

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

## Factors Persuading Tourists to Visit SWAT Valley, Pakistan

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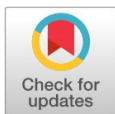
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**Abstract**— The study identified the factors that persuade tourists (local or international) to visit SWAT, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and whether these factors successfully created positive behavioural intentions among visitors. In total, 684 responses from local and international tourists were collected through a questionnaire survey. The responses were analysed by employing the PLS-SEM technique on SMARTPLS software. Results revealed that most tourists are satisfied with the destination brand, attraction, hospitality, and entertainment given by SWAT's people & local government. These factors create positive future behaviour (i.e., intention to recommend and intention to revisit) among visitors, except transportation which is the only element that failed to attract tourists due to inadequate mechanisms in SWAT. This study highlighted that Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), being a responsible authority in Pakistan for tourism-related matters, still needs to improve and develop tourist destinations in Pakistan to sustain tourism. This study is a pioneer attempt to identify the factors that persuade tourists (local or international) to visit SWAT, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, using a Likert scale survey questionnaire.

**Index Terms**— Transport, Destination brand, Attraction, Hospitality, Entertainment, Visitor Satisfaction, Future behavior, Intention to recommend, Intention to revisit

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### Introduction

Tourism is people travelling to destinations far away from their residences and providing facilities that have been formed for fulfilling travelling needs (Jasir, Khan, & Barghathi, 2023; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Yuni et al., 2023). The scope of tourism is widening in its new

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definition by Cini (2002) that people who perform several activities during their travelling stay other than their regular environment for vacations, corporate trips and many other reasons for a short period. Tourism is considered an important element in many countries for reducing poverty and for their monetary and social growth through acquiring businesses and other activities. Jurado et al. (2012), Turaev, Shodiyev, and Atamurodov (2023) emphasise an important aspect of tourism: overall, organised and well-supervised tourism is one of many elements for smooth and steady growth of the country and for the creation of jobs and business. On the other hand, tourism entirely depends on the presence of a natural ecosystem (Ji, Guo, Chen, & Morgan, 2023; Kariminia, Ahmad, & Hashim, 2012).

Pakistan is quite privileged with all resources of tourism that it possesses archaeological, cultural, natural and adventurous places. As per the report of Papakonstantinou (2019), 2.8% of Pakistan's GDP was contributed by Pakistan's travel and tourism industry which is approximately equal to US \$8,000.2 that generated around 1,484,200 jobs in the Year 2018, i.e., 2.4% of Pakistan's GDP. Pakistan is now ranked 121 out of 140 and scored 3.1 out of 7, which is improved from last year's ranking. Pakistan has also been facing various issues for many years to expand the economic contribution of its travel and tourism industry. The basis of those issues is linked with external and internal security threats. According to Pakistan Economic Survey (2018-19), more than 5 lac jobs will be generated in the next five years if the proper arrangement is made to invest in the tourism sector. Therefore, domestic tourism befits to augment the economic contributions of the Pakistan tourism sector. Whereas present policies and strategies still need to be vigorously helping the country to develop strong domestic tourism (Ahmad, Khan, Shah, & Khan, 2022; Haq, Ullah, & Sajjad, 2019; Tanveer, Yuzliza, & Fawehinmi, 2023).

Pakistan, like other developing countries, specifically in the South Asian region, has the potential for growth in the tourism industry. Pakistan's tourism industry has been worsened by severe terrorist activities in northern areas in the last decade (Ahmad-Ur-Rehman et al., 2020; Adnan Hye & Ali Khan, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2022). Pakistan has many mountain ranges in its northern areas like Ayubia, Balakot, Malam Jabba, Murree and SWAT (Hassan et al., 2022). Due to the October 2005 earthquake, Pakistan has to suffer a major loss in the declining number of international tourists. A huge tourist income comes from Pakistan's most beautiful and captivating location, i.e., the Northern areas (Begum, Er, Alam, & Sahazali, 2014). Recently, Pakistan was ranked the third country around the globe as the "Highest Potential Adventure Travel Destinations for the 2020s" by the British Backpacker Society in December 2019. After the British Backpacker Society Ranking, The British Government, on January 2020, revised its travel advice for visitors to Pakistan (British High Commission, 2020). This is now considered a positive sign in the development of Pakistan Tourism, which would benefit tourists worldwide and Pakistan's citizens (Nowreen & Moran, 2023).

On the northwest side of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, lies SWAT Valley, the greener, more mesmerising, and steep with waterfalls, streams and rivers. Its valleys are the most beautiful allure, i.e., Bahrain, Kalam, Maindam and Malam Jabba (S. Akbar & Sharp, 2023; Sihombing, Gunawijaya, & Akbar, 2017). Thus, this area of Pakistan is widespread with trackers, adventurers, mountaineers and, in the winter season, skiing at the famous Malam Jabba Ski Resort (Pakistan Tourism and travel guide, 2006).

SWAT Valley has remained so unfortunate by the influence of militants and contradicts militancy in all walks of life, but major harm was done to its tourism. In the last three years, the Tourism sector of Pakistan has experienced a loss of more than 8 billion rupees. During this ferocious year, several resorts of Bahrain, Fiza Gat, Kalam, Madyan, Malamjabba, Miyadam, and Murghzar, were abandoned and wretched (S. Akbar & Sharp, 2023; Zada, Khan, Saeed, Zada, & Jun, 2023). Nevertheless, Pakistan's armed forces, while doing several successful operations against terrorists and militants, supported the SWAT valley to flourish and regain its shape for tourism purposes, which suffered 75 billion adversities over the year 2007 and around 7.5 billion losses abide by its resorts (Khan, 2010; Xiong, Khan, Bibi, Hayat, & Jiang, 2023).

