

Understanding the Dynamics of Participative Pricing: Psychological, Ethical, and Engagement Dimensions in Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract:

This study explores the effectiveness of participative pricing strategies by examining the interplay between psychological triggers, ethical dilemmas, and tourist engagement in sustainable tourism. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Self-Determination Theory, the research investigates their role in shaping psychological triggers that influence tourist motivation and engagement. Ethical dilemmas are also examined as a moderating factor in the relationship between psychological triggers and motivation. The study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey with stratified sampling and SEM analysis to examine psychological triggers, ethical dilemmas, and tourist engagement in participative pricing, advancing insights into sustainable tourism behaviour in India. In a survey of 449 Indian tourists using a structured questionnaire, the findings suggest that psychological ownership fosters psychological triggers, reinforcing tourist motivation towards sustainable engagement. Altruism and novelty-seeking significantly enhance psychological triggers, highlighting their importance in shaping responsible tourism choices. However, emotional gratification does not significantly impact psychological triggers, suggesting that sustainability-driven decisions are more value-oriented than hedonic. Ethical dilemmas play a crucial role in influencing tourist motivation, emphasizing the need for transparency and fairness in participative pricing models. This study enriches theory by linking psychological and ethical factors to participatory pricing in sustainable tourism and guides managers to enhance visitor engagement through ethical pricing, intrinsic motivation, and transparent communication strategies. This study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by examining the psychological and ethical aspects of participative pricing, paving the way for more consumer-centric and ethical tourism models.

Keywords: Participative Pricing, Psychological Triggers, Ethical Dilemmas, Sustainable Tourism Engagement.

1. Introduction

Pricing has been recognised as a significant component of the marketing mix and is a key component of the company's marketing strategy (Kienzler & Kowalkowski, 2017). Pricing decisions impact revenue generation, customer loyalty, and product positioning (Wagner & Araujo Pacheco, 2020). Therefore, marketers have continuously experimenting with new pricing strategies. Across many sectors, including India's expanding travel sector, participative pricing—where people help to decide the price for goods or services—has grown ever more important. This pricing approach provides advantages like more customer satisfaction and more income potential since it meets consumer views and willingness to pay. Previous research has shown that consumers who engage in pricing often perceive greater value, which promotes pleasure and loyalty, particularly in service-oriented industries such as travel. (Kim and Lee, 2023). Participatory pricing strategies, such as pay-what-you-want (PWYW), have been shown to enhance average revenue at various Indian tourist destinations (Miller et al., 2022). By adopting this approach, businesses acquire a competitive advantage that distinguishes them in a congested market and offers valuable insights into demand elasticity and price sensitivity, thereby enhancing demand forecasting (Rao & Gupta, 2023; Singh & Sharma, 2024).

In India's tourism sector, participative pricing models are becoming more influential, as consumers are actively involved in determining the price they pay. Consumer engagement, perceived value, and satisfaction are all improved by strategies such as "name-your-price" (NYP) and pay-what-you-want (PWYW) (Kahneman et al., 2023). Comparative research indicates that participative pricing mitigates tourism seasonality by appealing to price-sensitive consumers (Barros & Sousa, 2019). Researchers have advised additional research into the long-term influence of these strategies on consumer loyalty, taking into account cultural and technological contexts (Le, 2023; Mattila & Gao, 2016). In the price-sensitive tourism industry, participatory pricing, which is based on behavioural economics, improves perceptions of fairness (Kahneman et al., 2023). It increases off-peak bookings by personalising the experience (Ravi & Kapoor, 2023) and cultivates trust and loyalty (Gupta & Sharma, 2022). It is imperative to comprehend its influence to maintain tourism expansion (Chatterjee, 2023).

Participative pricing is emerging as a pivotal strategy in India's tourism sector, augmenting customer motivation, engagement, and satisfaction by enabling tourists to participate and influence price through models such as Pay What You Want (PWYW) and dynamic pricing. This method promotes equity, accountability, and tailored experiences, addressing various client demographics (Kim & Lee, 2023; Binkley, 2012). Studies demonstrate that it enhances repeat patronage and favourable word-of-mouth, essential for the viability of tourism enterprises. Aligning pricing with client expectations enables Indian tourism operators to secure a competitive advantage. Comprehending visitor psychology in participative pricing is crucial for enhancing involvement with these adaptable pricing strategies (Kim & Lee, 2023; Binkley, 2012).

The evolving paradigm of participative pricing mechanisms—such as "pay-what-you-want" (PWYW) and "name-your-own-price" (NYOP)—in the context of sustainable tourism remains underexplored, particularly regarding its psychological and ethical

dimensions and how these influence tourist engagement. While recent studies have examined participative pricing in retail and digital contexts (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2022), there is a paucity of research decoding its psychological triggers—such as perceived fairness, reciprocity, and consumer empowerment—and ethical dilemmas in tourism settings, where stakeholder relationships and sustainability expectations are complex and interdependent (Chhabra, 2021; Yang et al., 2023). Furthermore, extant literature seldom integrates participative pricing with tourist engagement constructs like affective, cognitive, and behavioral involvement, nor does it critically assess how these variables contribute to sustainable tourism outcomes. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by synthesizing insights from behavioral economics, ethical tourism, and sustainability marketing to propose a comprehensive framework that elucidates how participative pricing, mediated by psychological and ethical factors, can enhance tourist engagement and foster responsible travel behavior. Addressing this gap is imperative, as emerging trends in value co-creation and ethical consumption demand more nuanced and context-specific explorations of pricing strategies in tourism (Dolnicar & Ring, 2022; Baka & Scott, 2023), making this study timely and academically significant.

