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UNDERLYING BELIEFS OF BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS REGARDING TOURISM ENHANCEMENT IN GEORGIA

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Abstract

Especially rural areas in Post-Soviet countries are struggling at the poverty line. In the case of two remote rural regions in Georgia, the tourism sector can serve as an additional source of income. A structural equation model is used to assess which influential factors determine the intention of private households to enhance activities in the tourism sector. The Theory of Planned Behavior (AJZEN, 1991) serves as the framework. Subjective norm exerts the strongest influence, followed by perceived control while attitude has no significant effect on intention. An analysis of the underlying beliefs shows that the family has the strongest influence on subjective norm, suggesting the importance of interventions that target the social aggregate. Bank loans can foster the perceived ability of enhancing touristic activities while personal illness is perceived as a significant threat.

Keywords

Behavioral intentions, Georgia, tourism, private households, Theory of Planned Behavior, structural equation modeling, income source, collectivism

1 Research Question

For the two research regions Kazbegi and Bakuriani, tourism is a promising sector and is already of considerable importance. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is applied to analyze behavioral intentions (INT) of private households regarding an enhancement of activities in the tourism branch and to answer the question of which of the explaining constructs attitude (ATT), subjective norm (SN) and perceived behavioral control (PBC) influences the households' intentions the most (AJZEN, 1991). Including belief-based measures gives insight into the informational foundation of the explaining constructs and can be used to derive interventions for behavior change (AJZEN 2005: 123).

2 Methodology and Results

The data results from a quantitative household survey (n=247) conducted within the project Analysing Multiple Interrelationships between Environmental and Societal Processes in Mountainous Regions of Georgia (AMIES) in 2011 with funding from the VolkswagenStiftung. A structural equation model was calculated using reflective and formative indicators, thereby creating MIMIC (= multiple indicators and multiple causes) constructs for SN and PBC (HAUSER and GOLDBERGER, 1971: 95-98). The model confirms the proposed influence of SN and PBC on

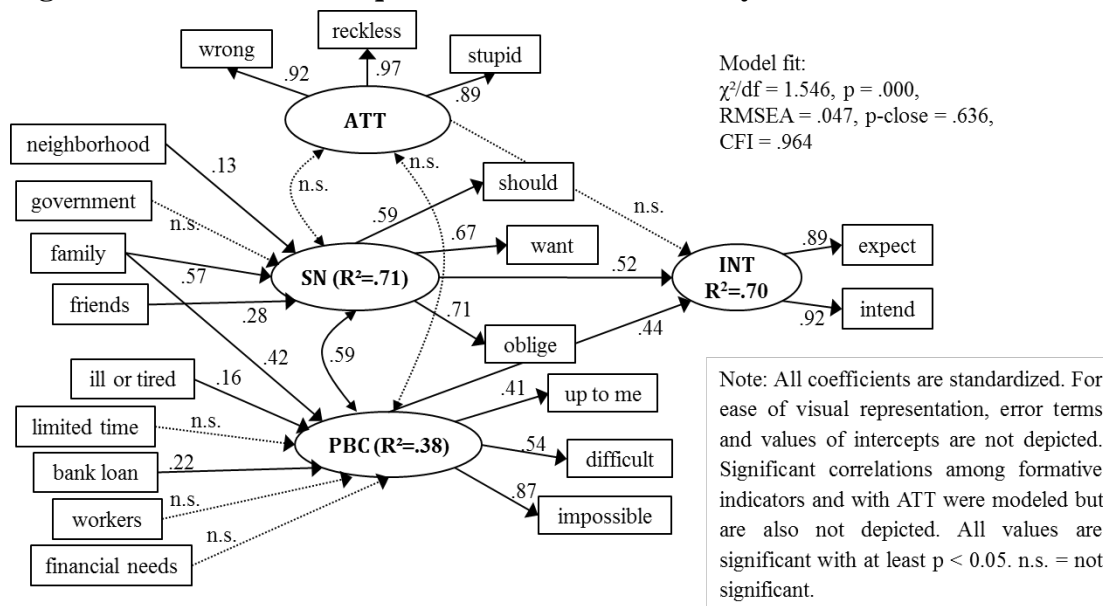
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INT, but not for ATT (also if formative indicators are included). SN has the strongest influence. The model explains a large share of the variance of intentions to enhance touristic activities.

Figure 1: Structural equation model of the Theory of Planned Behavior



Source: Own calculations from own data

3 Discussion

It is interesting that SN has the largest influence on INT while ATT is insignificant since SN is generally the weakest component (ARMITAGE and CONNER, 2001: 481f). However, YBARRA and TRAFIMOW found that depending on whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic, behaviors are more likely to be under attitudinal or normative control respectively (1998: 369). It is possible that the collectivist nature of the Georgian culture (HOUSE et al., 2004) has implications for the relationships in the model. In order to foster the engagement of private households in the tourism sector, policies and NGOs should take the strong social bonds of households into account by e.g. targeting not only the individual, but also the social aggregate. Furthermore, it is important to warrant reliable loans and precautions for times of illness would increase perceived control.

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