

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Regenerative Tourism in the Philippines: Millennial Tourists' Perspective and Intent to Participate

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Abstract

Tourism development can put destinations on a more equitable and environmentally friendly path by applying regenerative principles to tourism development. The millennial generation, known as sustainability-conscious consumers, bears much potential to participate in regenerative tourism. This study aimed to determine the awareness, perceived value, and intent to participate in regenerative tourism of the millennial generation in the Philippines in Metropolitan Manila and the surrounding areas such as Bulacan, Cavite, Angeles City, Cavite, Laguna, and others. This type of research is explanatory research, conducted through direct surveys of 190 millennial Filipinos through an online questionnaires (Google Form). Data was analyzed using SEM-PLS Version 3. The results of this study provide insights into the readiness of the millennial generation to participate in regenerative tourism practices. This research intends to contribute theoretically to tourism readiness and recovery post-pandemic. Moreover, it can make a practical contribution to tourism stakeholders to support the regenerative and sustainable development of tourist destinations in the Philippines.

Keywords: explanatory research, millennial, Philippines, PLS-SEM, regenerative tourism, SOR-Theory

1. Introduction

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector was acknowledged as one of the most rapidly increasing and largest economic sectors worldwide [1], the economic value derived from travel and tourism poured into the global economy reached US\$8 trillion, comprising 10.4% of the worldwide gross domestic product (GDP) [2]. In 2022, the industry exhibited a strong resurgence in expenditure on tourism, leading to the restoration of income levels seen before the pandemic in numerous locations [3]. However, tourism recovery in Southeast Asia continues to lag behind other regions significantly [4]. With the challenges brought by COVID-19, the global tourism industry hopes to return to its former glory.

To build a more robust tourism industry post-COVID-19, experts suggest that tourism should be inclusive and regenerative [5]. Regenerative tourism, emphasizing conservation, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship, emerges as a beacon of hope for the post-pandemic tourism landscape. There is an urgent need for regenerative tourism development in areas worldwide that have already been negatively affected by human advancement and over-tourism [6]. Experts suggest that regenerative tourism embodies the further step in sustainable tourism [7][8], an upgrade or a concept beyond the 'sustainable development' paradigm [9]. Recognized as an evolution beyond traditional sustainability paradigms [10, 11] and considered as a powerful force of change [12], regenerative tourism represents a transformative shift [13,14] in the direction of developing enduring capacities and promoting adaptability among primary and secondary stakeholders. Regenerative tourism will help tourism recovery because it offers a series of strategies aimed at

reimagining and reconstructing the tourism sector to cultivate enduring competencies and enhance adaptability for both its primary and secondary stakeholders during and beyond the crisis [15]. Countries like New Zealand have promoted regenerative tourism practices embodied in their “Tiaki Promise” [16]. The Philippines has also considered regenerative tourism to help recover the tourism sector [17]. Both countries have already embraced regenerative tourism practices as a means to not only recover economically but also to preserve their natural and cultural heritage.

As the tourism industry strives to recover, one of the segments that shows excellent potential in tourism recovery is Generation Y or Millennials. Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996 [18]. In some parts of Asia, like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and the Philippines, Generation Z and Millennials comprise the most significant population share, constituting an important consumer group in these countries. Among the various segments of travellers, millennials stand out as pivotal players in driving sustainable practices within the tourism industry. Their sustainability-conscious mindset [19,20] and a preference for environmentally friendly travel options position them as catalysts for change toward conservation-oriented tourism experiences. As millennial tourists continue to dominate and surpass other generations in numbers, it may also significantly influence and impact the development of a sustainable environment [21, 22]. As sustainability-conscious consumers, young adults from the millennial generation have shown a keen interest in embarking on vacations that have a reduced environmental footprint [23], aligned with the principles of regenerative tourism [24].

Most of the research about regenerative tourism falls under policies and practices, with very little research looking at the demand side. There is a need to enhance the understanding of regenerative travel conduct within the realm of tourism stakeholders to enhance the evaluation of tourism destinations and the conscientious consumption tendencies of diverse touristic commodities and services [24, 25]. This study seeks to delve into the perspective of millennial tourists in the Philippines regarding regenerative tourism, aiming to uncover their motivations and intentions toward conservation-focused travel. By understanding how millennials perceive and engage with regenerative practices, stakeholders in the tourism sector can harness this influential consumer group to promote environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and responsible consumption patterns.