Studying tourism in SWAT Valley is essential due to its potential for economic growth and regional development (Daraz, Ullah, & Sarwar, 2022). Tourism generates employment opportunities, stimulates entrepreneurship, and contributes to the overall economic prosperity of the region (J. Akbar, Shah, Khan, & Naeem, 2017; Kalhor & Abbas, 2022). Research on tourism in SWAT Valley can identify the key drivers of tourism-related economic growth, helping policymakers and local communities make informed decisions to maximise economic benefits. Additionally, researching tourism in SWAT Valley can shed light on the environmental impact of tourism activities and promote sustainable practices (Sajid, 2019). SWAT Valley is known for its fragile ecosystem, and increased tourism can exert pressure on natural resources, leading to environmental degradation (Sanaullah, Rabbi, Khan, & Zamin, 2020). By studying tourism, researchers can assess the region's carrying capacity and recommend measures for sustainable tourism development.

Moreover, understanding tourism in SWAT Valley enables the preservation of its rich socio-cultural heritage and empowers local communities (Bacha, Muhammad, Kılıç, & Nafees, 2021). Tourism often brings cultural exchange and exposure but can also lead to cultural commodification and the erosion of local traditions (Ashraf et al., 2022; Ali, Ullah, & Wahab, 2020). Research can identify ways to safeguard the cultural integrity of SWAT Valley, involve local communities in tourism decision-making processes, and ensure their equitable participation.

Therefore, the study examined factors of tourist satisfaction at SWAT Valley and their relationship with tourists' intention to again. The visit is an important study to draft new policies on tourist satisfaction and retention for tourism in Pakistan.

The study will greatly impact many stakeholders, including the travel and tourism sector, politicians, and local populations. First off, the results of the research can assist destination marketers and tourism officials in developing successful tactics to draw more tourists

to SWAT Valley (Umer Sultan, 2022). They may focus resources and efforts appropriately by determining which elements impact visitor satisfaction most and their intent to suggest and revisit (Ban, Kim, Sheehan, & Prideaux, 2022). Using this information will help advertise the area's distinctive attractions, improve the transportation network, and guarantee top-notch hospitality and entertainment services. Second, the study can help decision-makers adopt policies and make educated choices encouraging sustainable tourist growth in SWAT Valley (Iqbal, Ramachandran, Siow, Subramaniam, & Latiff, 2023). Prioritising infrastructure investment, protecting cultural and natural heritage, and encouraging responsible tourism practices can be made easier by better understanding the variables influencing tourists to pick a certain location. It may also help the SWAT Valley villages by generating new jobs and local economic prosperity (Zada et al., 2022). The study's importance also extends to the academic community. It contributes to the corpus of available knowledge on tourist satisfaction, destination marketing, and traveller behaviour. Academics and researchers may use the data to learn more about how tourists make decisions, how interventions work, and the dynamics of destination loyalty (Elbaz, Abou Kamar, Onjewu, & Soliman, 2023; Zada et al., 2023).

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Background**

A System of tourism consumption Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) defined a discretionary traveler is the collection of related travel opinions, preferences, and behaviours before, throughout, and after a trip. The core assumption of this theory is that the opinions, preferences, and behaviours concerning one activity affect the opinions, preferences, and behaviours of a series of many other activities. Using a closed-ended questionnaire for travel data collection and rapid clustering analysis, this study quantitatively discusses seven simple theory proposals relating to decisions taken once the destination has been chosen (Nilashi et al., 2022). The results endorse and expand the specific proposals explicitly suggesting consistent trends in visitor behaviours in SWAT, Pakistan (Rauf, Abbas, Rafiq, Shakir, & Abid, 2022). The researchers conclude by suggesting that this technique is of common interest to tourism promoters and professionals. Recommendations for evaluating theory are given to improve the efficacy of tourism marketing tactics.

Based on Clawson and Knetsch (1966) five-phase recreational experience model, Woodside & Dubelaar defines a leisure tour as a dynamic framework with various sets of parameters, for instance, the background of visitors (e.g., psychographic & demographic attributes), previous travel behaviour (e.g., knowledge search & planning), and tour-related decision-making & intentions (e.g., target place & amenities choice). Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) postulate that these travel-related constructs are interdependent: opinions, preferences and behaviours. On this basis, they presented a range of direct and indirect rapports among variables. Their methodology examined a few of the Tourism Consumption System ideas and supported the theory (Hailiang, Chau, & Waqas, 2023).

People who read can trace the conceptual sources of the Tourism Consumption System to Woodside and colleagues' earlier research Woodside and King (2001) on visitor decision-making procedure and consumption, where they recommend visitors make several decisions earlier and afterwards their departure for vacation (Becken & Gnoth, 2004). Such decisions apply to the various elements of their vacations and are profoundly interconnected. Afterwards, the association among travel intention (planned) and actual (realised) behaviour was further investigated and clarified by March and Woodside (2005), whose research work partly accepts the statement that consumption behaviour realised are higher in number than planned behaviour and numerous uncertain aspects may affect the extent of consistency among planned and realised efforts. There is still a need for empirical studies on the Tourism Consumption System till now, though several scholars support the theory's basic principle (Snepenger, Snepenger, Dalbey, & Wessol, 2007). For example, for some hypothetical eco-efficient destination planning choices, Kelly, Haider, Williams, and Englund (2007) used a differentiated choice experiment to determine visitor preferences. Their research endorsed Tourism Consumption System, as the previous trip experience of visitors had been shown to influence preferences for many other characteristics of the destination significantly. Li (2008) also endorsed the Tourism Consumption System's key hypothesis that all of the variables are fundamentally interdependent by extensively comparing the demographic and travel-related behavioural characteristics of first-time and frequent travelers, tour scheduling behaviour, pre and post-trip comparison in the travel experiences concerned, and post-trip assessment (Becken & Gnoth, 2004; March & Woodside, 2005).

Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) suggested a set of direct and indirect rapport among constructs related to travel, as demonstrated. The assumption of how the background characteristics of visitors (e.g. demographic factors) influence their travel behaviour is of concern to this research.

### **Empirical Studies**

#### **Attraction:**

The tourist attraction is the most important factor for tourists visiting a destination (Hermawan, Wijayanti, & Nugroho, 2019). A well-maintained tourist attraction during a tourist's visit to that tourist destination can create positive visitor experiences. Lesmana et al.

(2016); Rajesh (2013), and N. Darsono, Yahya, and Ama (2016) conducted research whose studies reported that tourist attraction has a direct influence on tourist satisfaction. The positive effect, however, may also mean the opposite: the poorer the standard of tourist attraction, the poorer the satisfaction of the tourist would be, which, as can be seen in past studies, may alarmingly see the decline in the number of tourist visits (Więckowski, 2023; Wiradiputra & Brahmanto, 2016).

Soebiyantoro (2009) discovered that visitor satisfaction is motivated by the facilities and attractions of the destination. Other studies, one carried out by Setiawan et al. (2016) and another by Ghani and Brahmanto (2015), also independently confirmed this result. All those studies show that the attraction, facilities, accessibility and service variables are major factors that decide the level of satisfaction. The findings of D. Hermawan et al. (2019) revealed that tourist attraction is a dominating factor that positively influences tourist loyalty through the involvement of the satisfaction variable.

As for visitors, tourism's main attraction services greatly impact visitors' satisfaction. (J.-H. Luo, Wu, & Lin, 2017) and Meng, Xia, Luo, and He (2013) scrutinised the association between urban characteristics and tourist satisfaction and confirmed that tourism resource attraction had a major positive impact on tourist satisfaction. Prior studies have shown that visitor attractions have significantly affected visitors' satisfaction.

Jiang, Li, and Mei (2018) concluded that three variables, namely, the quality of: tourism real estate construction, tourism public service and tourist attractions, have a major positive effect on visitors' satisfaction as well as between studied variables, whereas the quality of tourist attractions has a maximum effect.

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H1:** Attraction has a significant impact on Visitor Satisfaction

### **Destination brand:**

A destination brand is a way of distinguishing a destination from its rivals, communicating the uniqueness of a destination to visitors and creating a distinctive identity that can be used continuously by all destination stakeholders (Mabkhot & Shaari, 2017). Destination brands must commit to an unforgettable destination experience to be competitive and distinguish from their rivals (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Khan et al., 2016; Kuqi & Selimaj, 2023). In this line of thought, the writers V. Kumar and Kaushik (2018) and Barnes, Mattsson, and Sørensen (2014) have established that destinations directly influence the satisfaction of tourists, intention to revisit, loyalty and word-of-mouth endorsements.

Previous research has reported the positive influence of the destination brand on visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; T. H. Lee, 2009). Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrin, Seebaluck, and Janvier (2015) analyse the structural rapport among the destination brand, visitor satisfaction, perceived value & loyalty. The research presented clear evidence to justify that the destination brand affects satisfaction directly, and satisfaction affects loyalty directly.

Vinh and Phuong (2017) suggest that the more effective Danang City is in creating a destination brand image, the higher the tourist satisfaction and perceived quality. R. Singh and Mehraj (2018) qualitatively analysed the relationship between destination brand experiences and visitor satisfaction from the existing literature. They concluded that destination brand experience is more significant in developing an astute and long-term relationship with tourists than other constructs (Zhou, Zhu, Kang, & Dávid, 2023).

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H2:** Destination Brand has a significant impact on Visitor Satisfaction

### **Entertainment**

The actual word for entertainment, "Tenare", originated in Latin. This indicated something that could entice people and their souls. Entertainment has become something people love and enjoy watching. That was the primary reason people were seeking entertainment. Bates and Ferri (2010) explain tourism entertainment as well-designed and well-managed situations with dance events, plays, theme park demonstrations, guided tours, and specifically modified video presentations for tourists. However, growing examples of popular entertainment practices are being introduced to improve visitor tourism. As a result, over the last decade, entertainment destinations have expanded significantly (Das, Nayak, & Naik, 2023; J. M. Luo & Lam, 2017). Entertainment activities are currently tactically developed as tourism products to create a memorable tourist experience (Xu, Sheng, Li, & Shi, 2010). It has become a famous tourism resource in various countries (Adeboye, Bermano, & Rolland, 2012). Some visitors plan their visit to a particular destination to participate in entertainment events (Kou, Luo, & Chau 2017).

Liu, Huang, and Li (2018) discovered that the experience of entertainment and the esthetic environment has a major influence on tourist satisfaction. As per research conducted by Mansori and Chin (2019), entertainment is ranked second in influencing visitors' satisfaction. F. Amoah, Amoah, and Campus (2019) discovered clear evidence pointing to the fact that there is a positive relationship between

tourism entertainment with the satisfaction of visitors, and this is similar to the results of Hosany and Witham (2010) and Huang, Tsaur, and Yang (2012) as well.

