Predictors of Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors among Community-Based Natural Resources Organizations in the Okavango Delta, Botswana

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Communication of information about natural resources and the environment is becoming an essential component in all aspects of sustainable development. Information diffusion interventions have often relied on the use of agents to disseminate information to their constituents, mainly agricultural innovations. Research related to knowledge-sharing behaviors is scarce in environmental/natural resources communication literature, though it abounds in other disciplines, such as organizational management. There is, therefore, a need to explore knowledge-sharing behaviors in the field of environmental communication. This article presents research results conducted to examine the relative contribution of selected predictors of knowledge sharing behaviors in explaining knowledge-sharing among the community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) leaders in the Okavango Delta, Botswana. The study was guided by theory of reasoned action and responsible environmental behavior model framework. The constructs explored, drawn from the two theories; knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, locus of control and intentions, were used to conceptualize a research model. While the responsible environmental behavior model posits knowledge to be a product of three knowledge domains, the study proposed an additional fourth knowledge domain: traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). TEK denotes socio-ecological knowledge, practices, and beliefs accumulated by communities over time through adaptive process and transmitted culturally across generations.

One hundred and twenty subjects, representing 13 CBNRM Boards, participated in the quasi-experimental study. Subjects completed a retrospective-pretest instrument after exposure to an experimental treatment – presentation of an environmental issue. Data was analyzed using multiple regression statistical procedures. Findings show that the three immediate predictors; knowledge, locus of control, and attitudes accounted for 46.3% of the variance in the knowledge sharing behavioral intention. Knowledge and attitude had an equal relative importance in the prediction of behavioral intention, with locus of control exerting the least influence. Among the four knowledge domains, skill knowledge has the strongest effect, followed by issue knowledge. The results indicate that attitudes towards knowledge sharing, knowledge of the subject matter, mainly factual and skills, have important effects in the promotion of knowledge sharing behaviors. Based on the findings, an effective information-diffusion intervention targeting agents should focus on promoting favorable attitudes and beliefs towards knowledge-sharing among agents, as well as focusing on equipping the agents with both factual and skill knowledge.