Despite the increasing importance on sustainable tourism and the integration of consumer-centric strategies, the application of participative pricing models—such as Pay-What-You-Want (PWYW) and Name-Your-Own-Price (NYOP)—remains relatively underexplored within the tourism domain, particularly in sustainability-oriented contexts. Existing literature has focused predominantly on price fairness, willingness to pay, and ethical consumerism (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017; Dolnicar et al., 2019), yet there is a notable lack of empirical inquiry into how participative pricing influences tourists' psychological perceptions, motivation, trust, and sustainable engagement. While research in other sectors has highlighted consumer agency in pricing (Kim et al., 2009; Chatterjee, P., 2023), tourism studies have not sufficiently examined how such agency impacts perceived ownership, socio-cultural alignment, altruism, and emotional gratification—factors that are crucial to sustainable behavior. Furthermore, ethical tensions may emerge when these psychological drivers conflict with long-term sustainability goals (Smith & Duffy, 2003; Gössling et al., 2015; Kala & Chaubey, 2024). The role of ethical dilemmas in moderating the relationship between psychological triggers and tourist motivation is insufficiently studied, and the mediating influence of motivation on sustainable engagement remains empirically vague. Building on the foundational works of Miller, Merrilees, and Coghlan (2015), Xiao and Smith (2020), and Johnson and Chen (2021), this study addresses these gaps by investigating how participative pricing mechanisms affect tourist behavior in Indian destinations. The study aims to explore the antecedents of psychological triggers in participative pricing within sustainable tourism by examining the effects of psychological ownership, socio-cultural influences, perceived value and trust, emotional gratification, altruism, and novelty-seeking behaviors. Further, the study aims to examine the mediating role of psychological triggers on tourists' motivation and their subsequent engagement with sustainable tourism practices. Another objective is to assess the moderating influence of ethical dilemmas on the relationship between psychological triggers and tourists' motivation, and its indirect effect on sustainable tourism engagement.

.Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Understanding tourist participation in sustainable tourism activities necessitates a thorough theoretical framework that considers both external and internal implications. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offer complementary explanations for how psychological triggers, ethical quandaries, and tourist motivation influence participation in sustainable tourism. This research investigates the combination of TPB and SDT in order to create a strong theoretical framework that validates the links between these constructs in terms of participatory pricing effectiveness.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), three main elements influence behaviour: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). It is commonly used to study customer decision-making and behavioural intentions. In the context of sustainable tourism, (a) psychological ownership, perceived value, and trust influence tourists' positive attitudes towards engaging in sustainable tourism; (b) socio-cultural triggers and ethical quandaries shape social expectations (subjective norms) regarding sustainable travel practices; and (c) tourists' self-efficacy (perceived behavioural control) in adopting sustainable behaviours influences their willingness to engage in participative pricing. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) distinguishes between internal and extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985). It asserts that people engage in behaviours in response to intrinsic psychological requirements such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of sustainable tourism, (a) emotional gratification, altruism, and novelty-seeking (intrinsic motivation) drive engagement in sustainable tourism practices; and (b) perceived ethical dilemmas and social influences (extrinsic motivation) influence tourists' motivation to participate in sustainable tourism initiatives.

In contrast to SDT's emphasis on the intrinsic drives behind voluntary action, TPB shows how sustainable tourism involvement is based on rational decision-making. This study combines TPB and SDT to provide a holistic view of the ways in which visitors' motivation is impacted by psychological triggers and ethical dilemmas in relation to sustainable tourism. This integrated theoretical perspective provides a more sophisticated understanding of participatory pricing effectiveness, making it an appropriate foundation for investigating the interactions between these components.

2.1. Psychological Ownership

Consumers' perceptions of pricing fairness are linked to their understanding of psychological ownership, which can be fostered through participatory pricing. People are more inclined to think the final price is fair and reasonable when they have a hand in setting it, which can influence their purchase choices. An essential component of client satisfaction in the service sector, which includes tourism, is the pursuit of originality in pricing, according to Zeithaml (1988). Participatory pricing techniques that emphasise transparency and user interaction can boost price uniqueness, resulting in greater consumer trust and long-term loyalty (Zeithaml, 1988). Hence, we formulated:

H1: Psychological Ownership has a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.2.Cultural and Socio-Economic Considerations

The success of participative pricing in India is influenced by the country's cultural diversity and socio-economic disparities, which shape varying expectations of fairness and value (Chatterjee, 2023). Narwal et al. (2021) explore the possibility of moral disengagement when consumers suspect they are manipulating pricing methods, which could harm brand loyalty. Adhikari (2016) emphasises the importance of fairness perception in the hotel industry's participative pricing. In a culturally varied country like India, where regional variances greatly impact consumer behaviour, firms must carefully negotiate these preconceptions to ensure that their pricing strategies are fair and appealing. Thus, we proposed:

H2: Cultural and socio-economic considerations have a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.3.Perceived Value and Trust

Participative pricing mechanisms, such as auctions or dynamic pricing, can increase the perceived value of tourism services by allowing consumers to influence pricing based on real-time demand and supply situations. This approach not only replicates market dynamics but also builds consumer trust by offering a more transparent and adaptable pricing structure. Viglia et al. (2016) stated that participative pricing in tourism can increase perceived value since consumers feel more empowered and informed about their purchase decisions. Consumers' trust is strengthened when they believe the pricing reflects a reasonable balance between their willingness to pay and the value received (Viglia et al., 2016). Hence, we posited:

H3: Perceived value and trust have a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.4.Emotional Gratification

