

# AN ANALYSIS OF DESTINATION REPUTATION, PERCEIVED VALUE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORAL INTENTION OF DOMESTIC TOURISTS TO SCUBA DIVING IN ANDAMAN COAST, THAILAND

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## Abstract

This research aims to study 1) the effect of destination reputation on the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists regarding scuba diving at the Andaman coast, and 2) perceived value as a mediator of the relationship between destination reputation and the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists, scuba diving at the Andaman coast. A quantitative method was used in this study. Data were collected via questionnaire, from 400 domestic tourists, who were scuba diving in the Andaman coastal region. Data were then analyzed via a structural equation model. The results showed that destination reputation did not affect environmentally responsible behavioral intentions. However, destination reputation affected three dimensions of perceived value, namely epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value. Moreover, these three dimensions of perceived value impacted environmentally responsible behavioral intentions. In addition, the three dimensions of perceived value fully mediated the relationship between destination reputation and environmentally responsible behavioral intentions.

**Keywords:** Reputation, perceived value, behavioral intention, environmentally responsible tourism, scuba diving

## INTRODUCTION

Environmentally responsible behavioral intentions (ERBI) create sustainable tourism (Teng et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Previous studies have suggested that tourists were aware of the effects of their activities on the environment and environmental protection. Thus, ERBI can be exploited for sustainable tourism (Fenitra et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Sharma & Gupta, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, ERBI is relevant to tourists' attitudes in several respects, such as consumption behavior (Rhodes et al., 2015),

resource demands (Coelho et al., 2017) and awareness of the consequences of activities (Carvache-Franco et al., 2021). Levels of attitudes and awareness are directly proportional to ERBI. According to Huang, Chang, & Backman (2019), when awareness is high, ERBI is high. However, studies on the relationships between tourist awareness and ERBI are still rare (Mondal & Samaddar, 2021; Sharma & Gupta, 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

Destination reputation is seen as a factor explaining ERBI, as it has been shown to predict tourists' behavior, as reported in

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several studies (Hassan & Soliman, 2021; Sharma & Gupta, 2020; Su et al., 2020). Previous studies of tourist behavior have confirmed that the reputation of destinations affects tourists' behavioral intentions (Hassan & Soliman, 2021; Wu et al., 2018). However, the results of the previous studies rarely led to effective development of tourist destinations (Su et al., 2020). Therefore, the reputation of tourist destinations for ERBI is the focus of analysis in this study, with an aim to explain the effects of ERBI in the context of scuba diving for the improved effectiveness of development plans.

Regarding recreational activities in the ocean, tourist behavior is related to how tourists perceive the value of different aspects of the activity, including the perspectives of economy, society, and relationships (Carvache-Franco et al., 2021). Tourists have individual perceptions of products, services, qualities, prices, emotions, and social factors (Moreno-Manzo, Gassiot-Melian, & Coromina, 2022). Integrating the factor of awareness into the analysis helps in understanding ERBI, as shown in previous studies (Alkhaldeh, 2022; Carvache-Franco et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022). Therefore, tourists' perceived value of scuba diving could help explaining ERBI in the current study.

As can be seen at this point, recreation activities in the ocean are crucial, especially scuba diving, which has recently gained popularity along the Andaman coast within Thailand, a world-class destination. Studies on the relationships between the reputation of destinations, tourists' perceived value, and ERBI are still rare. The objective of this study was to analyze the influence of destination reputation on ERBI in the Andaman coast region. It also aims to analyze tourists' perceived value as a mediator of the destination reputation's influence on ERBI in the context of scuba diving in the Andaman coast. The results of the study will benefit the development of scuba diving and tourism management in the area.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Destination Reputation**

Reputation creates strength in business competition. Undoubtedly, tourists prefer to travel to famous destinations (Ding et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2018). In contrast, infamous destinations are not likely to welcome many visitors (Braun & Zenker, 2022). According to Tobias and Wahl (2013, p. 266), in tourism studies, the reputation of a destination is more important than the reputations of organizations in the destination. It is important that all stakeholders such as tourist attractions, services, basic infrastructure, tourists, local residents, local administrators, and businesses, should be included in any studies (Jovicic, 2019; Sainaghi & Baggio, 2017). The tourism industry depends on the reputation of destinations, with this reputation being more sustainable than brand or image (Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). Besides this, the reputation of the destination affects investment and human resources in creating behaviors that yield positive effects on stakeholders, reduce risks in destination selections, and strengthen economic power, as explained in Andreassen & Lindestad (1998) and Fombrun & Shanley (1990).

