

Outdoor Leisure Activities: Motivation, Attitudes and Strategies Promoting Responsible Behaviour towards Nature and Landscape

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Introduction

Outdoor activities can have negative effects on nature and landscape. According to the "Swiss Landscape Concept", people should therefore be encouraged to behave responsibly towards nature and landscape. Authorities and sports associations have tried to reach this aim by giving advice, but their success has never been evaluated.

Thus, in order to provide scientific support to the Swiss authorities and NGOs, the three central aims of this project were:

- (1) to analyse the motivations for carrying out outdoor leisure activities and, in particular, to investigate the importance of the experience of nature and landscape as such motivation,
- (2) to identify the driving factors for responsible behaviour towards nature and landscape,
- (2) and to evaluate behaviour changing strategies, promoting responsible behaviour towards nature and landscape.

Methods

To reach these aims, five methodical steps were undertaken:

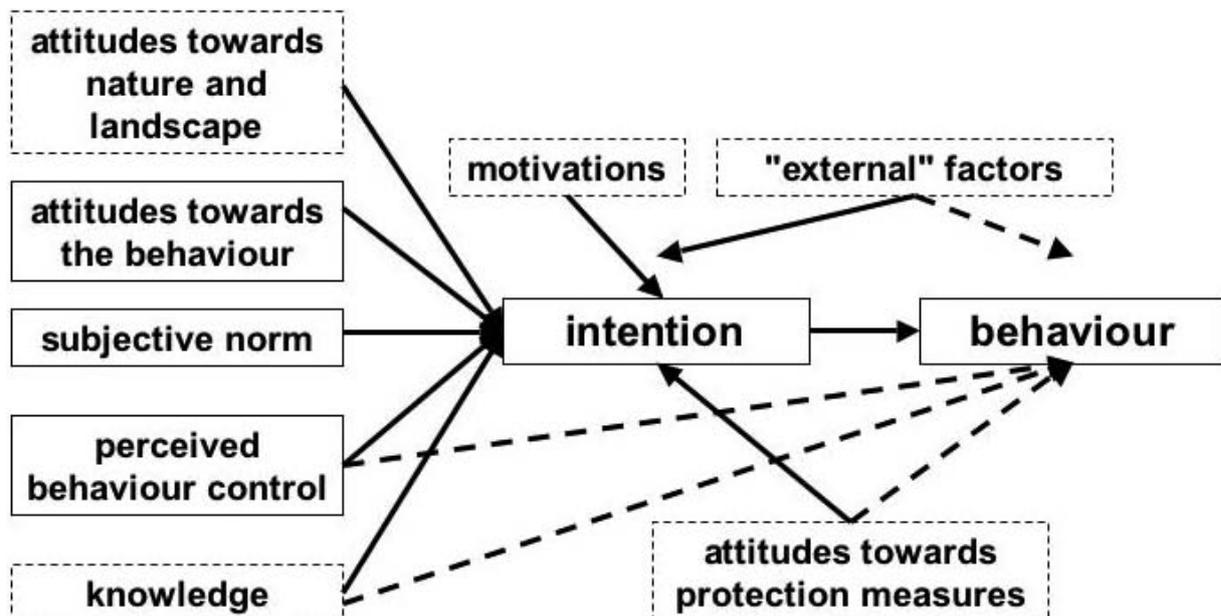


Figure 1: The extended theoretical model for responsible behaviour towards nature and landscape with the original „Ajzen-factors“ (boxes with continuous lines) and the inductively gained factors (boxes with broken lines).

(1) In the preparative part expert interviews were conducted in order to identify two outdoor leisure activities that are most problematic due to being frequent, having considerable impact on nature, being unorganised and thus difficult to steer, and representing different seasons (summer/winter) as well as two different main characteristics (trend-oriented/classic). These two were free riding (ski or snowboard) and picnicking.

(2) In the inductive part the analysis of qualitative data, collected by problem-centred interviews with individuals carrying out the before-selected outdoor activities, revealed deep insights into the different motivations for these activities and into the driving factors of responsible behaviour towards nature and landscape.

(3) Theory development: Based on the “theory of planned behavior” (Ajzen & Madden 1986) and the results of the inductive part – such as the extraction of initial factors like motivation (Rheinberg, 1993), attitude towards nature and landscape, perception of problems (Hunecke et al. 1999), acceptance of behaviour-strategies, knowledge and external factors – an extended theoretical model was developed to take a closer look at the underlying factors determining responsible behaviour towards nature and landscape (see figure 1).

(4) In the deductive part a representative nationwide postal survey was conducted in Switzerland (n=1340 German-Swiss and French-Swiss participants) to test the above-mentioned model and to provide representative quantitative data regarding the motivations and the importance of nature and landscape experience in this context.

(5) In the experimental part intervention experiments were undertaken in order to evaluate behaviour-changing strategies. For this purpose one experiment was conducted for each of the two above-mentioned selected outdoor leisure activities (free riding and picnicking). The effects were measured by an experimental design with control groups and surveys before and after the interventions.

