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Visitors' Environmental Conservation Behaviour in the Mountain Tourism Destinations in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the environmental conservation behavior of visitors in mountain tourism destinations across Pakistan, with theoretical support drawn from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Norm Activation Model (NAM), and the Visitor Impact Management (VIM) Framework. With the growing popularity of mountain tourism, concerns regarding its environmental impact have become increasingly pertinent. Understanding the behavior of visitors towards conservation practices is essential for sustainable tourism management. Utilizing a mixed methodology, together with reviews and interviews, this research aims to explore the attitudes, motivations, and actions of tourists towards environmental conservation in Pakistan's mountainous regions. By analyzing data collected from both domestic and international tourists, this study seeks to identify key factors influencing visitors' conservation behavior, such as awareness levels, socio-cultural backgrounds, and perceptions of responsibility. Furthermore, it examines the ability of current conservation initiatives and the potential for enhancing environmental education and awareness among tourists. The findings of this research will add to the expansion of strategies and policies aimed at promoting sustainable tourism practices in Pakistan's mountain destinations, ensuring the preservation of natural resources and the long-term possibility of the travel industry.

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1. Introduction

In order to bring stability in the development of local economy of Mountain regions, sustainable tourism plays vital role. According to (Yu-ling, 2017) tourism in the mountain regions certainly effects the nature in a negative way such as noise pollution, air and water pollution, aesthetic pollution, increase in litter and solid waste and destruction in the natural habitats. The local environment is in a serius danger due to all these problems. Hence, there is a need of creating awareness about sustainable tourism in order to avoid negative impact of huge tourism in the mountain regions.

In contrary (Chen B, 2012) has emphasized on the positive impacts of tourism in the mointain regions as it improves the life standards of the local community by an increase in income, more employment opportunities, an increase the contruction of infrstructres at local level. (Chen B, 2012) further added that all these healthy goals can be achieved only via protection of natural resourses and promotion of sustainabale tourism. Thus it is suggested that activites related to tourism can be proved as both promoters as well as hitches in the enlargement and maintenance of sustaibale travel in the mountain areas. Different studies have suggested different kind of behaviors that people have toward their environment. For example (Sivek DJ, 1990) suggested environmentally responsible behavior , (Ballantyne R, 2011) proposed sustainable behavior, environmentally concerned behavior proposed by (Axelrod LJ, 1993). conservation behavior as studied by (S, 2015) and pro-environmental behavior studied by (Miller D, 2015) .

Above literarture suggests that much of the studies are mainly concerned with any particular targeted behavior and its influencers in the context of environmental psychology. Such as energy conservation (E, 2013) , sustainable transport (Jansson J, 2011) recycling (Zhang YL Z. J., 2015) green consumption (Choi H, 2015) etc. Although litrerature from another study has suggested that there has always been a strong relationship between individuals and the environment in which they are livng, whether individually or in the form of communities and this relationship affect the behavior as well (Carrus G, 2013).

The real link between environmental friendly behavior and mountain attachment has still been less discovered. In order to find the practical linkage between ECB and mountain attachment this study aims to find a method and to fill the gap by constructing a model. So the novel contribution of this research would be the disclosure of the current situation of Pakistani society .

It is very important for the tourists to be educated enough to understand the phenomenon of environmental management, in case they restrict their participation toward it,then this act is not only immoral but also enhances the level of hostility among people toward the efforts made by the government for the protection of the environment (Zhang YL, 2014). Thus the concept of promoting the sense of sustainable tourism and protection of the natural mountain environment among the tourists by creating awareness about environment friendly behaviour in them, is significant both in terms of academics as well as practical.