Emotional gratification is a significant psychological trigger that influences long-term visitor engagement, particularly when viewed through the lenses of uses and gratification theory and positive psychology. According to Keelson et al. (2024), social media platforms have a substantial impact on tourist destination decisions by meeting psychological requirements such as emotional pleasure, social connection, and self-improvement. Crompton (2025) further elaborates on the six fundamental motives driving tourists' pleasure-seeking behaviour, emphasizing the role of emotional experiences in shaping travel preferences and engagement. Additionally, Coghlan (2015) underscores the application of positive psychology principles in tourism, demonstrating how emotional gratification contributes to well-being and sustained participation in sustainable tourism initiatives. Collectively, these studies establish that emotional gratification, whether derived from digital interactions, intrinsic travel motivations, or positive experiences, plays a pivotal role in fostering long-term engagement in sustainable tourism. Hence, we hypothesized:

H4: Emotional gratification has a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.5. Altruism

Altruism serves as a key psychological trigger for sustainable tourist engagement, influencing behavior, decision-making, and value co-creation. Deng et al. (2024) highlight its moderating role in reducing value co-destruction in revenge tourism, and fostering responsible engagement. Saayman, Li, Scholtz, and Fourie (2020) demonstrate that altruistic tourists support informal craft traders, enhancing local livelihoods and sustainable tourism. Yang et al. (2023) emphasize moral elevation in cause-related tourism marketing, increasing sustainable tourism participation. Han et al. (2020) and Kala and Chaubey (2024) explore altruism in volunteer and religious tourism, respectively and found its impact on ethical consumption and responsible behaviour. Collectively, these studies establish altruism as a critical driver of sustainable tourism, promoting ethical consumption and community support. Thus, we formulated:

H5: Altruism has a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.6. Novelty-Seeking

Novelty-seeking is a key psychological factor influencing sustainable tourist engagement by motivating individuals to explore unique experiences. Blomstervik and Olsen (2022) emphasize that personality traits, attitudes, and emotions drive novelty-seeking, making individuals more open to sustainable tourism. Pratminingsih et al. (2025) highlight its role in creative tourism, where novelty-seeking tourists perceive destinations as more appealing and demonstrate positive behavioural intentions toward sustainability. Xu, Z., et al. discuss its influence on adopting innovative travel practices, including eco-friendly transportation. Ivancovsky, T., Baror, S., & Bar, M. (2024) link novelty-seeking with pleasure motivation, reinforcing engagement in sustainable travel. The extent of literature establishes novelty-seeking as a critical driver fostering tourists' receptiveness to eco-conscious travel. Thus, we posited:

H6: Novelty-seeking behavior has a significant influence on psychological triggers in motivating tourists towards sustainable tourism engagement.

2.7. Moderated Mediation Relationship

Sustainability in tourism has attracted a lot of academic interest due to the complex relationship between psychological triggers, ethical concerns, and tourist motivation. According to Narwal et al. (2021), tourists are able to sidestep ethical considerations when making decisions due to moral disengagement, which moderates the effectiveness of participatory pricing. To show how this concept affects the ethical justification of participating in tourism, Black et al. (2022) further integrated it into the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Research by Zhang et al. (2021) and Pereira et al. (2022), for example, shows that travel motivation plays a role in mediating the association between unique experiences and destination choice. The significance of intrinsic psychological motivations is shown by Dai et al. (2023), who show how site identity affects tourist

loyalty. This paradigm is expanded upon by Xu et al. (2023), who use moderated mediation to study the impact of destination psychological ownership on environmentally conscious behaviour. In a similar vein, Ullah et al. (2024) found that social norms and eco-guilt mediated the emergence of environmentally conscious actions. Ashraf et al. (2024) find that environmental leadership is important for encouraging sustainable tourism practices, and they also agree that emotional solidarity is a key moderator of destination loyalty. Social emotions, perceptions about one's efficacy, and worries about the passage of time were the focus of Zheng et al.'s (2020) research on locals' social issues in ecotourism.

An ethical dilemma arises when no clear ethical response exists among the available choices and responsibilities. Such dilemmas often stem from conflicting moral views or competing priorities, such as individual interests versus collective well-being, or short-term benefits versus long-term sustainability. These situations encourage ethical reflection and contribute to the evolution of moral principles. Gneezy et al. (2010) highlight the importance of transparency and fairness in participative pricing, balancing consumer empowerment with fair provider compensation. In tourism, psychological drivers like social emotions and perceived efficacy influence motivation, but ethical conflicts often arise between self-interest and communal welfare (Kala & Chaubey, 2024). This aligns with the ongoing discourse on sustainable tourism participation (Zheng et al., 2020). Motivation serves as a key mediator, shaped by environmental awareness, social influence, and perceived behavioural control (Dolnicar et al., 2020). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, supported by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), foster responsible tourism (Gössling & Hall, 2021). Thus, we proposed:

H7: Psychological trigger has a positive and significant influence on sustainable tourism engagement.

H8: Ethical dilemma moderates the relationship between psychological triggers and motivators towards participative pricing of tourism products.

