

# Thinking Green when at a Tourism Destination? The Effect of Tourists' Sociodemographic Characteristics in Predicting the Perception of Green Packaging and Branding, Eco-Friendly Attitudes and Behaviour

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**Ivana Šagovnović**

*University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography,  
Tourism and Hotel Management, Serbia  
e-mail: ivana.sagovnovic@gmail.com*

**Igor Stamenković**

*University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography,  
Tourism and Hotel Management, Serbia  
e-mail: igorrogi@yahoo.com*

**Damir Demonja**

*Institute for Development and International Relations, Department of  
International Economic and Political Relations, Zagreb, Croatia  
e-mail: ddemonja@irmo.hr*

**ABSTRACT** The tourism industry contributes greatly to stakeholders at tourism destinations, yet leaving negative prints on the environment. Besides, both tourism providers and tourists are often associated with unfavourable treatment of nature and disrespectful behaviour towards the destination's natural resources. Hence, understanding what influences tourists' attitudes and behaviour towards the environment is of great significance. Previous literature has already shed light on the importance of people's sociodemographic characteristics in molding their environmental attitudes and behaviour. Thus, this paper attempted to investigate whether tourists' sociodemographic variables influence their eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour when at tourism destinations. Similarly, such personal characteristics have been confirmed to assist consumers in their preferences towards product packaging. Based on this, and the fact that green products could enhance the quality of the environment and modify consumers' behaviour, the present study also focused on tourists' perception of green packaging and branding. The survey research was carried out among 368 Serbian tourists. The results confirmed differences in eco-friendly attitudes between male and female tourists, as well as between travelers of different occupational statuses and monthly income. Moreover, the findings pointed out that

tourists' age correlates positively with their eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour. Interestingly, no significant differences were detected in the perception of green packaging and branding. Practical implications for destination marketers will be discussed in the paper.

*Key words:* tourists' sociodemographic characteristics, green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, eco-friendly behaviour.

## **1. Introduction**

International tourism represents an outstanding generator of growth and employment opportunities in developing countries (Sharif, Saha and Loganathan, 2017). On the other hand, international tourism contributes to global warming through emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from air traffic, cruisers, and accommodation (Solarin, 2014; Othman, Stafford and Hartman, 2012; Sharif et al., 2020). In addition, providers of tourism services are being linked to slow but impactful degradation of the environment. Similarly, tourists themselves are often perceived as irresponsible people who do not behave properly towards the environment (Chan and Lam, 2002; Leonidou et al. 2014). Even though tourists possess enough knowledge about climate change, they do not show enough willingness to reduce traveling by airplanes or minimize carbon prints they are leaving (Leiserowitz, 2006; McKercher et al. 2010). Previous literature (Becken, 2004; Martín, 2005) pointed out that the improvement of tourists' familiarity with climate changes and their consequences could make them more interested in adopting responsible behaviour towards the environment. Indeed, numerous advantages could arise from the implementation of eco-friendly behaviour, including health, safety, symbolism, or status (Ottman et al. 2006; Leonidou et al. 2014). Therefore, understanding what determines tourists' eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour could make significant steps towards the sustainable development of tourism (e.g., Leonidou et al. 2014; Chiu, Lee and Chen, 2014).

In relation to this, many authors focused on the factors influencing tourists' environmental attitudes and behaviour, including national culture (He and Filimonau, 2020), environmentally responsible travel experience (Kim, Kim and Nguyen, 2021), recreation experience (Lee and Jan, 2015), deontological status, law obedience, political action (Leonidou et al. 2014), and public environment facilities (Wang et al. 2018). Aside from these, people's sociodemographic variables are found to shape their perception of the problems that the environment is facing. Likewise, these variables are confirmed to influence their evaluation of green products as well (Bryła, 2016; Witek and Kuzniar, 2021). Besides, previous studies in the field of consumer literature (Khaniwale, 2015; Yakup and Jablonsk, 2012) shed light on acknowledging consumers' characteristics when assessing their consumption behaviour, as consumers are unique and differ in personal characteristics and nature among themselves. Addition-

ally, having an insight into the place of consumers' sociodemographic characteristics in formulating their intention towards green consumption could assist marketing experts in enhancing their practical activities (Witek and Kuzniar, 2021). Consequently, numerous researchers examined the role of people's sociodemographic characteristics in shaping different aspects of their environmental attitudes and behaviour (e.g., Boronat-Navarro and Pérez-Aranda, 2020; Han et al. 2011; Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai, 2019; Mostafa, 2007; Walia, Kumar and Negi, 2020; Witek and Kuzniar, 2021).