According to Han and Yoon (2015), eco-friendly reputations greatly impact the tourism industry. It was found that customers were increasingly responsive to social and environmental change. Due to environmental problems being a great concern, analysis of a destination's reputation could help to provide information about how tourists behave regarding the environment in comparison to other destinations. The results of the current study could lead to decisions in selecting appropriate destinations for scuba diving activities in Thailand.

### **Environmentally Responsible Behavioral Intentions**

ERBI refers to several behaviors such as environmental support and environmentally friendly activities (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017;

Miller et al., 2015). Such behaviors are intended to help in environmental protection and eco-tourism. Carasuk, Becken, and Hughey (2016) pointed out that responsible tourism not only reduces negative effects but also benefits society and the natural environment. Tourists' responsible behaviors results from their perceptions of the environment and the norms of tourism activities particularly regarding eco-tourism (Kim & Thapa, 2018). Therefore, responsible tourism was a wise option for destinations which were prone to negative effects (Lee, 2017). Studies of responsible tourism behavioral intentions are attitudinal surveys regarding tourist activities, such as intentions to return to scuba dive in the same destination, to support environmentally friendly activities, or to recommend the destination to others.

As explained above, reputation has a directly proportional relationship with tourists' attitudes, decisions, and satisfaction. Good reputation will attract tourists, while losing reputation would destroy business power (Helm et al., 2010; Shirvani Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2019). There are several previous studies which have focused on the relationship between reputation and behavioral intentions (Kircova & Esen, 2018). Su et al. (2020) found that the reputation of a destination regarding environmentally-friendly activities affects tourists' emotions and satisfaction. This was also confirmed by Artigas et al. (2017). Meanwhile, Wu et al. (2018) found that tourists' behavioral intentions resulted from the reputation of the respective destination. Hassan and Soliman (2021) found that tourists' decisions on returning to the same destination could depend on the reputation of the destination. The first hypothesis of the current study is:

H1: The destination reputation has a direct effect on the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists when scuba diving.

## **Perceived Value**

In the tourism context, perceived value refers to an evaluation of a tourist attraction

under circumstances which affect tourist behavior. Zeithaml (1988) found that when participants perceived the value of products and services to be at a low level (Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015; Pandža Bajcs, 2015), perceived value was found to be a factor in destination choice and predictions of tourists' behaviors. The evaluation of tourist experiences depends on the perceived value and shared responsibility (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Kim & Park, 2017). Perceived value is relevant to success in tourism management and could be employed as a business strategy (Kim et al., 2013). There are increasing studies under the topic of perceived value especially in terms of how it is relevant to tourists' behavior (Jamal et al., 2011). In addition, previous studies revealed perceived value in three dimensions which affected behavioral intentions, namely: *functional value*, *epistemic value* and *conditional value* (Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Puig & Ming, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016). These three dimensions were the main focus in developing the hypotheses of the current study.

Analysis of the perceived value in each dimension should explain tourists' behavior and demonstrate the theory of perceived value as shown in previous studies (Byeon, 2015; An, Joo & Kim, 2015; Shin, 2017; Sohn & Han, 2016). According to Kim et al. (2013) perceived value influences loyalty to destinations. Greater perceived value results in higher loyalty. This finding corresponded to Cheng and Lu (2013) who found that perceived value affected decision-making, such as whether or not to return to the same destination, recommend the destination to others, or promote the destination. Ilban et al. (2015) reported that tourists who perceived high value from travelling tended to return to the same destination and recommend the destination to others.

Results from previous studies on the relationships between perceived values are applicable. However, some studies have shown that perceived value is a mediator promoting behavioral analysis (Aliman et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2013).

Moreover, the dimensions of perceived value as mediators, should be included in any study on the influence of perceived value on behavioral intentions.

In this study, which incorporates the dimensions as mediators, the guidelines suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) have been employed to explain the results. The three variables have been analyzed under the following conditions. If the independent variable (reputation of the destination) influences the dependent variable (ERBI) and has influence on a mediator (perceived value), it could be claimed that this shows *partial mediation*. If the independent variable (reputation of the destination) does not have influence on the dependent variable (ERBI) but has influence on the mediator (perceived value), it could be claimed that this shows *full mediation*. There have been no previous studies conducted to test this relationship, and no applicable results focusing on tourists involved in scuba diving in Thailand. The related hypotheses are:

H2: The relationship between destination reputation and the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists in scuba diving is mediated by functional value.