H9: Tourist motivation moderates the relationship between psychological triggers and sustainable tourism engagement.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey method to collect data from tourists who have encountered participative pricing models in the tourism sector. A stratified random sample technique is utilised to ensure representation across varied demographic categories of respondents. The constructs and associated variables are derived from seminal and contemporary literature, including, Narwal et al. (2021) Black, Burton & Cieslewicz (2022), Moore (2015), Bandura et al. (1996), Kim & Lee (2023), Newman, A., Le, H., North-Samardzic, A., & Cohen, M. (2020). and Kala and Chaubey (2024). The study employed carefully adapted constructs aligned with its research objectives and the unique context of sustainable tourism. A structured questionnaire, serving as the primary data collection tool, incorporated validated items from previous empirical studies to ensure content validity and contextual relevance. Pretesting with a small sample helped refine the wording and enhance clarity. Internal consistency and reliability were confirmed using Cronbach's

alpha and composite reliability (CR), with all constructs surpassing the recommended thresholds (α and CR > 0.70), demonstrating strong reliability: Altruism ($\alpha = 0.936$), Emotional Gratification ($\alpha = 0.935$), Ethical Dilemmas ($\alpha = 0.872$), Perceived Value and Trust ($\alpha = 0.949$), Novelty Seeking ($\alpha = 0.746$), Psychological Triggers ($\alpha = 0.923$), and Psychological Ownership ($\alpha = 0.819$). A purposive sampling method targeted individuals engaged or interested in tourism through direct outreach, forums, social media, and professional networks. The questionnaire, distributed via email and online platforms, yielded 490 responses, of which 449 valid cases were retained post-screening. Descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS, while SmartPLS was employed to assess structural relationships. Harman's single-factor test revealed that the first factor accounted for 49.116% of the variance, indicating no significant common method bias. This robust methodological approach ensures the validity and reliability of the findings, offering valuable insights into participative pricing, psychological motivators, ethical concerns, and visitor engagement in sustainable tourism..

3. Results

The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Of the sample, 45.2% were aged 41–60 years, with 53% male and 47% female. Students (28.5%) and postgraduates (37.4%) dominated the sample. Income varied, with 39.9% earning between INR 50,001–100,000.

Table 1: Demographic Profile (N=449)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age (in Years)	Upto 25	61	13.6
	26-40	121	26.9
	41-60	203	45.2
	> 60	64	14.3
Gender	Male	238	53.0
	Female	211	47.0
Occupation	Student	128	28.5
	Self-employed	113	25.2
	Salaried	189	42.1
	Others	19	4.2
Education	High School	32	7.1
	Graduate	165	36.8
	Postgraduate	168	37.4
	Professional	84	18.7
Monthly Income (in INR)	<50,000	106	23.6
	50001-100000	179	39.9
	100001-150000	120	26.7
	<150000	44	9.8

4. Measurement Model

Table 2 demonstrates various indicators for the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha scores vary from 0.746 to 0.956, all over the 0.7 threshold, suggesting strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Composite reliability values (0.854-0.965) are within the acceptable threshold. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceed the 0.5 requirement, indicating convergent validity. Except for Psychological Ownership, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are still less than 5, reducing multicollinearity issues. The f-square effect sizes show high connections for Ethical Dilemmas (0.693) and Socio-Cultural Triggers (1.204), whereas other components have minor to moderate impacts. These findings confirm the validity and reliability of the model.

Table 2: Constructs and Items

Constructs and Items
Psychological Ownership I feel that participative pricing in tourism services fosters a sense of ownership among consumers. (PO1) Participatory pricing strengthens tourists' tourist attachment and builds a psychological relationship. (PO2) Tourists value their money more when involved in participatory pricing, boosting their overall service satisfaction. (PO3) Participative pricing practices significantly increase tourist loyalty to the brand. (PO4)
Socio-Cultural Triggers Participatory pricing in tourism helps enhance economic empowerment by allowing tourists to contribute based on their financial capacity. (SCT1) Participatory pricing in tourism helps enhance social and shared responsibility : tourism experiences. (SCT2) I believe that participatory pricing ensures fair pricing in tourism services compared to fixed pricing models. (SCT3) Participatory pricing in tourism helps in Community Development. (SCT4)
Perceived Value and Trust I trust tourism brands that allow me to participate in the pricing process. (PVT1) Participative pricing enhances my perceived value of the tourism service. (PVT2) I believe that my involvement in pricing decisions leads to a fairer price for the tourism service. (PVT3) When I participate in pricing, I believe I get better value for my money. (PVT4)
Emotional Gratification I feel a sense of happiness when I contribute to the pricing of tourism products. (EG1) Participatory pricing gives me a sense of personal satisfaction. (EG2) I experience a feeling of accomplishment when my input is considered in pricing decisions. (EG3) I feel emotionally connected to tourism brands that involve me in pricing decisions. (EG4)

Altruism

I participate in pricing decisions because I want to support fair pricing for others. (ALT1)

I feel responsible for ensuring that tourism pricing benefits both businesses and customers. (ALT2)

I contribute to participatory pricing to help improve the industry. (ALT3)

I engage in pricing decisions because I care about social fairness in tourism. (ALT4)

Novelty-Seeking

When making travel plans, I like investigating novel and unusual price schemes, including participative pricing. (NS1)

If participative pricing in travel presents a chance for a fresh and interesting experience, I am ready to try it. (NS2)

Using participative pricing in travel thrills me since it gives my vacation plans some unusual and unpredictable character. (NS3)

Psychological triggers

Transparency in participative pricing increases my trust in tourism service providers. (PT1)

Participative pricing allows me to perceive better value for the tourism products I purchase. (PT2)

I am more likely to choose a tourism product that allows me to participate in setting the price. (PT3)

Participative pricing makes tourism products more attractive and engaging for me. (PT4)

Ethical Dilemmas

Allowing tourists to decide the price they pay may lead to unethical price manipulation. (ED1)

Participatory pricing in tourism promotes transparency and trust between businesses and tourists. (ED2)