The growth of consumerism and industrial production impacted the emergence of environmental risks, which also triggered awareness about environmental health issues (Bhardwaj et al. 2020). Some of the main negative impacts on the environment include reduction of natural resources, pollution of air and water, climate changes that lead to global warming problems, diseases that could be life-threatening, and disappearance of species (Behera and Ratna Reddy, 2002; Kolk and Pinkse, 2005). Companies strive to accomplish multiple goals to diminish such issues by implementing eco-friendly materials, reducing packaging sizes, and limiting the usage of energy, water, and waste (Kassaye, 2001; Moustafa et al. 2019). Additionally, aside from showing a willingness to develop products made of environmentally safe packages, companies also attempt to include eco-labels, as this tool could help them to market green products more efficiently (Ruzevicius and Waginger, 2007; Grundey and Zaharia, 2008; Grundey, 2009; Rochikashvili and Bongaerts, 2018; Micu et al. 2018). Subsequently, the role of green marketing and its attractive tools, namely green packaging and branding, emerged. Indeed, green packaging is believed to be effective for both human health and the environment (Moustafa et al. 2019). On the other hand, a green brand represents a powerful tool for increasing the number of consumers and shaping their decisions to purchase ecological products (Danciu, 2015). Together, these tools could succeed in attracting consumers' attention and molding their consumption behaviour (Chen et al. 2017; Mishra, Jain and Motiani, 2017; Yang and Zhao, 2019; Shabbir et al. 2020). In relation to this, Çinar (2020) emphasized the importance of the role of people's sociodemographic characteristics in evaluating product packaging. Specifically, this could serve as a valuable base for understanding whether packaging responds to the cause of attracting consumers' attention properly (Nancarrow and Wright, 1998).

Despite many benefits that result from green marketing, some of which are oriented towards eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour, current literature sheds light on a negative aspect that has been raised from dishonest and profitably-oriented actions of persons and companies – greenwashing. Greenwashing represents deceiving advertisements oriented towards the promotion of products or an organization's aims and policies, which are supposed to increase the sales and profit of products. In the literature, many synonyms for greenwashing are being used, such as eco-bleaching, whitewashing, eco-washing, green makeup, green image washing, etc. (Kahle and

Gurel-Atay, 2015; Mayrand and Trottier, 2011; Braga Junior et al. 2019). Greenwashing leads to negative consequences, including the increase in consumers' mixed feelings about corporate social responsibility policies of companies (Furlow, 2010). Moreover, greenwashing is also found to negatively shape consumers' evaluation and attitudes towards the brand (Parguel, Benoît-Moreau and Larceneux, 2011; Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla and Paladino, 2012; Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla and Paladino, 2014), green trust (Chen and Chang, 2013), and consumers' word-of-mouth (Chen, Lin and Chang, 2014). Likewise, greenwashing triggers consumers' green skepticism, which also represents an obstacle for green marketing (Chen et al. 2014). Further on, green skepticism is found to jeopardize consumers' perception of the reliability of initiatives of green marketing (de Freitas Netto et al. 2020).

Hence, examining the influence of tourists' sociodemographic characteristics in shaping their eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour when at a tourism destination is of great importance. Moreover, investigating differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between tourists could lead to a better understanding of their preferences and serve as a basis for creating optimal environmentally friendly products offered by tourism destinations or hotels at destinations. Additionally, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper that is simultaneously focused on the role of tourists' sociodemographic characteristics in shaping their perception of green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, and behaviour within one research framework.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1. Differences in the perception of green packaging and branding based on socio-demographic characteristics***