Hosany and Witham (2010) have identified that visual appeal and entertainment are closely linked to visitor satisfaction. A study about film festivals by H. Park (2010) revealed that education, design, and entertainment significantly influence visitors' satisfaction (Aguinis, Kraus, Poček, Meyer, & Jensen, 2023; Preto, Huang, Ridderstaat, de La Mora, & Haney, 2023).

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H3:** Entertainment has a significant impact on Visitor Satisfaction

### **Hospitality:**

Hospitality is the distinctive key element in this new, established platform for the economy. Despite the growing value of building unforgettable moments in tourism offerings, very few attempts have been made to comprehensively understand how positively the quality of experiences can influence behavioural intent.

Hospitality is inevitably one of the most basic aspects of social duties, especially in the tourism & hospitality context (Aguinis et al., 2023; A. A. M. Ariffin & Maghzi, 2012). The researcher described hospitality as the accommodating activities driven by the desire to appease and sincere consideration of the visitor as a person creating memorable and enjoyable experience (Brotherton, 2002; Lashley & Morrison, 2000)

As per the study by Morrison and Spangler (1992), a tourist destination comprises attractions, facilities and transportation and the hospitality element; hospitality is regarded as one of the main success factors in the tourism industry in today's dynamic professional world (A. A. M. Ariffin, 2013), hospitality allows visitors to believe that the host receives them through empathy, wishing to please, and expressing gratitude (Lashley, 2008).

A legitimate hospitality experience can help boost visitor satisfaction, particularly for hospitality service providers (Dileep & Pagliara, 2023; Horng & Teng, 2011; Jiménez, Valido, & Pellicer, 2023). Previous research by K. Ariffin and Susanti Husin (2011) concentrated on hospitality; showed that hospitality affects visitor satisfaction positively and directly. A study by A. A. M. Ariffin, Ahmad, and Ishak (2008) indicated that, compared to their local counterparts, foreign visitors are more specific about the level of friendly nature and the pleasant relationship with the service providers. Focused on these assumptions, and also the fact that hospitality behaviour by foreign visitors is relatively more in demand than local tourists.

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H4:** Hospitality has a significant impact on visitor satisfaction.

### **Transport:**

Developing transport infrastructure & adequate accessibility is extremely important for tourism development in any given area (Więckowski et al., 2014). This is due to the accessibility and quality of the transportation system that motivates tourists to travel to many locations in close vicinity to allow them to enjoy several relaxing activities (Xiao, Jia, & Jiang, 2012). Lack of physical accessibility is one of the serious challenges affecting many tourist sites in developing countries (Omisore & Akande, 2009). Utilisable transport infrastructure and services can primarily affect geographical accessibility to any destination (S. Akbar & Sharp, 2023; Alkahtani, 2015).

Transport is a pillar of the tourism industry (Virkar & Mallya, 2018). Transport plays a major role in the efficient production and construction of new attractions and the strong development of traditional facilities. The provision of appropriate transport has turned abandoned centers of tourist interest into active and productive destinations that attract hordes of people (Prideaux, 2000). Transport plays a vital role in offering tourist mobility to the destination, and the experience of tourists with public transport affects their satisfaction with the destination (Abenoza, Cats, & Susilo, 2017). Tourist experience can only be considered with transportation because transportation is one of the key factors for tourism (Dileep & Pagliara, 2023; Mammadov, 2012).

However, the construction and development of infrastructure and transport may affect the natural environmental features of the destination's main attractions (Lumsdon & Page, 2004). So seeking a balance between convenience and accessibility for visitors while preserving the standard of the destination is complex. Accessibility of transport impacts the choice of recreational destinations for tourists (Su & Wall, 2009). In Goa, tourists have generally been found to be satisfied with public transport services (Virkar & Mallya, 2018). Parahoo, Harvey, and Radi (2014) discovered that transportation positively influenced satisfaction. Nwachukwu, Gladys, and Chikezie (2019) study established five fundamental factors of transportation – accessibility, travel comfort, travel safety, travel information, and customer services – that influence visitors' satisfaction with destination transportation services.

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H5:** Transport has a significant impact on visitor satisfaction.

**Future behavior:**

Satisfaction is confirmed as a key predictor of future behaviour (intention to revisit and recommend) in tourism programs (Grappi & Montanari, 2011). Satisfied visitors tend more to revisit destinations and recommend them to others (Martínez-Martínez, Cegarra-Navarro, & Garcia-Perez, 2023; Piramanayagam, Rathore, & Seal, 2020). Those dissatisfied customers indicate a negative attitude towards revisiting the same destination (Alegre & Garau, 2010). Prayag and Ryan (2012) found that satisfactory emotional experiences contribute to visitors' positive future behaviour. Therefore, future behaviour is a broad phenomenon and cannot be fully evaluated using the only intentional construct recommended (Chi & Qu, 2008; Patwary, 2023). Thus, this paper integrated the intention of revisiting and recommending behavioural intentions as an integral component of visitors. A favourable relation between satisfaction and behavioural intentions (intention to revisit and recommend) was investigated empirically by prior research (Sharma et al., 2018).