There is a risk that participatory pricing can lead to discrimination or unfair pricing practices. (ED3)

I am concerned about the ethical implications of participative pricing in the tourism industry. (ED4)

The ethical practices of a participative tourism brand influence my decision to engage in participative pricing. (ED5)

Participative pricing fosters managing tradeoffs, present benefits and long-term consequences. (ED6)

Tourists Motivation

I am more motivated to book a tour or service that offers participative pricing. (TM1)

Participative pricing increases my desire to choose a specific tourism service or destination. (TM2)

I am more likely to book a tourism experience when I can influence the price. (TM3)

I am willing to pay a fair price for a tourism service, even when given the option to choose my price. (TM4)

Participative pricing encourages me to pay what I believe is a reasonable amount for the tourism experience. (TM5)

I feel obligated to pay more when I am given the choice to set the price for a tourism service. (TM6)

Sustainable Tourism Engagement

I am more likely to purchase a tourism product or service if I can influence the price through participative pricing. (STE1)

Participative pricing increases my likelihood of booking or purchasing from the same tourism provider for future trips. (STE2)

The option to participate in pricing makes me feel more loyal to the tourism brand or service provider. (STE3)

I would recommend tourism products or services with participative pricing options to other travellers. (STE4)

I am likely to choose participative pricing options when booking tourism products or services in the future. (STE5)

Participative pricing positively influences my decision to book or purchase again from the same tourism brand or service provider. (STE6)

Table 3: Measurements

Constructs and Items	Factor Loading	Mean	SD	α	CR	AVE	VIF	f-square
Psychological Ownership		3.80	.786	0.819	0.880	0.648	4.723	0.151
PO1	0.808	3.71	1.048					
PO2	0.819	3.80	.895					
PO3	0.809	3.88	.923					
PO4	0.783	3.80	1.044					
Socio-Cultural Triggers		3.18	.693	0.878	0.917	0.735	2.234	1.204
SCT1	0.851	3.15	.813					
SCT2	0.783	2.95	.895					
SCT3	0.843	3.26	.813					
SCT4	0.945	3.38	.734					
Perceived Value and Trust		3.81	.858	0.949	0.964	0.870	1.159	0.030
PVT1	0.948	3.82	.977					
PVT2	0.947	3.82	.945					
PVT3	0.865	3.80	.862					
PVT4	0.968	3.93	.944					
Emotional Gratification		3.70	.947	0.935	0.953	0.837	1.877	0.002

EG1	0.914	3.58	1.183					
EG2	0.885	3.73	.973					
EG3	0.882	3.66	1.019					
EG4	0.974	3.81	.970					
Altruism		3.75	.912	0.936	0.955	0.844	2.177	0.034
ALT1	0.979	3.82	.985					
ALT2	0.925	3.81	1.067					
ALT3	0.786	3.43	.968					
ALT4	0.971	3.93	.965					
Novelty-Seeking		3.43	.862	0.746	0.854	0.663	2.653	0.319
NS1	0.864	3.65	1.113					
NS2	0.845	3.76	1.041					
NS3	0.727	2.88	1.014					
Psychological Triggers		3.89	.765	0.923	0.945	0.813	1.392	0.019
PT1	0.917	3.92	.758					
PT2	0.884	3.77	.955					
PT3	0.879	4.03	.784					
PT4	0.925	3.84	.899					
Ethical Dilemmas		3.85	.703	0.872	0.912	0.722	2.287	0.693
ED1	0.869	3.94	.801					
ED2	0.836	3.74	.789					
ED3	0.845	3.87	.886					
ED4	0.848	3.65	.838					
ED5	0.869	4.05	.772					
ED6	0.836	3.83	.750					
Tourists Motivation		4.00	.630	0.956	0.965	0.820	2.876	0.012
TM1	0.921	4.06	.603					
TM2	0.932	3.97	.788					
TM3	0.901	4.13	.645					
TM4	0.928	4.04	.662					
TM5	0.864	4.00	.685					
TM6	0.884	3.78	.791					
Sustainable Tourism Engagement		3.32	.630	0.938	0.951	0.765	1.982	0.225
STE1	0.809	3.62	.577					
STE2	0.907	3.61	.920					
STE3	0.872	3.13	.645					
STE4	0.893	3.04	.662					

STE5	0.873	3.00	.685
STE6	0.890	3.54	.812

5. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity of the proposed model was assessed using a heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) matrix. The discriminant validity of the HTMT was confirmed by the fact that its values were well within the cutoff value (less than 0.90) (Table 3). All of the AVE square roots were greater than the correlations between the constructs and their respective indicators, which confirmed the model's discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 3). These results provide evidence that the model's constructs all met the criteria for discriminant validity. All of the suggested model's indicators and structures had strong backing overall.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

	ALT	EG	ED	PVT	NS	PT	PO	SCT	STE	TM
ALT	0.919	0.626	0.807	0.457	0.712	0.678	0.655	0.712	0.701	0.671
EG	0.587	0.915	0.743	0.342	0.594	0.536	0.560	0.693	0.620	0.582
ED	0.726	0.665	0.850	0.511	0.904	0.817	0.811	0.802	0.848	0.723
PVT	0.430	0.326	0.466	0.933	0.542	0.495	0.437	0.532	0.479	0.460
NS	0.608	0.506	0.741	0.451	0.814	0.829	0.809	0.874	0.826	0.878
PT	0.632	0.502	0.740	0.464	0.781	0.901	0.846	0.653	0.869	0.744
PO	0.583	0.498	0.700	0.394	0.650	0.744	0.805	0.618	0.880	0.868
SCT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.858	0.703	0.660
STE	0.650	0.631	0.701	0.493	0.718	0.590	0.535	-	0.875	0.802
TM	0.658	0.579	0.864	0.452	0.783	0.903	0.779	0.641	0.975	0.905