Results

The results of the nationwide survey showed that “closeness to nature” is one of the most important motivational factors whereas risk experience is not as important as is often assumed. Of course, there are considerable differences between the motivations for different activities such as picnicking and free riding (see figure 2). But nevertheless, nature and landscape experience are the most important motivations also for the trend activities such as free riding.

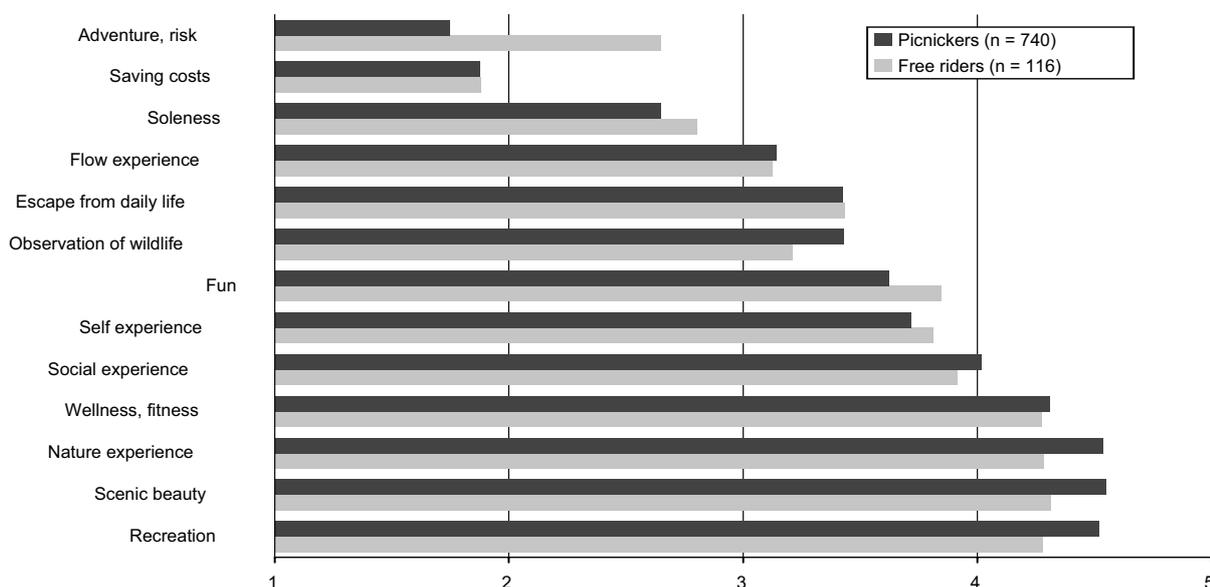


Figure 2: The motivations for carrying out the outdoor leisure activities free riding and picnicking.

Table 1: The predictors of the intention of nature/landscape responsible behaviour.

Predictors	B	S.E.B	β
Attitudes towards behaviour	.394	.035	.38***
Importance of scenic beauty	.060	.015	.13***
Subjective norms	.072	.021	.11***
Knowledge	.037	.013	.09**
Perceived behavioural control	.067	.024	.09**
External factors	.079	.031	.08*
Attitudes towards protection measures	.036	.015	.07*

Stepwise-Regression; n=1340; $r^2 = .39^{***}$; *: $p < .05$; **: $p < .01$; ***: $p < .001$

The extended theoretical model could be corroborated empirically: it was shown that responsible behaviour towards nature is often not only influenced by “Ajzen-factors” such as subjective norms or perceived behaviour control but also for example by landscape preferences (see table 1).

Table 2: The effect of infrastructure and prompt/information on the intention to behave ecologically responsibly (picnicking).

	infrastructure	control group	prompt/inform.
intention	3.8	3.8	4.4

(1= low; 5 = high)

Table 3: The effect of simple and differentiated information (both combined with a prompt) on reported behaviour (free riding).

prompt, simple information	1.8	1.2
prompt, differentiated information	1.7	1.6
control group	1.3	1.3

The intervention experiments showed that, among several intervention types, prompts seem to have an effect on attitude and behaviour, albeit only a minor one on behaviour. On the other hand, the offer of infrastructure has no effect on attitude but a significant effect on behaviour. In addition, it became clear that the amount of information provided to the people should be small and easy to understand.

Conclusion

The results reveal the importance of the role of nature and landscape as a motivation for carrying out outdoor leisure activities and, thus, encourage public agencies and NGOs to build on this motivation in the further development of strategies that shall promote responsible behaviour towards nature and

landscape. Aiming at influencing people in this sense it is important to bear in mind that a combination of prompts, motivating to show the desired behaviour, and (little!) information, explaining the necessity of the behaviour, as well as providing infrastructure, enabling to show the desired behaviour, is most suitable.

References

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