**Intention to recommend:**

Satisfied visitors are often more likely to recommend the same destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007). It is impossible that disappointed visitors will return to the destination Alegre and Garau (2010). Rather they engage in negative word-of-mouth (Chen & Chen, 2010). Nevertheless, prior studies indicate a positive relationship between visitor satisfaction and intention to recommend (Sugandini, Effendi, Istanto, Arundati, & Rahmawati, 2019). Recommendation intentions determine positive behaviour resulting from satisfactory tourist experiences (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Satisfied customers are much more likely than others to recommend the destination (Wąsowicz-Zaborek, 2019). Tourists who are not pleased will indulge in negative word of mouth (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, and Del Chiappa (2017) study revealed that the overall image of the destination positively influences tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. Images that meet the standards of visitors will please them, and in effect, frequent travelling there will increase the probability of recommendation to friends and family (González, Comesaña, & Brea, 2007). Satisfied visitors were reported to have a greater tendency to revisit the same destination and to give friends and relatives positive feedback (Chen & Tsai, 2007).

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H6:** Visitor satisfaction has a significant impact on the intention to recommend.

**Intention to revisit:**

In tourism literature, revisit intention is characterised as the willingness or enthusiasm of a tourist to revisit the same destination and serves as a powerful indicator of future behaviour (Bigne, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2001). This signifies the extent to which a visitor will perform or not return to an attractive destination in the future. Revisit intentions were also interconnected to the timeframe & the willingness of the individual (Isa, Ariyanto, & Kiumarsi, 2020).

Intention to revisit denotes the willingness of people ready to return to a similar destination and anticipate the upcoming decision to be revisited (Abubakar, Ilkan, Al-Tal, & Eluwole, 2017). In addition, satisfaction with the destination arises after the previous tour affection and affects the decision to revisit a similar destination (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010). Awareness of tourist behaviour also assists in forecasting, promoting, and improving products and services to maximise the number of visitors to a destination (Van Vuuren et al., 2011).

As stated by Stylos, Bellou, Andronikidis, and Vassiliadis (2017), the intention of tourists to revisit a destination is also measured by the extent to which they realise a destination's attributes as meeting their needs. Another research by Ramdhani and Astuti (2019) revealed the positive impact of the tourist satisfaction variable on revisit intention.

Thus, hypothesising the following is logical,

**H7:** Visitor satisfaction has a significant impact on intention to revisit.

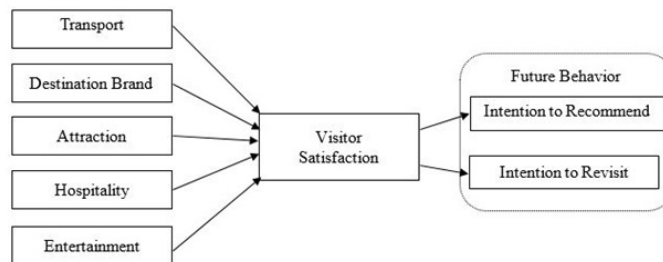


Fig. 1 Proposed Model

After extensive study of past studies, researchers proposed the following to investigate visitor satisfaction and their future behaviour toward visiting SWAT, as shown in Figure 1.

**Methodology**

The method that focuses on this study is the survey research design. The sampling technique employed is non-probability purposive sampling. For collecting data, a Likert scale-based survey questionnaire was developed. Later on, five experts from the industry as well as from academics, endorsed the same. Table I presents the variable summary, including adapted sources.

Table I  
Reliability and Validity

Variables	Adaption	Source
Transport	4	(Al-Rahimi, Othman, & Musa, 2013; Mazman & Usluel, 2010)
Destination Brand	3	(Yu, Wang, & Seo, 2012)
Attraction	5	(Mazman & Usluel, 2010)
Hospitality	4	(Al-Rahimi et al., 2013; Lau et al., 2016)
Entertainment	3	(Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012)
Visitor Satisfaction	6	(Tseng, Wu, Morrison, Zhang, & Chen, 2015)
Future Behavior: Intention to Recommend	3	(Pestana, Parreira, & Moutinho, 2020; Yi-Cong et al., 2016)
Future Behavior: Intention to Revisit	3	(Pestana et al., 2020; Yi-Cong et al., 2016)

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part comprises demographics, i.e., gender, qualification, monthly income, name of the home country, and cities of SWAT that tourists visited, and the second part covers questions related to transport, destination brand, attraction, hospitality, entertainment, visitor satisfaction and future behaviour, i.e., intention to recommend and intention to revisit to SWAT. The target population of this study are those who visited northern areas of Pakistan. A total of 850 responses were collected from respondents. Thus, after eliminating the incomplete responses and excluding outliers, the final data consist of 684 respondents. Table II exhibits the summary of their demographic profile.

Table II  
Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 684)

	Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	392	57.3
	Female	292	42.7
Age Group	Less than 18 years	182	26.6
	18 to 25 years	245	35.8
	25 - 37 years	169	24.7
	38 and above	88	12.9
Education	Undergraduate	243	35.5
	Graduate	314	45.9
	Post-Graduate	73	10.7
	Others	54	7.9
Marital Status	Single/Unmarried	273	39.9
	Married	411	60.1
Number of Travelling Days	Less than 3 days	38	5.6
	3 to 7 days	302	44.2
	8-14 days	238	34.8
	15 days or more	106	15.5
Main Purpose	Food and cuisine	156	22.8
	Religion	24	3.5
	Visit friends/family	118	17.3
	Shopping	135	19.7
	Sightseeing	122	17.8
	Business purposes	129	18.9
Monthly Income (in PKR)	25,000 to 50,000	196	28.7
	50,001 to 75,000	159	23.2
	75,001 to 100,000	140	20.5
	More than 100,000	189	27.6

**Data Analysis**

**Outer Model Measurement**

The outer model identifies the rapport among the constructs and their observed indicators (Wong, 2013). In this measurement, data reliability and validity are estimated.