6. Structural Model

The structural model assessment reveals strong predictive accuracy and model fit. R^2 values, which measure the variance explained in the endogenous constructs. Psychological Triggers ($R^2 = 0.726$), Sustainable Tourism Engagement ($R^2 = 0.957$), and Tourist Motivation ($R^2 = 0.875$) exhibit substantial explanatory power, surpassing the commonly accepted threshold of 0.50 for moderate predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). The predictive relevance ($Q^2_{predict}$) values for all constructs exceed the benchmark of 0, confirming the model's predictive validity (Chin, 1998). The Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE) values indicate acceptable prediction accuracy, with RMSE values ranging between 0.435 and 0.538

and MAE between 0.328 and 0.402. Model fit indices further reinforce the robustness of the model, with an SRMR value of 0.065 for the saturated model and 0.066 for the estimated model, both within the recommended threshold of ≤ 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016). However, the infinite chi-square value suggests model complexity, necessitating further assessment through alternative fit indices. Overall, the results indicate a well-fitting and predictive model.

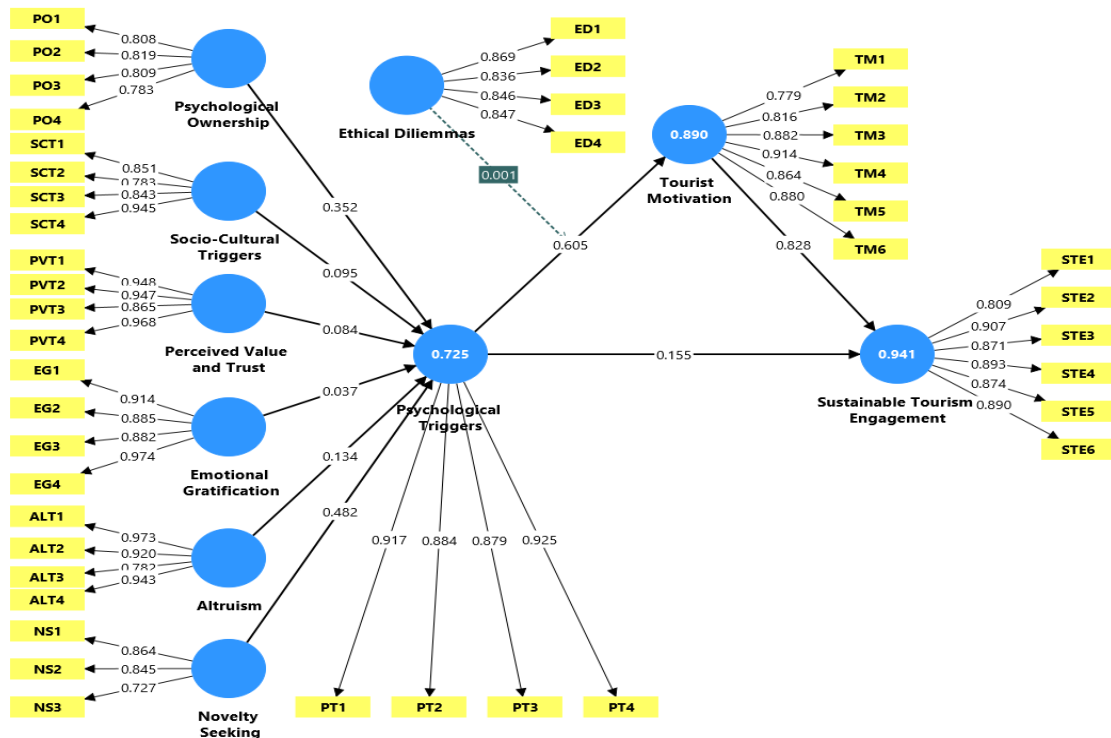
Table 5: Model Fitness

	R ²	R ² adjusted	Q ² predict	RMSE	MAE
Psychological Triggers	0.726	0.722	0.713	0.538	0.40
Sustainable Tourism	0.957	0.957	0.813	0.435	0.32
Tourists Motivation	0.875	0.874	0.783	0.469	0.37
Model Fit Summary	Satur ated	Estimated model			
SRMR	0.065	0.066			
d_ULS	3.967	4.156			
d_G	n/a	n/a			
Chi-square	infinite	infinite			

The structural model results indicate significant relationships among key constructs (Table 5). Psychological Ownership exhibits a strong positive influence on Psychological Triggers ($\beta=0.350$, $p<0.001$), while Socio-Cultural Triggers ($\beta=0.099$, $p=0.018$) and Perceived Value and Trust ($\beta=0.084$, $p=0.021$) also contribute significantly. Altruism ($\beta=0.143$, $p<0.001$) and Novelty-Seeking ($\beta=0.482$, $p<0.001$) further strengthen Psychological Triggers, whereas Emotional Gratification ($\beta=0.034$, $p=0.329$) does not show a statistically significant effect. Psychological Triggers significantly influence both Sustainable Tourism Engagement ($\beta=0.174$, $p<0.001$) and Tourist Motivation ($\beta=0.580$, $p<0.001$). Tourist Motivation has the strongest impact on Sustainable Tourism Engagement ($\beta=0.820$, $p<0.001$). Ethical Dilemmas significantly affect Tourist Motivation ($\beta=0.445$, $p<0.001$). The mediation effect of Psychological Triggers on Sustainable Tourism Engagement through Tourist Motivation is also substantial ($\beta=0.476$, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, the interaction term between Ethical Dilemmas and Psychological Triggers influencing Tourist Motivation is statistically significant ($\beta=0.043$, $p=0.030$), confirming the moderating effect.