H3: The relationship between destination reputation and the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists in scuba diving is mediated by epistemic value.

H4: The relationship between destination reputation and the environmentally responsible behavioral intentions of domestic tourists in scuba diving is mediated by conditional value.

## METHOD

The target participants of the study were domestic tourists participating in scuba diving activities. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, through various tour agencies, with a total of 408 responses. However, eight incomplete responses were removed.

Therefore, only 400 responses were included in the total sample, which was deemed to be sufficient for analysis (Hair et al., 2018) as presented in Table 1.

Data were collected using a questionnaire developed from previous studies, which was backed by translation. It was reviewed by three reviewers in the field. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part 1 consisted of general information. Part 2 consisted of questions regarding the reputation of the destination. There were four questions in Part 2, all of which were adapted from Su et al. (2020) and Han et al. (2020). Part 3, on perceived value, contained 10 questions adapted from Kim and Thapa (2018) and Um and Yoon (2020). Part 4, on ERBI consisted of three questions adapted from Um and Yoon (2020). The questions used a seven-rank rating scale in which 1 referred to the lowest and 7 referred to the highest rating.

## RESULTS

### Measurement Models

A measurement model analysis was carried out to ensure the validity of the analysis and hypothesis testing. Confirmation factor analysis was employed to test the model. The statistical results were  $\chi^2 = 398.478$ ,  $df = 109$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.65$ , CFI = 0.938, TLI = 0.922, RMSEA = 0.080, and SRMR = 0.037, indicating that the empirical data were a good fit with the measurement model.

Factor loading was showed as Table 2. It was more than 0.50 suggested by Hair et al. (2018). Reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test ( $\alpha$ ). Validity was tested via Average variance extracted (AVE) and Composite reliability (CR) (Table 3). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values in this analysis ranged from 0.833 - 0.895 indicating acceptable reliability based on the cutoff value of 0.70. AVE values ranged from 0.56 - 0.74 indicating acceptability based on the cutoff value of 0.50. The CR values ranged from 0.75 - 0.90, indicating acceptability based on the cutoff value of 0.60. All tests indicated that the

variables in the theoretical and empirical data were consistent and had a good fit with each other. Discrimination analysis was also performed via comparison of the Pearson's correlation coefficient and the AVE value. Results showed that the AVE value for all variables was higher than the Pearson's

correlation coefficient. All variables demonstrated discriminant validity.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

After confirmation testing of the measurement model, structural equation

**Table 1** Demographic

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b> (N = 400)		
Male	228	57.0
Female	172	43.0
<b>Age</b> (N = 400)		
18 - 24 years old	108	27.0
24 – 41 years old	199	49.8
More than 41 years old	93	23.2
<b>Level of license</b> (N = 400)		
Open Water Diver	119	29.8
Advance Open Water Diver	97	24.2
Dive Master	97	24.2
Instructor	60	15.0
Rescue Diver	27	6.8
<b>Scuba diving experience</b> (N = 400)		
Less than 6 months	44	11.0
6 months – 1 year	110	27.4
1 - 3 years	109	27.3
3 - 5 years	72	18.0
5 - 10 years	33	8.3
More than 10 years	32	8.0
<b>Type of license*</b> (N = 481)		
PADI	249	51.8
CMAS	176	36.6
SSI	32	6.6
NAUI	17	3.5
Others	7	1.5
<b>Point of scuba diving*</b> (N= 817)		
Racha Island	241	29.5
PP Island	198	24.2
Similan/Surin Island	170	20.8
Doc Mai Island	103	12.6
Kho Khao Island	75	9.2
Other	30	3.7

Remark: \* more than one option can be selected.