**Reliability Testing**

Reliability can be measured via Jöreskog’s composite reliability. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), composite reliability better measures internal consistency. Table III narrates the result of composite reliability. The reported CR values of all constructs are above 0.70 (Dumas & Edelsbrunner, 2023; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

**Convergent validity:**

It refers to the extent to which the construct converges to explain the item variance (Sarstedt, Ringle, Smith, Reams, & Hair, 2014). The study observes the convergent validity by AVE (average variance extracted), which should be above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Table III represents the outcomes of AVE. According to AVE results, all construct values are above 0.50, which specifies the presence of convergent validity of each construct. The study also assesses the indicator loading. Indicator loading is above 0.70, which specifies that the construct supported more than 50% variance among indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Table III reports the findings of indicator loading. A few items of constructs are eliminated because of not meeting the threshold criteria of indicator loading, i.e., 2 items of Transport, 1 item of Destination Brand, 2 items of attraction, 1 item of hospitality, 1 item of Visitor Satisfaction & 1 item of Intention to Revisit. However, all remaining items reported in Table III show more than 50% variance among indicators, as all the values are greater than 0.70.

Table III  
Reliability Testing and Convergent Validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Transport (TP)	TP1	0.815	0.840	0.724
	TP4	0.885		
Destination Brand (DB)	DP2	0.770	0.774	0.632
	DP3	0.819		
Attraction (AT)	AT3	0.779	0.831	0.623
	AT4	0.864		
	AT5	0.718		
Hospitality (HP)	HP1	0.863	0.836	0.630
	HP2	0.722		
	HP4	0.791		
Entertainment (ET)	ET1	0.922	0.921	0.796
	ET2	0.921		
	ET3	0.831		
Visitor Satisfaction (VS)	VS1	0.837	0.896	0.633

**Discriminant validity:**

It is important to establish discriminant validity to ensure that the result is certain and that there are no statistical discrepancies in results (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Fornell and Larcker criterion, Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio and crossing loading are used to determine discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Tables IV, V, and VI represent the findings of the correlation of discriminant validity (i.e., Fornell and Larcker criterion), Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio and factor loading (i.e., crossing loading), respectively.

According to Hair et al. (2014), Fornell and Larcker criterion proposed that each construct should show more variance with its items rather than with the other constructs. Concerning the correlation results of the discriminant validity table, evidence shows the presence of discriminant validity as all the values reported in Table IV are above the values of cross-loadings.



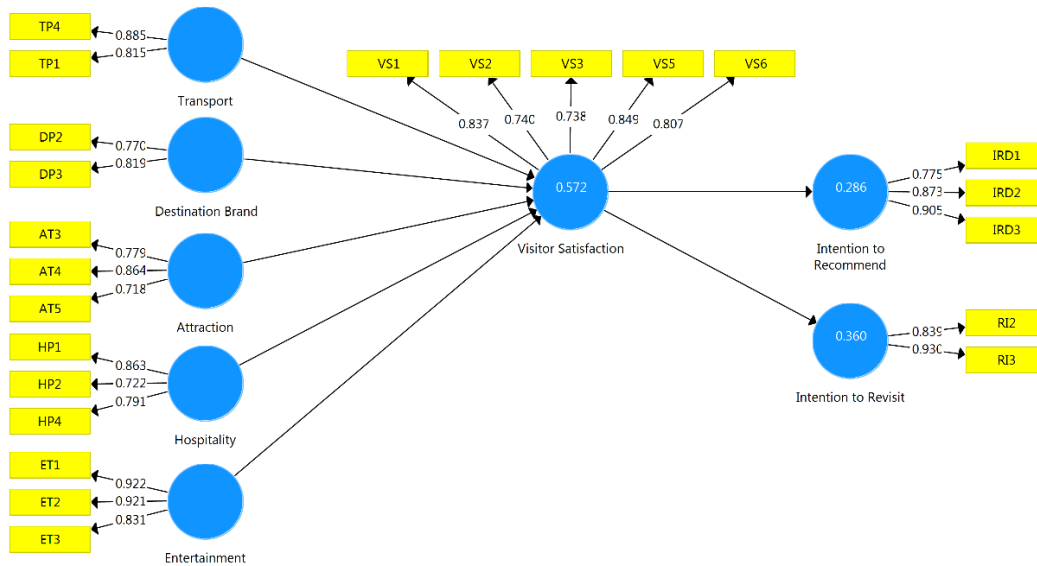


Fig. 2 PLS Algorithm Illustration

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio is another approach that verifies discriminant validity. The value of HTMT should be lower than 0.9 (Henseler et al., 2015). Table V provides evidence of discriminant validity, as all the values are below 0.90.

Lastly, cross-loadings of items are applied to endorse discriminant validity. The cross-loading of each item in its construct should be greater than the cross-loading on another construct (Hair et al., 2014). The finding of cross-loading is reported in Table VI.