The objective of this research is to explain the perception of Environmental Conservation Behaviour (ECB) via building a theoretical model and studying the issues that effect the ECB of tourists for futher amplifications.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Envirnomental Conservation Behaviour

To comprehend the connection between affection, cognition and behavior, Cognitive Behavior theory was used by many social workers, by the end of 1970s (Chen HS, 2016). Cognitive theory, which aims to understand the thought process and thus explains the human behavior, is basically a psychological theory ; (A, 1986) and behavioural theory, which claims that human behavior can be changed, icreased or decreased or even can be disappeared via learning ; (CL, 1943), blend together to form cognitive behavior theory which overcomes the flaws of these two theories. According to (Floyd PN, 2107),the truth is revealed by cognitive behavior theory that this is not the subconscious instinct but rational thinking which actually affects the personal behavior. This theory further

elaborates that absence of the ability of thinking rationally or prsesence of cognitive errors are the main cause of negative behavior. Among behavior and affection, a mediating role is played by Cognition. According to (Floyd PN, 2107) important role is being played by this theory when it comes in the field of rehabilitation medicine . likewise . (A E. , 1969) studied important contribution of this theory in Rational Emotive Therapy. From the above literature it is clear that role of this model in terms of ecological administration is not much concerned and only a little work has been done so far. It is correspondingly vague that whether tourists emotions toward native and ecological reasoning could trigger their ecological behaviour in Pkistani environmentally complex mountain range. Thus on the basis of Cognitive Behaviour Theory, exploring this problem can be very meaningful. In order to measure the emotions, moutntain attachment will be used. further in order to measure the cognition, awareness about environmental concequences will be used by this research. Hence, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Awareness of environmental consequences is directly and positively affected by Mountain attachment.

H2: ECB is directly and positively affected by Awareness of environmental consequences.

2.2 Mountain Attachment

According to (YF, 1974) Places are more than just their physical elements. Thus (Williams DR, 1992) suggested that the atmosphere can therefore be seen as generally built structures of different meanings. The amount of an individual's attachment to a location is connected to the emotional component of these meanings for a setting. When environments are infused with meanings that forge or strengthen a person's emotional connection to a natural resource, place attachment results; (Cuba L, 1993) . Further (Carrus G, 2013) and (YF, 1974) suggested that These individual meanings may be affected, as a minimum in part, by organised practices (such as communal involvement in mountain travel) that demand dedication and time spent on a resource. They further added that People may be further likely to act in an ecologically accountable manner generally if these ties to local resources have an impact on other elements of their lives.

Thus, Place attachment has been a highly effective predictor of environmentally friendly behaviour as a research instrument for the study of people and nature. First, (Vaske JJ, 2001) created a predictive model to show how place dependency and place identity, two notions related to place attachment, have an impact on responsible behaviour. They came to the conclusion that place distinctiveness mediates the link among place reliance and accountable behaviour. According to a research by (Cheng TM, 2105) conducted in Penghu China, ECB was positively impacted by the degree of inhabitants' place attachments to Penghu as viewed by tourists. In his research (Buta N, 2014) suggested that the connection has received a lot of attention due to its implications for environmentally friendly behaviour, its contribution to the conservation of natural assets, and its relevance to the supervision of ecosystems and sustainable recreation . The benefits of place connection on environmentally friendly behaviour have also been supported by numerous scientific investigations (Cheng TM, 2105) (Zhang YL Z. H., 2014)

Mountain attachment, a form of place attachment, refers to the specific affection residents of mountainous areas have for their community. So, a third hypothesisis put forth:

H3: ECB is directly impacted by mountain attachment.