**Table 2** Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Standard Factor Loading	Z	p- value
<b>Destination reputation</b>			
1. This destination has a good reputation in terms of environment and ecological systems.	0.769	29.332	0.000
2. This destination has a positive reputation about being eco-friendly.	0.774	29.694	0.000
3. This destination has a reputation for eco-friendly practices.	0.731	25.291	0.000
4. This destination has a good reputation when compared to other destinations.	0.722	24.690	0.000
<b>Epistemic value</b>			
1. Eco-friendly diving adds to the attractiveness of this destination.	0.764	32.194	0.000
2. Eco-friendly diving is an evident identity as this destination.	0.877	57.008	0.000
3. Eco-friendly diving helps develop the uniqueness of this destination.	0.82	42.252	0.000
4. Eco-friendly diving contributes to the distinctness of this destination.	0.837	45.842	0.000
<b>Conditional value</b>			
1. Eco-friendly diving in this destination has consistent quality.	0.851	47.794	0.000
2. Eco-friendly diving in this destination has an acceptable standard.	0.867	51.263	0.000
3. Eco-friendly diving in this destination will perform consistently.	0.795	36.177	0.000
<b>Functional value</b>			
1. Eco-friendly diving in this destination is offered at a reasonable price.	0.863	42.660	0.000
2. Eco-friendly diving in this destination is a good activity.	0.870	43.549	0.000
3. Eco-friendly diving in this destination is value for money.	0.705	24.057	0.000
<b>EBRI</b>			
1. I will come back to do eco-friendly scuba diving in this destination again.	0.841	46.712	0.000
2. I will come back for any reason to support eco-friendly tourism.	0.908	66.972	0.000
3. I will invite other people to come for eco-friendly scuba diving in this destination.	0.835	45.833	0.000

**Table 3** Reliability, Validity, and Pearson Correlation

	$\alpha$	AVE	CR	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Destination reputation	0.833	0.56	0.75	5.38	.867	.74				
2. Epistemic value	0.893	0.68	0.83	5.60	.918	.594**	.82			
3. Conditional value	0.874	0.70	0.88	5.53	.943	.588**	.700**	.84		
4. Functional value	0.851	0.67	0.86	5.49	.741	.400**	.473**	.481**	.82	
5. EBRI	0.895	0.74	0.90	5.51	.961	.541**	.672**	.705**	.478**	.86

Remark: Diagonal refers to the value of the square root of average variance extracted

modeling revealed the statistical values as:  $\chi^2 = 372.743$  ( $p < .000$ ),  $df = 107$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 3.32$ ,  $CFI = 0.943$ ,  $TLI = 0.927$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.079$ , and  $SRMR = 0.038$ . The statistical results showed that the empirical data were a good fit with the model. The analysis of the relationships in the structural equation model is shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. It contains seven paths. The first path refers to the influence of destination reputation on EBRI. It was found that the destination's reputation did not influence EBRI. The second, third, and fourth paths, refer to the influence of

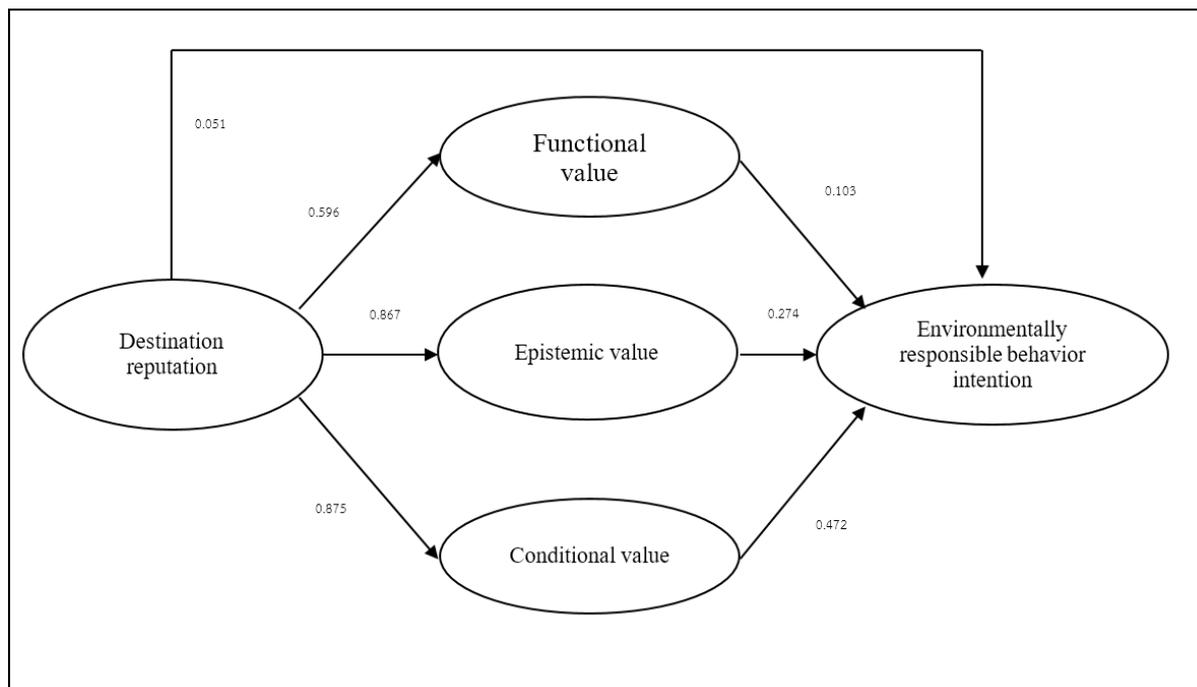
destination reputation on the three dimensions of perceived value. It was found that destination reputation directly influenced epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value. The fifth path refers to the influence of epistemic value on EBRI. It was found that epistemic value influenced EBRI. Similarly, the sixth path indicated that conditional value influenced EBRI. Lastly, it was found that functional value also influenced EBRI. The analysis of the mediation between destination reputation and EBRI focused on the three dimensions of