Table 6: Structural Model

Path	β	T-statistics	p-values
Psychological_ Ownership -> Psychological _Triggers	0.350	8.415	0.000
Socio-Cultural Triggers -> Psychological Triggers	0.099	2.376	0.018
Perceived Value and Trust -> Psychological Triggers	0.084	2.308	0.021
Emotional Gratification -> Psychological Triggers	0.034	0.975	0.329
Altruism -> Psychological Triggers	0.143	3.701	0.000
Novelty-Seeking-> Psychological Triggers	0.482	11.403	0.000
Psychological Triggers -> Sustainable Tourism _Engagement	0.174	4.610	0.000
Psychological Triggers -> Tourists' Motivation	0.580	10.919	0.000
Tourists' Motivation -> Sustainable Tourism Engagement	0.820	21.590	0.000
Ethical Dilemmas -> Tourists' Motivation	0.445	7.268	0.000
Psychological Triggers -> Tourists' Motivation -> Sustainable Tourism Engagement	0.476	16.703	0.000
Ethical Dilemmas \times Psychological Triggers -> Tourists' Motivation	0.043	2.172	0.030

**Figure 1 :Structural Model**

7. Moderated Mediation Analysis

The moderated mediation analysis provides insights into the relationships between psychological triggers, ethical dilemmas, tourist motivation, and sustainable tourism engagement. The direct effect of psychological triggers on sustainable tourism engagement is significant ($\beta=0.174$, $p<0.001$), indicating that psychological influences positively drive sustainable engagement. Additionally, psychological triggers

significantly impact tourist motivation ($\beta=0.580$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that intrinsic psychological factors strongly shape motivational aspects. Moreover, tourist motivation significantly enhances sustainable tourism engagement ($\beta=0.820$, $p<0.001$), demonstrating its crucial role in promoting sustainable behavior. The impact of ethical dilemmas on tourist motivation is also significant ($\beta=0.445$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that ethical concerns influence motivation levels. The mediation analysis confirms that tourist motivation mediates the relationship between psychological triggers and sustainable tourism engagement ($\beta=0.476$, $p<0.001$). Furthermore, the moderation effect of ethical dilemmas on the relationship between psychological triggers and tourists' motivation is significant ($\beta=0.043$, $p=0.030$), indicating that ethical considerations slightly moderate the psychological impact on motivation.

8. Discussion

The present study investigated the psychological triggers underlying participative pricing and their influence on sustainable tourism engagement, incorporating the moderating role of ethical dilemmas and the mediating role of tourism motivation. The findings offer important theoretical contributions to the sustainable tourism literature by elucidating how specific psychological and contextual factors interact to shape pro-sustainability engagement among tourists. Notably, psychological ownership emerged as a critical psychological trigger, affirming the notion that when tourists develop a sense of personal connection and perceived responsibility toward a destination, they are more inclined to participate in sustainable behaviors. This aligns with Lee and Jan (2021), who demonstrated that psychological ownership significantly fosters responsible tourism by reinforcing a sense of stewardship and care for the visited place. In addition, socio-cultural triggers, perceived value, and trust were found to substantially influence the formation of psychological triggers. These findings corroborate Boley et al. (2020), who emphasized that favorable sociocultural contexts and trust in tourism systems enhance tourists' intrinsic motivation to engage in sustainable tourism. The presence of a supportive cultural environment and credible service interactions appears to strengthen tourists' emotional and cognitive investment, thereby amplifying their motivation for sustainable choices. Overall, this study highlights the complex interplay between individual psychological perceptions and contextual enablers in driving sustainable tourism engagement. Altruism and novelty-seeking augment the psychological triggers, implying that visitors' tendency towards justice and social good is important in shaping their long-term behaviours. Prior study back up this claim, demonstrating that tourists with stronger altruistic tendencies and novelty-seeking are more likely to participate in eco-friendly activities (Chong & Ma, 2019). However, emotional fulfilment had no significant effect on psychological triggers, implying that the pleasure gained from participation may not be a powerful enough motivator for long-term tourism engagement. This contradicts previous findings that emphasised the function of hedonic motives in eco-tourism (Su & Swanson, 2019), indicating that the impact of emotional pleasure may be situation dependent.

Psychological triggers have an important role in boosting both sustainable tourism engagement and tourist motivation. This finding is consistent with previous research

that has highlighted the significance of psychological elements in driving tourist pro-environmental behaviour (Dolnicar et al., 2021). The study also demonstrates that visitors' motivation is a significant regulator of sustainable tourism participation, lending credence to the theory that intrinsic motivation is a powerful predictor of environmentally conscious travel behaviours (Kim et al., 2023). The findings show that tourists with higher levels of motivation are more likely to adopt sustainable habits, supporting the self-determination theory's assumption that intrinsic motivation promotes positive behavioural change (Deci and Ryan, 2017).

Ethical dilemmas have a substantial impact on tourist motivation, implying that when tourists perceive ethical concerns in pricing and tourism activities, their incentive to be environmentally responsible is affected. This outcome is consistent with previous studies highlighting the ethical implications of participative pricing techniques in tourism (Heo et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study discovers a moderated mediation effect, in which ethical quandaries interact with psychological stimuli to influence visitor motivation. This lends credence to the hypothesis that ethical decision-making influences sustainable tourism behaviours (Barnett et al., 2021). While prior research has investigated ethical quandaries in corporate social responsibility and consumer behaviour, this study expands the subject to include participative pricing and its psychological influence on tourists. The findings highlight the need to develop psychological ownership, fairness ideas, and ethical awareness to improve long-term involvement.