2.3 Environmental Values

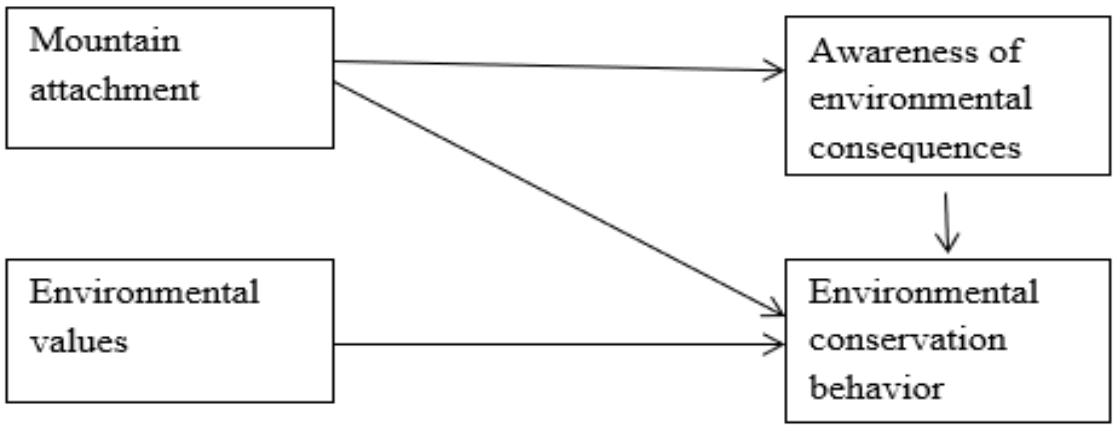
Values serve as a representation of a society's most essential cultural characteristics and are

also important determinants of how people behave (Zhang YL Z. H., 2014). According to earlier researchers like(Cordano M, 2010), Chilean students experienced greater pressure to engage in proenvironmental behaviour than American students. This may be a result of the stark cultural distinctions in how altruism is measured between the two countries.

Most scholars concur that although values directly affect behaviour related to the environment, they do so indirectly through the influence of other factors including norms, attitudes, and beliefs. beliefs (HS, 2015) (Steg L, 2005) (HS, 2015). Despite the widespread belief in the academic community that values and behaviour related to the environment are unrelated. Self-transcendence ideals and self-reported ecological behaviours have a favourable association, according to (DG, 1996). According to (Stern PC, 1995), self-enhancement standards and self-reported behaviour are negatively correlated. Altruistic ideals have a straight and optimistic effect on proenvironmental behaviour, according to (Zhang YL Z. H., 2014). Additionally, the empirical findings of other researchers have confirmed that morals might directly affect behaviour (Schultz PW, 2005) (Poortinga W, 2004). Stern's value measure is a widely used concept for forecasting behaviour connected to the environment. The correlation among values and environmentally friendly behaviour has stayed successfully demonstrated in previous studies utilising Stern's value scale behavior (Choi H, 2015) (DG, 1996) (Stern PC, 1995).

The biosphere value—here dubbed "environmental values"—is one of Stern's value dimensions that is used in this study. As a result, the final hypothesis is put out.
H4: ECB is directly impacted by environmental values.

2.4 Theoretical framework:



3. Methodology

The study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as the main investigative tool to examine the relationships between various constructs and variables. PLS-SEM is a vigorous statistical technique appropriate for discovering intricate interrelationships between latent variables and observed indicators, making it well-suited for analyzing the multidimensional nature of environmental conservation behavior (Hair Jr, 2006)

3.1 Location

The study focuses on the Gilgit-Baltistan region in northern Pakistan, renowned for its vibrant travel and tourism industry, attracting mountaineers, climbers, explorers, hikers, and anglers seeking the renowned "Trout fish," earning the region a reputation as a paradise

(http://www.tourism.gov.pk/northern_areas.html).

3.2 Survey Method

A direct face-to-face survey employing a convenience sampling technique was used to select study participants. A five-part research questionnaire was utilized:

3.2.1 Environmental Values

Participants responded to questions assessing environmental values, focusing on the dimension of egoistic values, to gauge perceptions of human-nature interactions (Stern PC, 1995).

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Eleven questions evaluated participants' perceptions of environmental consequences, based on the design by (Ho MC, 2008).

3.2.3 Place Attachment

Participants' attachment to mountains was assessed using four items adapted from (Vaske JJ, Place attachment and environmentally responsible behavior. , 2001) and (Scannell L, 2010).

3.2.4 Environmental Conservation Behavior (ECB)

Six questions from (Choi HC, 2010), (Zhang YL Z. H., 2014) and (PC, 1999) were used in the fourth section to evaluate the participants' ECB. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "not at all" and 5 denoting "very much," was used to assess the replies to the measuring items.