**Table 4** Direct Effect

	<b>Epistemic value</b>	<b>Conditional value</b>	<b>Functional value</b>	<b>EBRI</b>
Destination reputation	0.867 (Z = 39.833***)	0.875 (Z = 38.097***)	0.596 (Z=14.760***)	0.051 (Z = 0.240)
Epistemic value				0.274 (Z = 2.411*)
Conditional value				0.472 (Z = 3.800***)
Functional value				0.103 (Z = 1.969*)

**Remark:** \* =  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

$R^2$  Environmentally responsible behavioral intention = 0.66,  $R^2$  Epistemic value = 0.75,  $R^2$  Conditional value = 0.77,  $R^2$  Functional value = 0.36



**Figure 1** Structural Equation Model

perceived value, namely epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value, following the guideline of Baron and Kenny (1986). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the independent variable has a direct influence on the dependent variable. Secondly, the independent variable has direct influence on the mediation variable. Lastly, the mediation variable has direct influence on the dependent variable. If the results of analysis show that the independent variable has a statistically significant influence on the mediation variable and the dependent variable, it can be interpreted as partial mediation. If the independent variable has a statistically significant influence on the mediation variable but not the dependent variable, it can be interpreted as full mediation.

The results of the analysis of the indirect influences are presented in Table 5. It was found that destination reputation did not influence EBRI but did influence epistemic value. Meanwhile, epistemic value had a direct influence on EBRI. It is therefore concluded that epistemic value fully mediates the relationship between destination reputation and EBRI. In addition, it was found that the reputation of the destination did not have a direct influence on EBRI, but did influence conditional value, while conditional value had a direct influence on EBRI. It is therefore concluded that conditional value demonstrates full mediation of the relationship between destination reputation and EBRI. Lastly, it was found that destination reputation did not have a direct influence on EBRI but did influence functional value. Meanwhile, functional value had a direct influence on EBRI. It is therefore concluded that functional value demonstrates full mediation of the relationship between destination reputation and EBRI.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the destination reputation did not have any direct influence on EBRI, while it did have direct influence on the three dimensions of perceived value, namely epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value. All three functional values influenced EBRI. Further, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) guideline was employed in the analysis of the three dimensions as mediators between the destination reputation and EBRI. It was found that the three dimensions were full mediators. Conditional value was found to have the highest statistical significance, followed by functional value and epistemic value, respectively.

The results of study support integrated tourism behaviors especially the testing of relationships and the roles of mediation. The results are applicable for scuba diving development for EBRI (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Han, 2015; Hassan & Soliman, 2021). It is crucial to understand the factors that contribute to EBRI and the related mechanisms. The results of this study also help to understand how destination reputation affects EBRI. The observations confirm that destination reputation does not have a direct influence on EBRI but does have influence on the three dimensions of perceived value: epistemic value, conditional value and functional value. Therefore, the results of this study help us to understand EBRI in the context of scuba diving along the Andaman coast.

