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Nexus between Community Satisfaction, Community Attachment and Sustainable Tourism in Swat, Pakistan

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Abstract: The Swat Valley, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is a prominent tourism destination known for breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and diverse attractions, ranging from serene rivers and lush forests to historical landmarks and adventure-filled valleys. This study examines the nexus between community satisfaction, attachment and sustainable tourism in Swat using structural equation modelling. For this purpose, data were collected from 300 respondents through a well-structured questionnaire. The constructs were assessed for both reliability and validity. Results indicated that community satisfaction, community attachment and sustainable tourism development are positively associated. Additionally, community satisfaction was found to explain approximately 40 percent of the variance in community attachment, while both community satisfaction and community attachment together accounted for 60 percent of the variance in support for sustainable tourism development. Policy implications are proposed to foster sustainable tourism development in Swat.

Keywords: Community Satisfaction, Community Attachment, sustainable Tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is also widely identified as a leading economic activity that makes significant contributions to both developed and developing economies. The global tourism industry has also kept growing at a very fast pace, led mainly by increasing appreciation of its economic contribution, along with the implementation of policy-friendly interventions. The literature describes that there are several factors which have fueled this growth: rising household incomes, better transport networks, more paid holidays in developed economies, advances in communications technology, shifts in social structures related to industrialization, family pattern changes, psychological responses to modern technological stress, and most importantly, the maintenance of international peace (Aktaş, 2005; Naradda Gamage et al., 2017; Munir, et al. 2025; Salifou, & Haq, 2017). As economically diversified as it is, tourism should be considered a separate and strategic sector. It is highly interconnected with other industries, with tourism development often reflecting and resonating the performance of those industries. Tourism is integrative in character since it involves a very broad range of activities most of which overlap or complement other areas of economic activity highlighting the complexity and ubiquitous economic influence (Minciu, 2004; lin et al., 2017; Haq et al., 2024). Within the framework of the 21st-century global economy, tourism is a major source of economic growth, structural transformation, and social development. Even though its contribution to the economy varies from nation to nation and being a primary source of income for some nations and a secondary source for others. Its impact is now even experienced in nations where tourism is not a primary industry (Krannich & Petrzelka, 2003; Haq et al., 2022).

Swat Valley tourism holds immense potential to fuel regional development and sustain economic growth and is therefore a significant area of study (Daraz, Ullah, & Sarwar, 2022). Besides generating employment opportunities, tourism also stimulates entrepreneurship and contributes to the overall economic well-being of the region (Akbar et al., 2017; Kalhoro & Abbas, 2022). Research on tourism in Swat can help identify the major drivers of economic growth driven by tourism, thereby enabling local policymakers and communities to make informed decisions that bring maximum economic returns. These studies can also promote sustainable tourism and determine the

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environmental impacts of increasing tourist activity in the region (Sajid, 2019). As the Swat Valley is a sensitive environment, tourism pressure can also exert additional pressure on natural resources, which can lead towards environmental degradation (Sanaullah et al., 2020). Tourist analysis can be employed to quantify the environmental carrying capacity of an area and guide sustainable tourism policy-making. Therefore, it is important to study the effect of community satisfaction, community attachment, and public support towards the sustainable development of Swat's tourism. The results of this study will offer valuable information to Pakistan's national and provincial governments, related organizations, the planning commission, and tourism industry stakeholders. The findings can be utilized to develop inclusive policy plans for tourist activities among local communities and promoting sustainable tourism development. Lastly, this initiative will promote regional development, foreign exchange earnings, and, most importantly, alleviate poverty especially in rural regions that have enormous potential for tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several theories that are used as the theoretical basis for studies on the connection between support for sustainable tourism, community attachment, and community satisfaction. They include Weber's theory, tourist area life cycle theory, social representation theory, emotional solidarity, social exchange theory, community attachment theory, and stakeholder theory that have been employed in studies of locals' attitudes and perceptions toward the impacts of tourism (Gursoy & Nunkoo, 2018). However, they cannot best provide an entire framework to explain residents' attitudes towards tourism development. Accordingly, other theories emerged, such as play theory, reasoned action theory, conflict theory, and compensation theory, which also have been applied in research that examined residents' attitudes and support for tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2018; Alrwajfah et al., 2019).

Researchers have often employed community support models to tourism that include community attachment to examine its contribution to the formation of attitudes and perceptions towards the community impacts of tourism as well as perceptions of the tourism sector. Community attachment has been described as one of the most important determinants that shape tourist development support (Adongo, Choe, & Han, 2017). The term "community attachment" defines a sentimental connection an individual has towards their place of residence. As a result of shared life course, social interaction-based community attachment is able to provoke emotional responses in their neighborhoods. Second, it is also elucidated that community attachment is a person's attachment or commitment to their neighborhood. This attachment may be expressed emotionally or behaviorally. The affective (emotional) component is a bond that grounds people in their neighborhood. In community attachment theory, individuals in a community have cognitive or affective bonds to one another and to the location where they live. Urbanization and industrialization in the 19th century are credited with creating interest in the concept. The social, economic, and political frameworks under which rural cultures and their communities had existed for centuries were upset as new immigrants poured into rapidly urbanizing cities. Positive belonging, rootedness, and belongingness of citizens to their society result from community attachment (Matarrita-Cascante, Stedman, &Luloff, 2010). According to McCool and Martin (1994), the conceptual definition of community attachment is the degree of a person's social involvement and membership in the community as well as their feelings on an emotional level regarding the community. According to Kasarda and Janowitz (1974), a community can be described as a social organization that has a clear life cycle which consists of normative, institutional, and ecological components. As a community, it can be viewed as a richly varied and intricate web of social relations constructed by the associations of the mass society.