2. Literature Review

The concept of regenerative tourism implies that a fundamental shift will necessitate a transformation in our cognitive processes and awareness and has garnered considerable interest in the past few years [13,14]. This change in the industry encourages stakeholders to value people and Nature above profit [26]. Regenerative tourism is an upgrade or a concept beyond the ‘sustainable development’ paradigm [9]. The following section includes a review of the concepts of regenerative design, regenerative tourism, Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and the stimulus-organism-response (S–O–R) theory.

2.1. Regenerative Design

Regenerative travel is grounded in regenerative development and design, encompassing structures that adhere to the standards set by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) [13]. The term ‘regenerative design’ has recently emerged to challenge sustainability’s perceived inadequacies and stasis [27]. Furthermore, regenerative design deviates from this understanding of sustainability through three main aspects [27]. The first stage involves changing the frame of reference and redirecting the focus from minimal effects to accentuating positive outcomes. Secondly, it raises inquiries concerning the interactions between humans and the environment, as influenced by the Cartesian separation between subjectivity and objectivity. Thirdly, there is an effort made to establish a reconnection between environmentalism and a socio-political dimension, an aspect that requires enhancement within a significant portion of the discourse on sustainability [27]. The idea of regeneration — renewing or restoring something — is not new, but it only began to surface in mainstream conversation within the tourism industry in 2019.

2.2. Regenerative Tourism

When defining the meaning and aim of regenerative tourism, some authors have compared it to other forms, such as sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, or resilient tourism [14]. Regenerative tourism represents a new paradigm within the field of tourism, showing great potential in advancing sustainability across various tourism sectors and global activities as a whole [28]. It is part of a long tradition of regenerative development methods that incorporate aspects of Western science and Indigenous viewpoints, knowledge frameworks, and methodologies [29]. To differentiate regenerative tourism from sustainable tourism, the former leaves a place better than before, while the latter leaves the place as it is so that it stays the same [30]. Regenerative tourism places specific focus on the necessity of fostering avenues for restoring the tourist locales, harmonizing the social-economic-environmental repercussions of tourism alterations, tackling the challenges posed by the climate emergency and diminishing resources from the Earth, as well as lessening and overseeing the environmental effects of tourism to enhance the significance of tourism [24]. The realization has emerged that the tourism sector, as a whole, along with the specific location, functions not as a mechanized assembly line but rather as a dynamic, interconnected entity integrated within an ecological system known as Nature and governed by the laws and fundamentals of Nature [31]. Two crucial contexts exist where regenerative tourism holds significant value: (1) the revitalization of tourist destinations that have been adversely affected by the phenomenon of mass tourism (while addressing its detrimental consequences), and (2) tourism is seen as a strategy for rejuvenating a forsaken landscape, community, or region that might not presently allure tourists but has the potential to evolve into a tourist spot [31].

2.3. Regenerative Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030

One of the goals of regenerative tourism visitors are encouraged to have a positive influence on their holiday destination, ensuring that they depart having improved its condition compared to their initial encounter [30][32]. Regenerative tourism urges tourism development with the community at its heart by involving all the stakeholders. A tourist destination can achieve regeneration through a comprehensive approach that encompasses all aspects of a system, is rooted in specific geographical locations, is driven by the community, and prioritizes the environment, while acknowledging the significance of social, cultural, environmental, and economic welfare [22]. With this, regenerative tourism has similar aspirations to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because they aim to transform our world [33]. Regenerative tourism supports the SDGs by encouraging and embracing Nature-based Solutions (NbS), such as those that protect, manage, and restore ecosystems. Providing solutions to the challenges faced by the world's ecosystems will help in the achievement of SDG 14 (Life Below Water) or SDG 15 (Life on Land) [33]. The United Nations has also elaborated on a set of regenerative tourism principles that draw upon Nature's wisdom aligned to the SDGs, which emphasizes the need to have a holistic understanding of the living-systems approach, collaboration, diversity, inclusivity and equity, transformation and inspiration, environmental responsibility, and cultural stewardship [30]. A regenerative mindset provides a comprehensive perspective; humans and Nature are not distinct classifications, but rather interconnected and interwoven [34]. Should all stakeholders in the tourism industry have this mindset, the world will undoubtedly witness the achievement of the SDGs.

2.4. Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) Theory

The S-O-R theory states that environmental aspects (stimulus) evoke individuals' psychological states (organism), which, in turn, undergo an internal process to shape their behavioral responses (respond) [31]. The S-O-R theory is adopted widely in different contexts, such as marketing and tourism. The SOR model has already been employed in online consumer behavior, investigating how humans and technology influence purchase intentions [35]. With this, the researchers utilized the SOR model by looking at the millennials' awareness of the meaning of regenerative tourism (stimulus), perception of the importance/value of regenerative tourism (organism) and leading to their intent to participate in regenerative tourism (response).