To the best of our knowledge, current literature lacks studies that have explored the influence of tourists' sociodemographic characteristics in shaping their perception of green packaging and branding. Nevertheless, consumer literature offers several studies that confirmed the effect of consumers' sociodemographic variables on their preferences towards product packaging (e.g., Çinar, 2020; Mojaverian and Tonakbar, 2018; Orzan et al. 2018; Yayar, 2012). For instance, Çinar (2020) confirmed that consumers' gender positively influences their preferences towards packaging. Also, Mojaverian and Tonakbar (2018) found that consumers' gender affects their preferences in choosing products with different packaging. Similarly, Kral et al. (2020) focused on the relationship between Slovakian consumers' sociodemographic characteristics and their preferences towards branded products. Their results showed that there is a positive correlation between consumers' gender and their preferences for branded products over regular products. Besides, their results suggested that male consumers are more likely to select branded products compared to female consumers. In addition, Blend and Van Ravenswaay (1999) also highlighted that male consumers were less ready to

purchase products with eco-labels. Eco-labels also represent a significant tool of green marketing, which enhances consumers' awareness of environmentally safe products (Simi, 2009). Thus, this reference could also serve as a valuable point for the assumption that there will be differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between male and female travelers. Consequently, based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: There are differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between male and female tourists.*

Furthermore, Çinar (2020) investigated whether people's monthly income impacts their preferences towards packaging, and findings confirmed that monthly income shapes their preferences. Besides, Kral et al. (2020) found that Slovakian consumers' income correlates with their preferences for selecting branded products over regular products. Moreover, Mojaverian and Tonakbar (2018) found that monthly income influences consumers' preferences in the type of packaging. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H2: There are differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between tourists with different monthly income.*

The previous literature is quite scarce when it comes to the relationship between people's occupational statuses and their preferences towards branded products or packaging (e.g., Çinar, 2020; Yayar, 2018; Mojaverian and Tonakbar, 2018). However, Çinar (2020) revealed that consumers' professions influence their preferences towards products. Similarly, Yayar (2018) found differences in packaging preferences between consumers of different employment statuses. On the other hand, Mojaverian and Tonakbar (2018) examined whether people's job affects their preferences towards choosing products based on packaging, but the results showed no significant impact of consumers' job in shaping packaging preferences. Therefore, there is room for investigating differences in the assessment of green packaging and branding between tourists of different occupational statuses but also work sectors. The previously presented references could serve as a basis for the assumption that there will be significant divergences in the perception of green packaging and branding between travelers of different occupational statuses and work sectors. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

*H3: There are differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between tourists with different occupational statuses.*

*H4: There are differences in the perception of green packaging and branding between tourists who work in different sectors.*

In a recent study, Çinar (2020) found that consumers' age influences their preferences towards packaging. Also, Kral et al. (2020) examined whether consumers' age correlates with their preferences for branded products, and findings showed a significant correlation between age and preferences. In their research, Mojaverian and Tonakbar (2018) showed that age positively shapes consumers' preferences towards buying products with specific packaging. Further on, Orzan et al. (2018) investigated whether there is a relationship between consumers' age and reasons for choosing organic packaging, but their results showed no significant correlation between these two constructs. Besides, Yayar (2018) revealed differences in product packaging preferences between consumers of different ages. Thus, we are proposing the following hypothesis:

*H5: There is a significant correlation between tourists' age and their perception of green packaging and branding.*

## **2.2. Differences in eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour based on socio-demographic characteristics**

Investigating differences in various aspects of eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour between male and female persons has been quite common in both tourism and consumer literature (e.g., Boronat-Navarro and Pérez-Aranda, 2020; Han et al. 2011; Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai, 2019; Mostafa, 2007; Walia et al. 2020; Witek and Kuzniar, 2021). The results of the recent work of Boronat-Navarro and Pérez-Aranda (2020) showed differences in green behaviour between female and male tourists. Specifically, female tourists were more ready to pay more money for a sustainable hotel in comparison to male tourists. Moreover, Han et al. (2011) showed differences in eco-friendly behaviour between male and female hotel guests. Particularly, female guests expressed a higher level of willingness to visit and pay more money to stay in a green hotel. Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai (2019) revealed that female tourists in Bangkok expressed their eco-friendly attitudes at higher levels compared to male tourists. Also, Mostafa (2007) showed that male consumers in Egypt expressed higher levels of positive attitudes towards green purchasing in comparison to female consumers. Furthermore, Walia et al. (2020) found that gender influences consumers' attitudes towards eco-friendly products and their purchase intention. Witek and Kuzniar (2021) conducted their research among Polish people and found that female consumers expressed more positive attitudes towards purchasing green products in comparison to male consumers. Indeed, previous literature (Banerjee and McKeage, 1994; McIntyre, Meloche and Lewis, 1993) highlighted the tendency of women to express environmental consciousness and be more oriented towards environmentally-friendly consumption (Han et al. 2011). Outside the field of tourism, Tikka et al. (2000) revealed that male students had more negative attitudes towards the environment in comparison to female students. Also, Yalçınkaya and Çetin