Theoretical Contributions

This study significantly contributes to theory by actively integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emphasizing the critical role of intrinsic motivation in shaping participatory pricing in sustainable tourism. By applying this integrated framework, the study offers a more nuanced theoretical perspective and deepens the understanding of participatory pricing mechanisms. It specifically addresses psychological and ethical dimensions that earlier research has often overlooked, thereby enriching the discourse on sustainable tourism practices. By identifying psychological ownership as a central psychological trigger, the study reinforces and extends existing frameworks on consumer engagement and pro-social behavior (Sharma & Klein, 2020). Furthermore, it validates the role of altruism and novelty-seeking in strengthening psychological triggers, aligning with previous findings on consumer decision-making drivers (Haws et al., 2014; Kim & Lee, 2023). Interestingly, the study challenges the established role of emotional pleasure in influencing consumer choices (Oliver, 2014), opening new avenues for theoretical debate on affective determinants in sustainability-related behaviors. Lastly, the study advances methodological rigor and theory-building by applying a moderated mediation model, thus contributing to the broader theoretical landscape of tourist motivation and ethical consumption behavior.

9. Managerial Contributions

The study also offers implications for managers, tourism organizers, and other tourism stakeholders. Tourists' sense of psychological ownership enhances their engagement with participative pricing. Managers can design experiences that foster ownership, such

as allowing tourists to customize their itineraries, contribute to sustainability initiatives, or be involved in destination conservation efforts. Since socio-cultural triggers and perceived value influence psychological triggers, tourism organizers should integrate cultural storytelling, local interactions, and community-driven initiatives into pricing models to enhance perceived authenticity and trust. Given the strong effects of altruism and novelty-seeking on psychological triggers, managers should promote experiences that appeal to tourists' desire to contribute to sustainability (e.g., eco-tourism projects, voluntourism) and introduce novel, immersive activities that differentiate the destination. Ethical concerns significantly influence tourist motivation. Destination managers must ensure transparency in pricing, avoid exploitation concerns, and educate tourists on the ethical considerations of their pricing contributions (e.g., how their payment supports local communities or conservation efforts). Tourism businesses must leverage psychological triggers by designing emotionally compelling marketing campaigns, gamified pricing mechanisms, and interactive storytelling to deepen tourist engagement. As tourist motivation strongly predicts sustainable tourism participation, operators should target intrinsically motivated travelers with exclusive eco-friendly experiences and tailored incentives. Recognizing that ethical dilemmas moderate the influence of psychological triggers, managers should establish transparent ethical guidelines, implement responsible tourism charters, and use ethical nudges in pricing communication. Destination managers should explore participative pricing models like "Pay What You Want," ensuring both psychological comfort and financial viability. Integrating these strategies enables ethically grounded, engaging, and sustainable tourism practices.

Conclusions

This study provides important insights into the dynamics of participative pricing by examining its psychological, ethical, and engagement elements in the context of sustainable tourism. Based on strong empirical data and established theoretical conceptions, the findings highlight the critical importance of psychological triggers—particularly psychological ownership, benevolence, and novelty-seeking—in determining tourist motivation and long-term involvement. Ethical quandaries emerge as significant modifiers shaping motivational pathways, demonstrating the subtle impact of perceived fairness and moral considerations in participative pricing environments. Notably, tourist motivation affects the association between psychological triggers and sustainable tourism participation, emphasising the importance of intrinsic motives in developing responsible behaviour. The absence of significance for emotional fulfilment calls into question notions regarding hedonic incentives, implying that tourist behaviour varies depending on the setting. Overall, this study advances theoretical knowledge in sustainable tourism by combining psychological ownership, motivation theory, and ethical frameworks. Practically, it promotes tourism techniques that foster psychological connection, increase ethical transparency, and align with tourists' pro-social beliefs. Future research should look into cross-cultural and longitudinal factors to validate these findings and explore changing tourist perceptions. This complete approach broadens our understanding of how participatory pricing can act not just as an economic mechanism, but also as a driver for sustainable tourism transformation.

10. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite providing valuable insights into the psychological, ethical, and engagement aspects of participative pricing in sustainable tourism, this study has certain limitations. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the capacity to determine causality across time. Longitudinal research could give stronger evidence about the long-term impact of psychological triggers and participatory pricing on sustainable tourist behaviours. Second, the study's dependence on self-reported data may introduce common method bias, albeit Harman's single-factor test was used to address this risk. Third, while the sample size and demographic representation were appropriate, the findings' generalisability may be limited by the focus on visitors familiar with participative pricing, which may remove insights from first-time or novice travellers. Furthermore, the impact of cultural context on ethical issues and psychological ownership was not directly investigated. Cultural norms may influence how travellers perceive justice, trust, and accountability, affecting the dynamics revealed in this study. Future research should look into cross-cultural comparisons to ensure that the findings are applicable globally. Furthermore, qualitative research such as interviews or focus groups could supplement the quantitative approach by providing fuller insights into tourists' cognitive and emotional reactions to participative pricing. Future research may potentially use experimental methods to identify specific psychological and ethical cues that influence tourist behaviour. Finally, incorporating additional behavioural factors such as perceived behavioural control or environmental concern may provide a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable tourist engagement within participatory pricing systems.

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