3. Methodology

This study was conducted in the Metropolitan Manila and their surrounding areas known as National Capital Region (NCR), encapsulating an area of 619.57 km² which comprises 16 highly urbanized cities, namely, Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Manila, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, Pateros (a municipality) Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela—with the sampling frame of 1,846,513 people [38], totalling 190 respondents.

This study employs a quantitative data analysis method using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) - Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modelling method known as (SMART-PLS) and SPSS Version 26. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a multivariate statistical method used to test the relationship between variables in a conceptual model. This method integrates path analysis, factor analysis, and linear regression analysis into one model. In social research, SEM is becoming increasingly popular due to its ability to address several methodological and theoretical issues in data analysis. The SEM-PLS analysis method predicts future behavior because it is predictive, so this analysis is needed to determine the prediction results.

Furthermore, SEM-PLS is an excellent analytical tool in tourism science studies [37]. The data analysis tool used is SmartPLS4. SPSS is used to carry out descriptive analysis of respondent profiles and the mean of each variable, making it easier to interpret hypothesis test results. For the sampling, the authors managed to get 190 millennial Filipinos using a purposive sampling method, with the inclusion criterion that only millennials allowed to participate in this study, aged 23 to 38 years old, live, stay, or work in NCR. While the exclusion criterion is baby boomers, Generation X is not eligible to participate in this study as they are not the targeted group, and foreigners are not eligible even if they are millennials. Plus, based on the monthly report released by the Philippines Statistics Authority in 2023[39], 69,397,349 individuals from 15 to 64 years old in the Philippines are within this age group. This study is an explanatory type to see regenerative tourism from the perspective of millennials in the Philippines.

4. Results and Discussion

This study has three variables: Awareness of Regenerative Tourism, Perceived Value of Regenerative Tourism, and Intent to Participate. The research results are described in the respondent demographic table, as well as the results of statistical analysis using SEM-PLS. The respondents' profiles show that most respondents are female, aged 27-31, have a bachelor's degree in education, and are primarily involved in the travel and hospitality industry. In terms of marital status, the majority are still single and working in the private sector. All respondents are Filipino citizens, and they describe themselves as tourists looking for new experiences. The demographic results are in Table 1.

Table 1. Demography Analysis of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	68	35.79
Female	122	64.21
Age Group		
27-31	144	75.79
32-36	23	12.11
37-42	23	12.11
Educational Attainment		
Associate degree	2	1.05
Bachelor's Degree	127	66.84
Doctorate	4	2.10
High School Graduate	4	2.10
Master's Degree	16	8.42
No Formal Education	-	-

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Professional Degree	-	-
Some College, No Degree	37	19.47
Industry Attached		
Agriculture	7	3.69
Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)	3	1.58
Construction and Real Estate	3	1.58
Customer Service	1	0.53
Direct Selling	1	0.53
E-Commerce	3	1.58
Education	18	9.47
Energy	2	1.05
Environment Conservation	2	1.05
Financial Services	6	3.16
Government Service	1	0.53
Hair and Makeup Artist (HMUA)	1	0.53
Healthcare	5	2.63
Information Technology	3	1.58
Local Government Units – Tourism	1	0.53
Manufacturing	1	0.53
None	5	2.63
Missing Value	2	1.05
Oil and Gas	1	0.53
Office Space	1	0.53
Shop Owner	1	0.53
Students	5	2.63
Supply Chain	1	0.53
Telecommunications	4	2.10
Transportation	1	0.53
Travel and Hospitality	106	55.79
Wholesale and Retail Trade	5	2.63
Type of Employment		
Government sectors	23	12.11
Non-profit organization	1	0.53
Others	17	8.95
Private sector	66	34.74
Self-employed	18	9.47
Students	65	34.21
Income Level (Individuals)		
Less than PHP 15,000	32	16.84
PHP 15,001 - PHP 25,000	40	21.05
PHP 25,001 - PHP 35,000	27	14.21
PHP 35,001 - PHP 45,000	15	7.89
PHP 45,001 - PHP 55,000	3	1.58
PHP 55,001 and above	22	11.58
Not Applicable	51	26.84
Combined Household Income		
Less than PHP10,957	45	23.68
PHP 10,957 but less than PHP 21,194	33	17.37
PHP 21,194 but less than PHP 43,828	37	19.47
PHP 43,828 but less than PHP 76,669	31	16.32
PHP 76,669 but less than PHP 131,484	21	11.05
PHP 131,484 but less than PHP 219,140	10	5.26
Greater than or equal to PHP 219,140	13	6.84
Marital Status		
Single	158	83.16
Married	32	16.84

