoolboy	52	52	18	10	10
Schoolgirl	48	48	19	25	25
Institute	N	%	20	23	23
Tourism at ALTSO	41	41	21	15	15
Tourism at Business A.	34	34	22 ≤	27	27
Tourism at Gazipaşa V.S.	25	25			

**Table 2: The Interest Levels towards Environmental Issues of the Participants**

Questions	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Are you a member of any environmental organization?	4	4	96	96
Are environment-related activities carried out in your school?	18	18	82	82
Do you join activities related to the environment?	21	21	79	79
Have you taken any courses related to environment before?	34	34	66	66
Are you interested in publications (newspaper, magazine, tv or radio programs) which are related to the environment?	39	39	61	61
Do you support any environmental campaigns (financial or mental)?	60	60	40	40

In Table 2, 96% of the students appeared not to be a member of any environmental organization. In addition to this, 82% of them indicated that any environment-related activities were not performed in the institution where they are studying; while 79% of them stated that they did not participate in any environmental activities. When we look at other results, 66% of students have not taken any course about the environment throughout their education life; 61% did not follow any environmental issues; while 40% indicated that they gave support for environmental campaigns.

**Table 3: Factor Analysis Results for the Scale of Ecocentric and Anthropocentric Attitudes**

Propositions	Factor Loadings	Eigen Value	Mean	Reliability ( $\alpha$ )
<b>Factor 1. Ecocentric Attitudes</b>		4,748	4,11	
ECO7 In the future, huge environmental problems will be faced if present consumption patterns are not changed.	,788		4,52	,840
ECO5 Though mankind has a very special talent, such as intelligence, it is still subject to the laws of nature.	,717		4,19	
ECO6 The nature has a very a delicate fragile balance.	,683		4,18	
ECO3 People have been consuming and using nature and natural resources excessively.	,635		4,33	
ECO10 Sometimes animals seem almost like humans to me.	,584		4,26	
ECO8 I can enjoy spending time in natural settings just for the sake of being out in nature.	,580		3,87	
ECO9 I feel sorry when I see natural environments destroyed for agriculture.	,579		4,12	
ECO1 Overpopulation has been rapidly exceeding the capacity of the world.	,557		3,85	
ECO2 Mankind's intervention in nature often results in a disaster.	,519		3,69	
<b>Factor 2. Anthropocentric Attitudes</b>		2,822	2,88	
ANT1 People have the right to change nature in accordance with their own wishes and desires.	,744		2,11	,719
ANT6 Mankind has the right to dominate nature.	,619		2,21	
ANT2 Mankind, thanks to wisdom and creativity, will make the world livable in any case.	,592		3,20	
ANT5 The phenomenon called ecological crisis is greatly exaggerated.	,566		2,39	
ANT10 Human existence will continue to be the major cause of environmental protection.	,509		3,88	
ANT7 Humans will learn all the intricacies of nature through the power of human thought and intelligenc, and it is under control as you like.	,507		2,94	
ANT8 Everything in the environment is as valuable as it benefit people.	,502		3,41	
<b>Overall Reliability of the Scale (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>				,794
<b>KMO</b>				,782
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Chi-square:	583,405		
	df:	190		
	Sig.:	,000		

As a result of factor analysis, two dimensions were obtained in principal (see Table 3). These dimensions have been named as "Ecocentric Attitudes" and "Anthropocentric Attitudes". The mean of students' ecocentric attitudes is  $\bar{X}=4.11$ ; while the mean of anthropocentric attitudes is  $\bar{X}=2.88$ . This reveals that students are within ecocentric (environment-centered) attitudes. Anthropocentric attitudes of students, though low, are also close to instability. Elements attracting the average level of instability are; thinking of "everything surrounding the human being is worth as good as its benefits", and "non-human creatures are worthy of value as much as the people". Another reason for anthropocentric thought to be close to instability was obtained from t-test. As a result of testing, a significant difference was determined between male & female students' anthropocentric attitudes ( $t=-2,032$ ;  $p=,043<,050$ ). Accordingly, anthropocentric attitudes of male students ( $\bar{X}=2,72$ ) is lower than those of female students ( $\bar{X}=3,05$ ). Additionally, anthropocentric attitudes of female students at a level of instability cause the general attitude being close to the instability.

### **Results**

In this study, environmental attitudes of students studying at higher education level was measured, and tried to put forward in what degree they are interested in the environmental issues. Overall, in our study, where students' environmental attitudes have been identified as an ecocentric, it has been found that students did not show interest in environmental issues. It is one of the best examples that the majority of students are not a member of any environmental organization, do not participate in environmental activities and do not follow any environment-related publications. Up to the level of higher education, most students take courses about the environment, but now at their level of education they are not encouraged to participate in any environment-related activities, which indicates that there are significant deficiencies of the education system in raising sensitive individuals about the environment. It is understood that the majority of students' ecocentric attitudes could not be displayed as behavior, the attitudes rather remain in the intellectual dimension, and students are not actively interested in environmental issues although they claimed to be supporting environmental campaigns. For people today in the short term and for future generations in the long term, it is rather worrisome that the younger generation, especially when viewed through the eyes of future architects, are disinterested in environmental challenges often mentioned in the international arena, and wanted with a variety of suggestions models about ways to solve. In this context, either by means of media or mass communication, steps should be taken to make dramatic changes, especially because the education system is such a delicate issue, in order not to remain insensitive, and initiatives should be taken to raise people's awareness in environmental issues.

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