3.3 Interview Method

In-depth interviews complemented the survey, providing qualitative insights into visitors' environmental conservation behavior. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' attitudes, motivations, and experiences related to environmental conservation in mountain tourism destinations.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys undergo statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics and inferential tests, to identify patterns and relationships among variables. Qualitative data from the interviews was thematically analyzed to extract key themes and insights.

3.5 Demographic Factors

The fifth section of the survey examined participants' characteristics, including gender, age, education, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, to understand the influence of social-demographic factors on environmental conservation behavior.

3.6 Sampling

Data collection targeted visitors to hill stations during peak seasons, ensuring a diverse representation of tourists visiting the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Overall, the utilization of PLS-SEM in SmartPLS facilitates a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the complex relationships underlying visitors' environmental conservation behavior, contributing to a nuanced understanding of sustainable tourism practices in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan.

4. Measurement Analysis

Utilizing the Brilliant PLS 2.0 calculation, this review utilized the Fractional Least Squares (PLS) course demonstrating to test a few speculations by (Christian M. Ringle, 2012) (Christian M. Ringle, 2012). To gauge the complicated reason impact relationship model, the PLS approach simultaneously offers estimation and underlying demonstrating. The underlying model mirrors the connections between the idle factors, while the estimation model addresses the connections between the noticed information and the inactive factors. Also, PLS is known to be proper for exploratory and prescient examination, remembering new subjects for the investigation of practical the travel industry. It was fitting to utilize PLS way displaying because the objective of this review was to estimate causal connections between factors as opposed to performing hypothetical tests.

4.1 Data analysis and Results

In this examination, we used the halfway least squares underlying condition demonstrating (PLS-SEM) approach. Our review kept the rules set out by (Raza, 2020). As a result, in order to ascertain the significance of each path coefficient, we utilized the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 sub-samples. The PLS-SEM examination continued in two phases: at first surveying the estimation model and hence assessing the primary model. Inside the estimation model, we investigated build legitimacy and discriminant legitimacy, while inside the underlying model, we analyzed R^2, F^2, PLS forecast, and the meaning of way coefficients. The adoption of PLS-SEM was based on its reliability in validating theoretical constructs through statistical analysis by (Ringle, 2005) . In this study, we utilize a variance-based approach to analyze theoretical models. The application of PLS-SEM is conducted using SmartPLS software, chosen for its suitability in examining complex, integrated models (Henseler, 2009)

4.2 Measurement Model

Various investigations have been led inside the estimation structure to offer similar appraisals of the legitimacy and unwavering quality of builds. Developing unwavering quality, individual thing dependability, focalized legitimacy, and discriminant legitimacy are utilized to evaluate the model's capability. Joined authenticity in PLS assessment is assessed through Cronbach's alpha, composite steadfastness, and ordinary vacillation eliminated (AVE). As per (Straub, 1989), every one of the factors in Table 1 have values for Cronbach's alpha and composite unwavering quality that are more noteworthy than 0.7. Also, individual thing unwavering quality for all parts is more noteworthy than 0.7, showing consistency with (Churchill, 1979) norms. Likewise, the AVE for all elements outperforms 0.50, agreeing with the models spread out by (Fornell, 1981) .

Table 1: Measurement Model Results

	Items	**Loadings**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted**
MAT	MAT1	0.826			
	MAT2	0.785			
	MAT3	0.739	0.826	0.878	0.589
	MAT4	0.755			
	MAT5	0.729			
EAW	EAW1	0.791			
	EAW2	0.733			
	EAW3	0.701	0.785	0.849	0.540
	EAW4	0.729			

	EAW5	0.712			
EV	EV1	0.839			
	EV2	0.788	0.743	0.848	0.659
	EV3	0.816			
ECB	ECB1	0.826			
	ECB2	0.734			
	ECB3	0.779	0.841	0.884	0.617
	ECB4	0.746			
	ECB5	0.810			

Note(s): MAT = Mountain attachment; EAW = Ecological awareness; EV = Environmental values;; ECB = Environmental Conservation behavior. The evaluation of discriminant legitimacy was directed utilizing the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) approach. This guaranteed the ampleness of discriminant legitimacy. According to (Raza, 2020), no of the HTMT metrics in Table 4 exceeded the threshold of 0.9, indicating that discriminant validity was satisfactory. The estimation model affirms both joined and discriminant legitimacy of the factors, empowering the movement to the underlying model.

