



## Ethics for tourism: integrating Confucian harmony and ethical beliefs into animal tourism

Pipatpong Fakfare <sup>a</sup>, Chayanon Phucharoen<sup>b</sup>, Jinkyung Jenny Kim<sup>c</sup> and Heesup Han <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Humanities and Tourism Management, Bangkok University, Pathumthani, Thailand; <sup>b</sup>Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University, Phuket, Thailand; <sup>c</sup>Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Macau University of Science and Technology, Taipa, Macao SAR, China; <sup>d</sup>College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Sejong University, Seoul, Korea

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain Asian traveler behaviors concerning ethical animal tourism, using the value-attitude-behavior model as the research framework. Through structural equation modeling analysis, critical factors for developing ethical behavior in animal tourism were verified. This research enhances the tourism literature by 1) incorporating Confucian harmony as an influencing cultural value and confirmed its essential role in the animal tourism context, and 2) verifying the significance of ethical beliefs as an important predictor for awareness and attitude, which subsequently induce responsible behaviors. Furthermore, the findings suggest how industry professionals could influence travelers' behavior in an ethical manner.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 April 2024  
Revised 12 May 2024  
Accepted 17 May 2024

### KEYWORDS

Confucian harmony; ethical belief; awareness; attitude; animal cocreation behavior; involvement; behavioral intention; ethical animal tourism

### Introduction

Animal tourism, which involves visits to places where animals live in their natural habitats or in captivity, such as national parks, game reserves, aquariums, and zoos, has become a popular activity for many travelers around the world (Blaer, 2022). According to Carr (2009), animal tourism refers to any activity in which animals are used as a form of entertainment or attraction for tourists. Participating in activities such as wildlife safaris, zoos, and aquariums, as well as animal-based cultural experiences and conservation experiences, constitutes animal tourism. While animal tourism can provide exciting and educational experiences, it also raises ethical considerations related to animal welfare, conservation, and the environment (Winter, 2020). The increasing demand for animal tourism experiences is associated with changing patterns in tourism desires and concerns for animal rights and well-being (Fennell, 2013).

As Winter (2020) claimed, ethical tourist behaviors in animal tourism include such actions as respecting animal welfare by choosing activities that prioritize the well-being of animals, engaging in educational opportunities about wildlife conservation, and advocating for ethical treatment of animals. Conversely, unethical behaviors involve supporting organizations that exploit animals for entertainment, participating in the illegal wildlife trade, and disregarding conservation guidelines

(Joo et al., 2023). Overall, ethical behaviors contribute to positive outcomes for animals, the environment, and local communities (Winter, 2020). However, the economic value of animal tourism is on the rise, raising concerns about the impact of unethical tourist behaviors on animals and their living conditions (Fennell & Thomsen, 2021). To address these concerns, tourism practices and policies that prioritize the welfare and animal protection are being promoted (Fennell, 2022a). This move is especially important given the potential negative impacts that tourism activities can have on animals and their habitats.

Many scholars have recognized the need to enhance animal ethics (Fennell, 2013, 2014; Winter, 2020), and an increasing number are researching compassionate animal-based tourism (von Essen et al., 2020). However, existing studies have predominantly focused on tourists' ethical practices from a Western perspective (Duffy & Moore, 2011; Fennell, 2014). By contrast, only a few studies have considered animal ethics from the view of Asian philosophies, despite the recent popularity of animal tourism among Asian travelers who are fascinated by animal travel-related activities and exotic species (Packer et al., 2014). According to Gao et al. (2018), Asian travelers may also be attracted to animal tourism activities as a unique experience not available in their home countries. Scholars have accentuated the importance of cultural values in shaping tourist attitudes,