According to Dastgerdi and De Luca (2019), destination reputation can explain tourists’ attitudes and behaviors. Previous studies have tested the relationships between reputation and behavioral intentions, finding that reputations have a positive influence on

**Table 5** Indirect Effects

Path coefficient	
Destination reputation → Epistemic value → EBRI	0.238 (Z = 2.417*)
Destination reputation → Conditional value → EBRI	0.413 (Z = 3.75***)
Destination reputation → Functional value → EBRI	0.061 (Z = 1.973*)

recommendations and repetition behaviors (Kircova & Esen, 2018; Wu et al., 2018). The results of the current study showed that destination reputation does not have a direct influence on EBRI. In addition, Su et al. (2020) pointed out that the reputation of being environmentally friendly has a great influence on tourists' emotions and satisfaction prior to EBRI. Similarly, Artigas et al. (2017) found that good destination reputation increased the possibility of EBRI.

The results of this study found that destination reputation had a relationship with the three dimensions of perceived value, namely epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value. Destination reputation encourages participants to be interested in gaining new experiences (Choe & Kim, 2019; Wong et al., 2018). Similarly, Ashton (2015) found that epistemic value was relevant to natural travelling decisions, while conditional value resulted from external factors. The results of the study by Gómez et al. (2018) showed a relationship between destination reputation and conditional value, while functional value was also influenced by destination reputation. If tourists had heard about the good reputation of a destination, they would perceive greater functional value in terms of the reasonable cost for scuba diving (Choe & Kim, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, reputation is an important factor in tourists' decisions to choose the destination for scuba diving, and if the tourists perceived value in the activity, they are likely to perform EBRI.

The analysis of the three dimensions, epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value, as mediators for the relationship between destination reputation and EBRI corresponded to previous studies showing that perceived value took an important role as a mediator for EBRI (Kim & Thapa, 2018; Um & Yoon, 2021; Wang et al., 2017). The results of the study support Su et al. (2021) which showed that perceived value was a full mediator between attitude and tourist behavior. The results also extended the results of Carvache-Franco et al. (2021) which showed that the values perceived from

activities consists of two aspects: Economic-functional value and emotional-social value. It can be seen that EBRI, in the context of scuba diving, is relevant to destination reputation and perceived value.

Conditional value was found to have the highest statistical value. The second highest value was functional value, while epistemic value had the lowest statistical significance. Conditional value expresses the standard and the perception of an activity. Tourists who perceive conditional value would have EBRI (Nekmahmud et al., 2022; Um & Yoon, 2021). Functional value expresses the costs and quality of an activity; it affects the EBRI and predicts the increasing of EBRI in the future (Kim & Thapa, 2018; Um & Yoon, 2021). Meanwhile, epistemic value expresses the uniqueness of the destination. The results showed that tourists who perceived greater epistemic value would have higher EBRI (Caber et al., 2020; Um & Yoon, 2021).

### **Theoretical Implications**

The current study confirms the relationship between the reputation of the destination and perceived value and EBRI. EBRI differs from other kinds of travelling because EBRI tourists are aware of environmental protection in the destination. They preserve and protect the natural resources of the destinations. It was found that destination reputation did not have a direct influence on EBRI. However, the relationship between the reputation and the EBRI was shown to require mediation via perceived value in three dimensions: epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value.

The current study confirmed the mediators for destination reputation and EBRI. By analyzing perceived value with mixed methods both regarding the overall perceived value and its dimensions, the relationship between destination reputation and perceived value and EBRI could be understood. The results also confirmed the indicators of perceived value via the study model. The observation data for EBRI showed that the analysis should be conducted

in three dimensions: epistemic value, conditional value, and functional value. This finding is applicable for further studies regarding tourism and hospitality.

### Practical Implications

It is crucial that the good reputation of the scuba diving destination should be maintained in terms of being a destination where natural resources and the environment are well managed. The destination should create balance between the environment, the society, and the economy. The destination should be promoted directly to the target visitors. Images and messages regarding environmental protection should be communicated directly to the target visitors who are concerned with environmental protection. It is possible to promote this concept online or by word of mouth.

Attention should be paid to the conditional value. The quality of the scuba diving location should be good at both national and international levels. The activities should not create pollution and danger. Regarding epistemic value, uniqueness should be created for the scuba diving location. It could be suggested that practical policies should be initiated, and suitable prices should be set for tourists to perceive good value.

### Limitations and Future Research

It should be noted that the data for this study were collected in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic under measures imposed by the government. Any implications of the study, therefore, are limited to the situation. It is recommended that a longitudinal study might be conducted to understand tourists' attitudes and behaviors in greater perspective. Lastly, the results of the study might not be applicable to other tourist activities. Studies might be conducted by applying the model of the present study to analyze other variables in order to explain EBRI further.

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