Table 2: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	MAT	**EAW**	**EV**	**ECB**
MAT				
EAW	0.590			
EV	0.692	0.822		
ECB	0.637	0.537	0.688	

Note(s): MAT = Mountain attachment; EAW = Environmental awareness; EV = Environmental values;; ECB = Environmental Conservation behavior

4.3 Structural model

Connections between latent variables are established by the structural model, which is an essential component of structural equation modeling (SEM). Using empirical data, SEM is a statistical method for proving hypotheses. The structural models were investigated using uniform paths, with each path representing a distinct hypothesis. Path coefficients are used to assess structural models and hypotheses in Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis. The p-value criterion, which is typically set at 0.01, 0.05, or 0.10, is used to determine whether hypotheses are accepted or rejected (Ahmed et al., 2021). Furthermore, the primary model went through assessment in view of the level of importance, coefficient of assurance (R^2), and prescient significance (Q^2).

Table 3: Results of path analysis

Hypothesis	**Regression path**	**Effect type**	**β-Coeff**	***p*-value**	f^2	**Remarks**
H1	MAT → EAW	Direct effect	0.136	0.045	0.020	Supported
H2	EV → MAT	Direct effect	0.276	0.002	0.074	Supported
H3	MAT → ECB	Direct effect	0.302	0.000	0.085	Supported
H4	EV → ECB	Direct effect	0.354	0.000	0.123	Supported

Note(s): MAT = Mountain attachment; EAW = Environmental awareness; EV = Environmental values; ECB = Environmental Conservation behavior

Table 4: R-square and Q-square

	R square	**Q square**
MAT	0.434	0.239
EV	0.545	0.310
ECB	0.379	0.221

Note(s): MAT = Mountain attachment; EV = Environmental values; ECB = Environmental Conservation behavior

4.4 Discussion of the results

Table 4 presents the consequences of a few speculations. Mountain Attachment (MAT) is positively and significantly influenced by Environmental Awareness (EAW) (B = 0.136, p 0.05), as shown by H1, indicating a strong and positive relationship between these variables. This result is in line with previous research (Han, 2017) , which suggests that tourists develop an attachment to the environment when they are aware of environmental activities. In order to foster a sense of connection with the natural world, it emphasizes the significance of awareness.

Continuing on toward H2, Ecological Qualities (EV) shows a positive and huge relationship with Mountain Connection (MAT) (B = 0.276, p < 0.01), substantiating discoveries from (Cheng, 2015). This recommends that vacationers with higher natural qualities and are more appended to the climate.

Last but not least, H3 demonstrates that MAT has a positive impact on tourists' environmental conservation behavior (B = 0.302, p 0.01), and H4 demonstrates that EV has a positive and significant impact on tourists' environmental conservation behavior (B = 0.354, p 0.01). These outcomes support the possibility that ecological triggers, for example, connection and inspiration lead to favorable to natural ways of behaving among sightseers.

Additionally, Table 7 provides effect size analysis (f^2), indicating that EAW and EV have medium effects. MAT demonstrates a medium effect on environmental Conservation behavior. These findings underscore the importance of environmental knowledge, attachment, and motivation in fostering pro-environmental behaviors among tourists.