(2018) found that female students expressed higher levels of environmental attitudes in comparison to their male counterparts. Hence, based on the above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H6: There are differences in eco-friendly attitudes between male and female tourists.*

*H7: There are differences in eco-friendly behaviour between male and female tourists.*

Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai (2019) found that students expressed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes in comparison to tourists employed in private companies and government offices. Also, entrepreneurs displayed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes in comparison to tourists employed in private sectors and state enterprises. Additionally, Walia et al. (2020) showed that people's occupation influences their attitudes and purchase intentions toward eco-friendly products. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

*H8: There are differences in eco-friendly attitudes between tourists with different occupational statuses.*

*H9: There are differences in eco-friendly behaviour between tourists with different occupational statuses.*

*H10: There are differences in eco-friendly attitudes between tourists who work in different sectors.*

*H11: There are differences in eco-friendly behaviour between tourists who work in different sectors.*

Eslaminosratabadi (2014) found that tourists with the highest income were the readiest to spend more money on a green hotel. In their paper, Fuentes-Moraleda et al. (2019) showed that consumers' income plays a role in molding their intention to pay more money for a hotel with environmental management. Also, Junaedi (2012) argued that consumers who have high incomes are more likely to show a willingness to purchase eco-friendly products in comparison to consumers who have lower incomes. Furthermore, Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai (2019) investigated differences in eco-friendly attitudes between tourists with different monthly incomes arranged in four categories (from lowest to highest). Their results showed that tourists with the lowest and highest incomes expressed their eco-friendly attitudes at higher levels in comparison to tourists with incomes arranged in the second and third categories. Besides, travelers with incomes from the third category displayed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes in comparison to travelers with incomes from the second category. In the recent study by Walia et al. (2020), results confirmed the role of consumers'

income in shaping their attitudes and intentions to purchase eco-friendly products. Also, Witek and Kuzniar (2021) pointed out that consumers, who are in a better financial situation, are more oriented towards purchasing green products. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

*H12: There are differences in eco-friendly attitudes between tourists with different monthly incomes.*

*H13: There are differences in eco-friendly behaviour between tourists with different monthly incomes.*

Eslaminosratabadi (2014) found that older tourists expressed their willingness to spend more money for a green hotel at higher levels in comparison to younger tourists. Similarly, Fuentes-Moraleda et al. (2019) revealed that consumers' age shaped negatively their green behaviour, assessed through the intention to pay more for a hotel with environmental management. Besides, Itasanmi, Akintolu and Ojedeji (2019) showed that older female adults expressed higher levels of environmental behaviour compared to their younger counterparts. Furthermore, Kunchornsirimongkon and Ditta-Apichai (2019) found that younger tourists displayed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes in comparison to older tourists. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H14: There is a significant correlation between tourists' age and their eco-friendly attitudes.*

*H15: There is a significant correlation between tourists' age and their eco-friendly behaviour.*

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Sample**

A total of 368 tourists from Serbia participated in the survey research. There was a noticeable dominance of female participants in the sample (78.3%). The mean age of participants was 28.63 years (SD=12.281; range=18-65 years). Regarding occupational status, the highest percentage of participants were employed (35.9%), with the majority of employed tourists working in the private sector (47.7%). In terms of monthly income, the majority of participants have no income (47.8%), whereas there were slight differences between participants with average incomes (18.8%) and below-average incomes (20.4%).



### **3.2. Instrument**

The first part of the questionnaire included questions about respondents' sociodemographic characteristics (gender, age, occupational status, work sector, monthly income). The second part of the questionnaire measured respondents' perception of green packaging and branding using a five-item scale from the work of Shabbir et al. (2020). The third section of the questionnaire measured travelers' eco-friendly attitudes when at destination using a ten-item scale from Leonidou et al. (2014). The fourth part of the questionnaire measured travelers' eco-friendly behaviour when at destination (ten-item scale taken from Leonidou et al. (2014)). Respondents were asked to select a number that suits them best in assessing the given statements on a five-point Likert-type scale (1-strongly disagree; 5-strongly agree).