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Divorced	-	
Widowed	-	
Nationality		
Philippines	190	100
Foreigner	-	
Geographical Distribution of The Respondents:		
Angeles City	1	0.53
Australia	1	0.53
Batangas	1	0.53
Bohol	4	2.10
Bontoc	1	0.53
Bulacan	1	0.53
Cainta Rizal	2	1.05
Caloocan	2	1.05
Canada	1	0.53
Cavite	5	2.63
Cebu	3	1.58
Dubai	1	0.53
Dublin, Ireland	1	0.53
Iloilo	1	0.53
Isabela	1	0.53
Laguna	79	41.58
Las Piñas	6	3.16
Leyte	1	0.53
Makati	8	4.21
Malabon	-	-
Mandaluyong	4	2.10
Manila	14	7.37
Marikina	1	0.53
Muntinlupa	1	0.53
Missing Value	2	1.05
Navotas	1	0.53
Nueva Ecija	1	0.53
Palawan	1	0.53
Pampanga	12	6.32
Parañaque	2	1.05
Pasay	4	2.10
Pasig	4	2.10
Pateros	1	0.53
Quezon City	6	3.16
Rizal	1	0.53
Roxas City	1	0.53
Santa Cruz	2	1.05
Sorsogon City	1	0.53
Tacloban City	1	0.53
San Juan	-	-
Taguig	5	2.63
Taytay	1	0.53
United States of America	1	0.53
Valenzuela	2	1.05
Vizcaya	1	0.53
Frequency of Traveling		
1x a year	91	47.89
2x a year	48	25.26
3x a year	21	11.05
More than 4x a year	30	15.79

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Describe Yourself as a Tourist		
Looking for a new experience	146	76.84
Prefer well-known destination	44	23.16

Table 2 shows the Cronbach Alpha for the constructs Awareness, Perceived Value, and Intent to Participate. The authors intend to see the reliability test for these constructs and the alpha value generated. These three constructs recorded the Cronbach Alpha range above 0.7, which shows above the best.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Awareness	0.954	0.966	0.878
Perceived Value	0.877	0.910	0.670
Intent to Participate	0.795	0.867	0.622

Next, SEM-PLS testing is divided into three stages: outer model, inner model, and bootstrapping. The results of the first test show that all research items have an outer loading value of >0.5, so they can be said to be valid. The Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability value shows a value of >0.7, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) shows a value >0.5, indicating that the research item is reliable (see Table 2).