5. Conclusion, Suggestions and Limits

5.1 Conclusion

The study explores how environmental factors, specifically values and awareness, impact Tourists' Environmental Conservation Behavior (ECB) by means of their Mediated Attachment to the Environment (MAT). In light of escalating environmental degradation and swift climate change, numerous sectors are prioritizing the adoption of ecological practices. Correspondingly, the travel industry is attentive to the ecological consequences of travelers' choices across various endpoints. Therefore, this research seeks to investigate tourists' ECB using the norm activation theory, providing policymakers with valuable insights for the implementation of preventative measures and impactful policies.

Furthermore, the research offers an in-depth examination of tourist performance, highlighting the significance of ecological triggers and attachment in fostering ECB. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study evaluates relationships among the planned variables. The findings reveal that entire ecological triggers exhibit constructive

and noteworthy associations with MAT and Ecological Values (EV). The results of this study are expected to make huge commitments to the eventual fate of the travel industry in Pakistan by increasing awareness, advocating for environmental protection, and proposing strategies to bolster ECB. Moreover, the study seeks to inspire visitors to engage vigorously in green initiatives in addition embrace environmentally friendly purchasing habits, thereby nurturing green service sector in Pakistan. Furthermore, it encourages the government to prioritize the enhancement of Pakistan's tourism division and contrivance robust regulations to attract a greater number of external tourists.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study offers huge hypothetical commitments to the current writing, especially inside the remarkable public setting of Pakistan. By examining what natural triggers mean for Mountain Attachment,(MAT) and ecological preservation conduct among homegrown vacationers in Pakistan, the exploration gives bits of knowledge into the intricacies of reasonable the travel industry rehearses in the country. Right off the bat, the review's attention on homegrown vacationers in Pakistan is fundamental for grasping the particular ecological viewpoints and ways of behaving of this specific segment. In the context of Pakistan's social norms, this method enables researchers to discover the stimulus of ecological triggers on eco-conscious performance. The development of directed interferences and plans that are in line through Pakistan's cultural values is made possible by such context-specific analysis, which improves the efficacy of tourism sustainability initiatives.

Second, the nationwide application of Schwartz's norm activation model (NAM) delivers a comprehensive understanding of tourist behavior in relation to environmental consciousness. The fact that NAM is applicable to Pakistani domestic tourists demonstrates how individual values and cultural norms influence attitudes toward environmental conservation. By coordinating NAM into the review, it progresses the hypothetical perception of the mental instruments driving eco-accommodating conduct inside the Pakistani setting

5.3 Practical implications

In accordance with the review's outcomes, a few ramifications are recommended for vacationers, local escorts, government specialists, the travel industry area, representatives, and further pertinent partners. The worth of efficient ecological administration has risen to the top in a nation like Pakistan, where numerous tourist destinations face environmental issues. Undependable resource corruption and unregulated ecotourism through expedition operators and tourists pose a significant threat to Pakistan's natural resources. According to the discoveries of this exploration, tending to natural difficulties can be accomplished through the advancement of eco-accommodating way of behaving among voyagers by visit organizations and different organizations related with the travel industry.

5.4 Limitations and future recommendations

The study acknowledges certain limitations that prerequisite to be articulated in subsequent studies. The example, first and foremost, size in this study comprised of 237 sightseers. Future investigation should target to expand the example size to incorporate a bigger and more different populace in order to better examine perspectives from a variety of perspectives. By extending the example size, analysts can work on both the generalizability of their discoveries and the legitimacy of their decisions. Furthermore, the information assortment in this concentrate basically designated homegrown travelers in Pakistan. In order to increase more diverse and comprehensive understanding of how eco-conscious behavior is influenced by cultural diversity, environments, and

mindsets in the field of sustainable tourism, future research must include tourists from other nations. Furthermore, gathering information from worldwide vacationers would work with the evaluation of long haul patterns and the in general ecological effect of the travel industry, in this manner directing endeavors to advance maintainability on a worldwide scale. At last, analyzing the prosperity of vacationers and their supportive of natural conduct highlights the significance of economical the travel industry encounters that take care of the feelings and fulfillment of sightseers. In order to improve our comprehension of sustainable tourism practices, future research endeavors ought to further investigate this aspect.

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