### **3.3. Procedure**

The survey research was conducted during a period of three months, from December 2020 to February 2021. The online questionnaire was created in Google Forms and distributed on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Viber. Data were collected using convenient and snowball sampling approaches, as participants were asked to distribute the online questionnaire further to their friends and family members. A convenience sample represents one of the most commonly used non-probability sampling strategies, which is also acknowledged for being less expensive, more efficient, and uncomplicated to implement (Jager, Putnick and Bornstein, 2017). In addition, virtual snowball sampling is frequently referred to as a time-efficient and less expensive means that helps researchers to increase the number of participants (Benfield and Szlemko, 2006; Baltar and Brunet, 2012). Survey questionnaires were intended for respondents who traveled internationally in the last three years. Respondents were informed that survey research is anonymous, their participation voluntary, and that results are going to be used for scientific purposes.

### **3.4. Statistical analysis**

Collected research data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0, through descriptive statistics, independent t-test, ANOVA test and post hoc (LSD) test, and Pearson's test of correlation.

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Results of descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows results of descriptive statistics (mean values and standard deviation) for each construct, as well as high  $\alpha$  values, implying good internal consistency among items within constructs.

Table 1.  
Results of descriptive statistics and reliability of the instruments

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Green packaging and branding	4.19	.6816	.774
Eco-friendly attitudes	4.37	.4955	.826
Eco-friendly behaviour	2.89	.8679	.885

The relatively high mean value for green packaging and branding (around 4.2) represents an encouraging finding, as this suggests tourists' awareness of the importance of ecological packaging and willingness to adjust their consumption towards a greener and sustainable consumption. Similarly, tourists expressed their eco-friendly attitudes at high levels (around 4.4). Nevertheless, travelers were not ready to behave in an environmentally friendly manner (2.89). In relation to this, prior studies indicated that people's favourable eco-friendly attitudes do not necessarily lead to eco-friendly behaviour (e.g., Singh, 2011).

### 4.2. Results of independent t-test

In order to examine whether there are differences in eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour but also in the perception of green packaging and branding between male and female travelers, an independent t-test was performed.

Table 2.  
Differences in green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, and behaviour between male and female tourists

	Male (N=80)		Female (N=288)		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Green packaging and branding	4.0775	.73087	4.2229	.66524	-.692	.091
<b>Eco-friendly attitudes</b>	<b>4.2513</b>	<b>.59831</b>	<b>4.3993</b>	<b>.45898</b>	<b>-2.052</b>	<b>.043</b>
Eco-friendly behaviour	2.8963	.94981	2.8858	.84551	.095	.924

Interestingly, no significant divergences in the perception of green packaging and branding were confirmed between male and female tourists (rejecting *H1*). Although existing tourism literature lacks studies that focused on this relationship, papers on similar constructs found that gender plays a role in shaping consumers' preferences towards product packaging (Çinar, 2020; Mojaverian and Tonakbar, 2018), eco-labeled products (Blend and Van Ravenswaay, 1999) and branded over non-branded products (Kral et al. 2020).

Furthermore, the results of the independent t-test showed that significant differences in terms of eco-friendly attitudes exist between male and female respondents. Specifically, female tourists expressed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes in comparison to male tourists. This finding is in accordance with prior studies, which also pointed out higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes among female respondents (Kunchornsiri-mongkon and Ditta-Apichai, 2019; Tikka et al. 2000; Yalçinkaya and Çetin, 2018). Moreover, Fisher and Arnold (1994) stated that women are more sensitive to issues related to the environment compared to men. Besides, women care more about living in a healthy and safe environment, whereas men are prone to perceive the environment as a resource to be exploited (Zelezny, Chua and Aldrich, 2000). On the other hand, results indicated no significant differences in eco-friendly behaviour between male and female travelers, which is opposite to previous studies (Boronat-Navarro and Pérez-Aranda, 2020; Han et al. 2011; Mostafa, 2007; Witek and Kuzniar, 2021). Consequently, this leads to accepting *H6* and rejecting *H7*.

### 4.3. Results of ANOVA and post hoc (LSD) tests

ANOVA test and post hoc (LSD) test were performed to investigate whether there are differences in eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour and in the perception of green packaging and branding between tourists of different occupational statuses, work sectors, and monthly income.

Table 3.