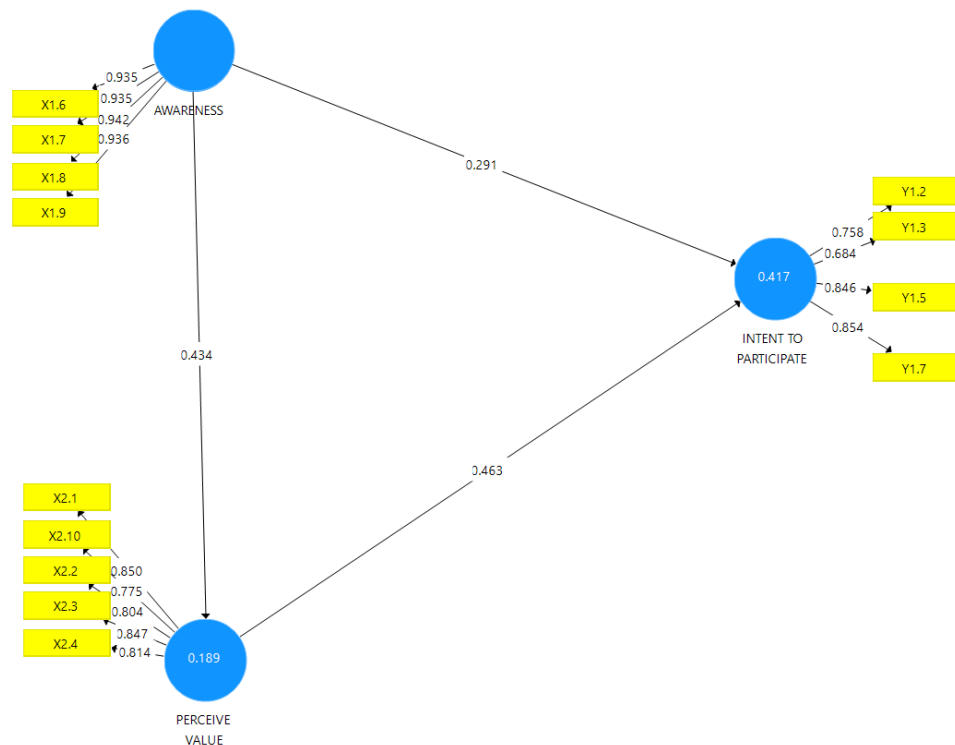


Figure 1. Result of Path Analysis

Based on the results of the inner model, it can be seen that the R square value shows that the influence of the intent to participate variable is 41.7% influenced by the awareness and perceived value variable, and other factors outside the research influence the remaining perceived value. The magnitude of the influence of the

perceived value variable is 18.9%, influenced by the variable's awareness. Other variables outside the research influence the rest.

Table 3. R Square

Result of Inner Model	R Square
Intent to Participate	0.417
Perceived Value	0.189

Lastly, hypothesis testing was carried out using the bootstrapping method. Based on the four hypotheses proposed, all are accepted. Awareness positively and significantly affects intent to participate, showing that tourists aware of regenerative tourism are willing to participate. Perceived value has a positive and significant effect on intent to participate in regenerative tourism; this indicates that tourists who perceive regenerative tourism as valuable or important will be willing to participate and undertake regenerative tourism. Intent to participate has a positive and significant effect on regenerative tourism, which shows that tourists willing to participate will engage in regenerative tourism. Perceived value has a partially indirect mediating effect on the relationship between awareness and intent to participate. It shows that perceived value aligns with tourists' expectations, which can create an intent to participate based on awareness.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Result

Variable	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Awareness → Intent to Participate	0.291	0.078	3.734	0.000
Awareness → Perceived Value	0.434	0.064	6.803	0.000
Perceived Value → Intent to Participate	0.463	0.075	6.162	0.000
Awareness → Perceived Value → Intent to Participate	0.201	0.044	4.528	0.000

The study's findings on regenerative tourism among millennial tourists in the Philippines shed light on consumer behavior and hold significant implications for conservation and sustainability efforts. The research underscores the positive conservation impact of promoting regenerative tourism by uncovering the awareness, perceived value, and intent to participate in sustainable tourism practices. These results highlight how sustainable practices can contribute to preserving natural ecosystems and cultural heritage. The study's emphasis on sustainability integration underscores the importance of responsible tourism behavior in driving environmental stewardship and biodiversity protection within the tourism sector. Additionally, the insights into community empowerment gleaned from the research reveal how regenerative tourism can empower local communities, support economic development, and foster a sense of ownership over environmental resources. These findings have significant policy implications, providing valuable guidance for policymakers and industry stakeholders seeking to enact sustainable tourism initiatives that support conservation goals and community well-being.

5. Conclusions

Undeniably, Millennials stand poised as powerful agents of change in steering the tourism industry toward more sustainable practices, particularly in regenerative tourism. This study is a pivotal starting point for catalyzing this shift by uncovering millennials' nuanced understanding of regenerative tourism and their willingness to participate and contribute to such practices actively. A key revelation from the research is the pivotal role of perceived value in shaping behaviors, surpassing mere awareness in driving engagement with regenerative tourism initiatives. These insightful findings underscore the significance of integrating regenerative tourism practices into destination management strategies, indicating that aligning tourist expectations with regenerative experiences can foster a greater willingness among tourists to partake in sustainable activities and support innovative strategies within the industry.

Drawing insights from the perspectives of Millennial tourists not only propels the country toward a more sustainable tourism landscape but also underscores the necessity for collaboration as a fundamental driver for realizing regenerative practices. Despite the inherent challenges, the study's emphasis on stakeholder cooperation is critical for actualizing regenerative tourism endeavors. Looking ahead, future researchers are encouraged to explore a holistic view by incorporating the perspectives of diverse tourism stakeholders. This collective insight can provide a robust foundation for generating cohesive recommendations and actionable strategies that propel the industry toward genuinely regenerative practices.

Author Contributions

AKL: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resource; **KSR:** Writing – original draft, Software, Visualization, Methodology; **RA:** Writing – review and editing, Supervision, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Visualization; **AG:** Data Curation, Resource; **MS:** Data Curation; **SO:** Data Curation, Writing – review and editing and **RG:** Data Curation, Resource.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare

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