Table IV  
Correlations of Discriminant Validity

	AT	DP	ET	HP	IRD	RI	TP	VS
Attraction	0.789							
Destination Brand	0.297	0.795						
Entertainment	0.396	0.061	0.892					
Hospitality	0.626	0.378	0.414	0.794				
Intention to Recommend	0.589	0.296	0.520	0.530	0.853			
Intention to Revisit	0.567	0.450	0.324	0.408	0.486	0.886		
Transport	0.481	0.463	0.390	0.422	0.433	0.405	0.851	
Visitor Satisfaction	0.619	0.370	0.477	0.683	0.535	0.600	0.450	0.796

Table V  
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	AT	DP	ET	HP	IRD	RI	TP	VS
Attraction								
Destination Brand	0.630							
Entertainment	0.510	0.115						
Hospitality	0.890	0.667	0.535					
Intention to Recommend	0.793	0.536	0.624	0.704				
Intention to Revisit	0.742	0.794	0.395	0.496	0.581			
Transport	0.764	0.890	0.537	0.670	0.613	0.558		
Visitor Satisfaction	0.787	0.603	0.561	0.841	0.622	0.711	0.585	

Table VI  
Factor Analysis

	ATT	DB	ENT	HOSP	IREC	PREV	TRP	VS
AT3	0.779	0.405	0.418	0.484	0.536	0.538	0.590	0.476
AT4	0.864	0.152	0.292	0.374	0.506	0.588	0.290	0.517
AT5	0.718	0.152	0.229	0.637	0.348	0.203	0.266	0.472
DP2	0.115	0.770	0.086	0.097	0.203	0.445	0.349	0.278
DP3	0.345	0.819	0.015	0.485	0.265	0.280	0.386	0.309
ET1	0.399	-0.007	0.922	0.383	0.507	0.244	0.431	0.408
ET2	0.269	0.023	0.921	0.328	0.479	0.210	0.364	0.415
ET3	0.387	0.140	0.831	0.392	0.407	0.401	0.255	0.448
HP1	0.520	0.347	0.307	0.863	0.404	0.438	0.309	0.630
HP2	0.357	0.286	0.393	0.722	0.463	0.258	0.359	0.482
HP4	0.612	0.261	0.301	0.791	0.409	0.249	0.352	0.500
IRD1	0.538	0.055	0.451	0.383	0.775	0.191	0.272	0.382
IRD2	0.472	0.301	0.412	0.488	0.873	0.529	0.335	0.485
IRD3	0.512	0.361	0.475	0.478	0.905	0.482	0.484	0.491
RI2	0.307	0.298	0.260	0.104	0.305	0.839	0.161	0.415
RI3	0.642	0.472	0.310	0.539	0.522	0.930	0.498	0.617
TP1	0.550	0.399	0.349	0.489	0.442	0.408	0.815	0.338
TP4	0.299	0.392	0.321	0.258	0.312	0.297	0.885	0.421
VS1	0.475	0.244	0.510	0.516	0.510	0.366	0.364	0.837
VS2	0.406	0.189	0.404	0.426	0.222	0.364	0.013	0.740
VS3	0.504	0.415	0.432	0.375	0.423	0.449	0.603	0.738
VS5	0.396	0.249	0.302	0.506	0.477	0.452	0.392	0.849
VS6	0.628	0.341	0.287	0.796	0.443	0.676	0.345	0.807

ATT = Attraction; DB = Destination Brand; ENT = Entertainment; HOS = Hospitality; IREC = Intention to Recommend; IREV = Intention to Revisit; TRP = Transport; VS = Visitor Satisfaction

### Inner Model Measurement and Hypotheses Testing

The inner model identifies the rapport among the dependent and independent constructs (Fauzan, Triyono, Hardiyanta, Daryono, & Arifah, 2023; Wong, 2013).

### Predictive Relevance of the Model

The inner model quality depends on its ability to predict the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2014). Cross-validated redundancy ( $Q^2$ ) and coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) are the crucial measures that help in assessing the inner model (Hair et al., 2014; Qurba, 2023). The value of  $R^2$  represents the explained variance of the dependent variable. According to Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011), a value of  $R^2$  greater than 0.2 is considered high. According to Table VII, estimates found a variance of 57.2% in visitor satisfaction, a variance of 28.6% in intention to recommend and 36.0% in intention to revisit, respectively. Therefore,  $R^2$  values show the model fit.

Another criterion for evaluating model accuracy is Cross-validated redundancy ( $Q^2$ ). For evaluating predictive relevance,  $Q^2$  is estimated using blindfolding (Gamil & Abd Rahman, 2023; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). All the values of  $Q^2$ , reported in Table VII, are greater than zero, confirming the model fitness.

Table VII  
Predictive Power of Construct

Constructs	$R^2$	$Q^2$
Intention to Recommend	0.286	0.197
Intention to Revisit	0.360	0.263
Visitor Satisfaction	0.572	0.330

### Hypothesis testing:

Seven hypotheses are examined in this study by employing PLS-SEM. The tested hypothesis findings are reported in Table VIII.

Table VIII  
Hypothesis Testing

No.	Hypothesis	Estimate	Std. Dev.	t-Stats.	Prob.
H1	AT -> VS	0.246	0.030	8.289	0.000
H2	DB -> VS	0.122	0.033	3.711	0.000
H3	ET -> VS	0.199	0.039	5.081	0.000
H4	HP -> VS	0.386	0.037	10.484	0.000
H5	TP -> VS	0.034	0.036	0.956	0.339
H6	VS -> IRD	0.535	0.026	20.561	0.000
H7	VS -> RI	0.600	0.023	26.263	0.000