Differences in green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, and behaviour between tourists

	Green packaging and branding		Eco-friendly attitudes		Eco-friendly behaviour	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Occupational status	1.005	.405	<b>2.978</b>	<b>.019</b>	2.301	.058
Work sector	2.222	.089	.309	.819	1.531	.210
Monthly income	2.071	.104	<b>3.941</b>	<b>.009</b>	1.136	.334

Furthermore, the results of the post hoc (LSD) test showed that pupils expressed their eco-friendly attitudes to the lowest extent in comparison to students (MD= -.16944;

$p=.019$ ), employed ( $MD= -.17898$ ;  $p=.019$ ), unemployed ( $MD= -.31761$ ;  $p=.019$ ), and retired respondents ( $MD= -.35268$ ;  $p=.019$ ). This is an important finding, as this suggests that younger people's perception of the environment, its problems, and initiatives towards its protection requires further development and attention. Hence, educating young people and tourists about current situations or issues, which the environment is facing, should be an essential part of their education, discussion, but also preparation for future travels. Indeed, enhancement of environmental knowledge potentially leads to improvement of environmental attitudes (Arcury, 1990).

Further on, significant differences in eco-friendly attitudes were found among tourists with different monthly incomes. Specifically, tourists with below-average incomes showed eco-friendly attitudes at higher levels compared to tourists with above-average incomes ( $MD=.25625$ ;  $p=.009$ ), average incomes ( $MD=.16667$ ;  $p=.009$ ), and tourists with no incomes ( $MD=.21231$ ;  $p=.009$ ). This finding is partially in accordance with the results from Kunchornsiramongkon and Ditta-Apichai (2019), which showed that tourists with lower monthly incomes expressed higher levels of eco-friendly attitudes. According to obtained results, we accept  $H8$  and  $H12$  and reject  $H2$ ,  $H3$ ,  $H4$ ,  $H9$ ,  $H10$ ,  $H11$ , and  $H13$ .

#### 4.4. Results of Pearson's test of correlation

In order to examine whether tourists' perception of green packaging and branding, but also eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour rise with their ages, Pearson's test of correlation was performed.

Table 4.

Correlation between tourists' age and their perception of green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, and eco-friendly behaviour

	Green packaging and branding	Eco-friendly attitudes	Eco-friendly behaviour
Age	-.012	<b>.136**</b>	<b>.152**</b>

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results pointed out that significant correlations exist between tourists' age, their eco-friendly attitudes, and behaviour. Accordingly, the older a tourist is, the more eco-friendly his or her attitudes and behaviour will be. This is congruent with the results of previous studies (Eslaminosratabadi, 2014; Itasanmi et al. 2019; Witek and Kuzniar, 2021), which indicated that older people are more ready to behave in an environmentally friendly manner in comparison to younger people. Subsequently, we reject  $H5$  and accept  $H14$  and  $H15$ .

## **5. Conclusion and practical implications**

The principal aim of this research was to examine whether tourists' perception of green packaging and branding, eco-friendly attitudes, and behaviour differ based on their sociodemographic characteristics. The results pointed out significant differences in both eco-friendly attitudes and behaviour in the case of tourists' gender, occupational status, and monthly income. Interestingly, the results showed no statistical differences in the perception of green packaging and branding among tourists. This points out that there should not be any differences in the promotional content about the destination's offer, which highlights the importance of recycled materials, or the product's friendly nature towards the environment, targeted at tourists of different ages, monthly income, or occupational statuses. Furthermore, based on obtained results, several practical implications for destination marketers could be offered.

Firstly, the focus of destination marketers should be on the promotion of the destination among male travelers. Specifically, marketers should create promotional material with a content that would appear interesting to male tourists. Such promotional activities should interpret the destination's attractiveness through the lens of its eco-friendly attitudes and the standards that the destination has towards nature. Yue et al. (2020) highlighted that putting an accent on environmental importance could spark people's interest in the environment and lead to more environmentally friendly behaviour.

Secondly, destination marketers should focus on targeting the promotional content about the destination to both genders of tourists simultaneously without making any differences. Likewise, marketers should choose an attractive green marketing tool, such as green packaging and branding, to promote specific products offered at tourism destinations or hotels. Regarding this, Prakash and Pathak (2017) highlighted how product packaging increases consumers' confidence and leads them towards the purchase of environmentally friendly products. Moreover, experts in the field of green marketing could ensure higher levels of awareness by highlighting green packaging and its friendly nature to the environment (Nittala, 2014).

Thirdly, marketers should focus on the promotion of the destination's more affordable offers and services that are unharmed to nature and respectful towards the environment, which would attract tourists with lower incomes. Specifically, such promotions should also inform customers that by purchasing their products or services, they are becoming part of the process of helping the environment. On the other hand, in order to attract tourists with higher incomes, marketers should focus on the promotion of richer, more elegant, and more expensive offers of destinations or hotels. In particular, the promotion should highlight that such offers, aside from including all elements for a great and memorable experience, are based on the usage of ecological materials, recycling, and other valuable practices towards sustainable development. Besides,

marketers should direct their forces on encouraging these tourists to become a part of the process of environmental protection at the destination.

Lastly, the focus should be directed on encouraging young tourists to understand how their single steps to a friendlier behaviour towards the environment are not minor and marginal but significant and impactful. Hence, the promotional content should highlight the idea that significant steps towards environmental protection could start at a given tourism destination. In fact, Kral et al. (2020) reported that, by making the most out of traits that are associated with young consumers, such as spontaneity, tendency to get easily influenced, novelty-seeking, or following trends and innovations, marketing experts could make young consumers interested in selecting the branded product.

## **6. Limitations and recommendations for future research**

The present research has limitations. Firstly, the survey research was conducted among tourists of one nationality (Serbian tourists). Hence, the results should be interpreted with caution. Secondly, in spite of being frequently used, virtual snowball sampling, which was applied in this paper, is not the most reliable sampling, thus the authors refer to it as a limitation that could be overcome in future research. Thirdly, survey research was carried out in the months when international travel was limited, and uncertainty of future travels was increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present research did not show significant differences in the perception of green packaging and branding, thus there is room for future research to focus more on the role of tourists' sociodemographic variables in shaping the perception of green packaging and branding. Additionally, future research could include another attractive green marketing tools in the existing research framework.

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## **Razmišljate li zeleno kada ste na turističkoj destinaciji? Učinak sociodemografskih karakteristika turista u predviđanju percepcije zelene ambalaže i brendiranja, ekoloških stavova i ponašanja**

**Ivana Šagovnovič**

Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, Prirodno-matematički fakultet, Departman za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo, Srbija  
e-mail: ivana.sagovnovic@gmail.com

**Igor Stamenković**

Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, Prirodno-matematički fakultet, Departman za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo, Srbija  
e-mail: igorrogi@yahoo.com

**Damir Demonja**

Institut za razvoj i međunarodne odnose, Odjel za međunarodne gospodarske i političke odnose, Zagreb, Hrvatska  
e-mail: ddemonja@irmo.hr

### **Sažetak**

Turistička industrija uvelike doprinosi dionicima u turističkim destinacijama, ali također ostavlja negativan otisak na okoliš. Osim toga i pružateljci turističkih usluga i turisti često se povezuju s neprimjerenim odnosom prema prirodi i nepoštovanjem prirodnih resursa destinacije. Stoga je iznimno važno razumjeti što utječe na stavove i ponašanje turista prema okolišu. Dosadašnja literatura već je rasvijetlila važnost sociodemografskih karakteristika ljudi u oblikovanju njihovih stavova i ponašanja prema okolišu. Stoga je ovaj rad pokušao istražiti utječu li sociodemografske varijable turista na njihove ekološke stavove i ponašanje u turističkim destinacijama. Također, potvrđeno je da takve osobne karakteristike pomažu potrošačima u njihovim preferencijama vezanima za pakiranje proizvoda. Na temelju toga i činjenice da bi zeleni proizvodi mogli poboljšati kvalitetu okoliša i modificirati ponašanje potrošača, ovo istraživanje se također usredotočilo na percepciju turista o zelenoj ambalaži i brendiranju. Anketno istraživanje provedeno je između 368 srpskih turista. Rezultati istraživanja potvrdili su razlike u ekološkim stavovima turista prema spolu, kao i razlike između turista različitoga statusa zanimanja i mjesečnih primanja. Štoviše, rezultati su pokazali da starost turista pozitivno korelira s njihovim ekološkim stavovima i ponašanjem. Zanimljivo je da nisu uočene značajne razlike u percepciji zelene ambalaže i brendiranja. U radu će biti raspravljene praktične implikacije za marketinške stručnjake na destinaciji.

*Ključne riječi:* sociodemografske karakteristike turista, zeleno pakiranje i brendiranje, ekološki stavovi, ekološko ponašanje.