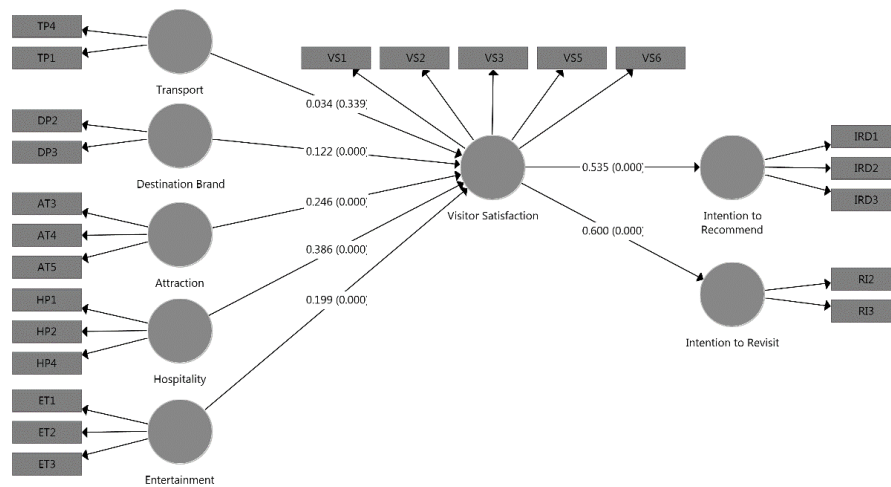


Fig. 3 PLS Bootstrapping Illustration

The outcome of attraction ( $\beta = 0.246, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ), destination brand ( $\beta = 0.122, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = 0.199, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ), hospitality ( $\beta = 0.386, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) narrates a significant effect on visitor satisfaction. The findings support the hypothesis: H1, H2, H3 and H4. Conversely, transportation ( $\beta = 0.034, p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ) has an insignificant influence on visitor satisfaction, which rejects H5. Moreover, visitor satisfaction significantly influences the intention to recommend ( $\beta = 0.535, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ) and intention to revisit ( $\beta = 0.600, p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). These outcomes support the hypothesis: H6 and H7.

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Conclusion

The study concluded that visitor satisfaction with SWAT Valley had improved considerably and positively in recent years. The study has also acknowledged that visitors intentionally recommend and revisit Pakistan's SWAT valley. The attraction finding is congruent with (Lesmana et al., 2016; Nugroho, Permanasari, & Firman, 2019) and (L. Darsono, 2015). Whereas the outcome of destination brand is congruous with M. Kumar, Prashar, and Jana (2019); R. P. Singh and Banerjee (2018) and (Barnes et al., 2014). Furthermore, findings regarding entertainment are congruous with (F. Amoah et al., 2019; J. Amoah et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2012) and C. W. Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, and Iacobucci (2010). Lastly, the outcomes of hospitality are congruous with K. Ariffin and Susanti Husin (2011) and (Horng & Teng, 2011). At the same time, previous studies regarding insignificant transportation results have yet to be available. For this purpose, informal interviews are conducted with visitors. According to them, transportation services need to be improved in some northern areas, but other factors like beauty, atmosphere, weather and places to visit inspire them. Moreover, some studies have emphasised that transport infrastructure should be maintained to enhance tourism (C.-F. Lee, 2016). The findings related to the intention to recommend are congruous with Grappi and Montanari (2011); Prayag and Ryan (2012), and Žabkar, Brenčič, and Dmitrović (2010). In addition, Alamanda, Ramdhani, Kania, Susilawati, and Hadi (2019) and Van Vuuren et al. (2011) also showed the same results related to intention to revisit.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Nowadays, the tourism industry is the most successful industry around the world. The reason for conducting this study is that tourism contributes to the economic development of a country. This study shed light on the factors, such as transport, attraction, entertainment, hospitality and visitor satisfaction, influencing tourist behaviour to recommend and revisit KPK, Pakistan. With the help of a questionnaire, data is collected from 684 tourists. SEM (Structural equation modelling) is applied to investigate the rapport between the studied construct. All the constructs, explicitly attraction, destination brand, entertainment and hospitality, significantly influence visitor satisfaction. In contrast, transport has an insignificant influence on visitor satisfaction. For the findings, tourists will be more satisfied if the facilities offered, destinations, attractions, events, accommodations and pleasant behaviour of locals are more adequate.

Additionally, the mediating variable, i.e., visitor satisfaction, significantly influences the intention to recommend and revisit. The results highlight that if the tourist experience is satisfactory, tourists plan to visit the same destination again, as their satisfied behaviour will lead them to recommend the same destination to visit their relatives and peers.

### **Managerial Implications**

This study has managerial implications for the government (Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation), travel agents, destination managers and local authorities. The government (Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation) should offer a free tourism training program for those who want to pursue a career in tourism. Also, recruit tour guides with complete knowledge of historical places and facilities available at specific destinations. To attract international tourists, government (PTDC) should provide economical services clean and secure environment to foreigners in the SWAT district. Travel agents should offer reasonable tour packages all year round. PTDC should invest in the maintenance of historical places, the development of infrastructure and provide transportation facilities owned by the government like NATCO (Northern Areas Transportation Corporation) in the SWAT district. PTDC, local authorities and travel agents provide detailed information regarding places to visit, cultural occasions and facilities available at specific destinations on social media sites and official government websites.

### **Recommendations for Future Researchers**

A few constructs become part of this study. For analysing other dimensions of tourist behaviour, the researcher could also incorporate constructs like, emotional experience, educational experience and escapist experience. This study is limited to the SWAT district; researchers could also bring in other districts, namely, Lahore, Muzaffarabad, Kalat, Ziarat and Gilgit-Baltistan, of Pakistan. Researchers could replicate this model on other destinations for tourism, explicitly European countries and Asian countries. However, the same model could have been expanded to scrutinise the indirect and direct effects among studied constructs by employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

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