Sustainable tourism growth requires a balance between economic growth and well-being for the community. The role of the local is crucial in preserving natural and cultural capital while improving tourist experience (Kilipiris, 2005). Community entrepreneurs, rather than the local-outsider divide, are best placed to press for good outcomes both for tourism and destination communities (Moscardo, 2014). In developing and rural areas, application of a community well-being framework, such as Flora's community capitals model, can assist in the identification of potential and obstacles to sustainable tourism development (Murphy et al., 2014).

Potential effects of tourism development on local communities have been recognized for decades. It is expected that visitors will interact with the inhabitants and support local businesses, and this will impact directly on the organization, functioning, and behavior of destinations and heritage sites and also on the inhabitants (Almeida-García et al. 2016; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, et al. 2017). As a result, tourism can impact local culture, in addition to individuals' way of life, lifestyle, and sense of belonging (Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh, et al. 2017).

Microeconomic, social, and environmental transformation in local societies are initiated by growing and developing tourism (Rasoolimanesh et al. 2015). Tourism economy has the potential to assist local people by giving them increased employment opportunities, better incomes, and greater standards of living if well-constructed (Rasoolimanesh et al. 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted in district Swat which is located in province of Pakistan name is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This study is restricted to the following destinations in Swat Valley. Kalam, Kashora, Marghazar, Madyan and SaiduSharif. The population of these destinations is 115652 and as per the formula given below in equation (1), the sample size will be 274 however; this study will collect data from 300 respondents.

$$S = \frac{X^{2*Np(1-p)}}{d^{2''(N-1)+X^2}p(1-p)} \text{.... (1)}$$

Whereas S is sample size, X^2 is tabulated value of Chi-square at the chosen level of confidence, N is total population and p is proportion of the population, which is presumed to be 0.5 because it would result in the largest possible size of the sample. Likewise, d is proportion of accuracy stated (0.05).

The items that correlate to the constructs listed in Table 1 were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree. The construct, supporting the development of sustainable tourism (SSTD) will be measured through items X1-X7, these items covers acceptability of the community for tourism along with socio-economic effects of tourism on community. Additionally, these items also cover environmental aspects of the tourism at the tourism destination. Community satisfaction (CS) was measured through items X8-X11. These items encompass community satisfaction regarding desirable place, harmony, overall condition and uplifting living standards. Community attachment (CA) was measured through items X12-X16. These items of the construct include feeling proud to be part of the community, friendly and cooperation and helping the community. This study uses Smart PLS software to analyze the data. Smart PLS provides with powerful and easy-to-use structural equation modeling (SEM) software. Smart PLS is a potent structural equation modeling (SEM) program that extends the capabilities of common multivariate analysis techniques like regression, factor analysis, correlation, and analysis of variance to assist your studies and hypotheses. A wide range of techniques, including observational and experimental research, are employed by scientists in structural equation modeling (SEM). Although it is employed in business, epidemiology, and other domains, SEM is mostly utilized in the social and behavioral sciences. It is challenging to define SEM without using technical jargon, but the name itself is a useful place to start. SEM uses a model to show how different elements of a phenomenon are believed to be causally related to one another. Postulated causal relationships between some latent variables assumed to exist but not directly observable are frequently seen in structural equation models. These latent variables are connected to observed variables whose values are present in a data collection through additional causal relationships. According to the causal structures, certain patterns ought to emerge among the observed variables' values. This enables one to assess whether or not the observed data are consistent with the constraints of the proposed causal structures, as well as to estimate the magnitudes of the theorized effects using the links between the values of the observed variables. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The model validity will be evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was calculated to evaluate the link between constructs after reliability and validity have been established. The fact that all of these tests and measurements take place concurrently in a single statistical estimate process, where all of the model coefficients are computed using the data from the observed variables, is a significant benefit of SEM. This indicates that the estimations are more accurate than they would be if a researcher calculated every component of the model independently.

Table 1: Proposed Model Constructs

	Support for sustainable tourism development (SSTD)
X1	I am proud that tourists are coming to my community
X2	Tourism generates employment opportunities for my community
X3	Tourism is a vital source of income for my community
X4	Harmony with the natural and cultural environment should be promoted in tourism development.
X5	Environmental protection should be prioritized by all tourism stakeholders.
X6	All stakeholders of tourism should promote environmental ethics
X7	The tourism industry should adopt corporate social responsibility for the development of my community
	Community Satisfaction (CS)
X8	My place is a desirable place to live
X9	Tourism will be a source of harmony for my community
X10	I am satisfied with the overall conditions of my place
X11	Tourism enhances the standard of living in my community
	Community attachment (CA)
X12	I feel proud to be part of my community
X13	Residents of my community are friendly and cooperative
X14	I actively participate in community activities
X15	I try my best to help my community
X16	For whatever reason, I don't want to leave my community

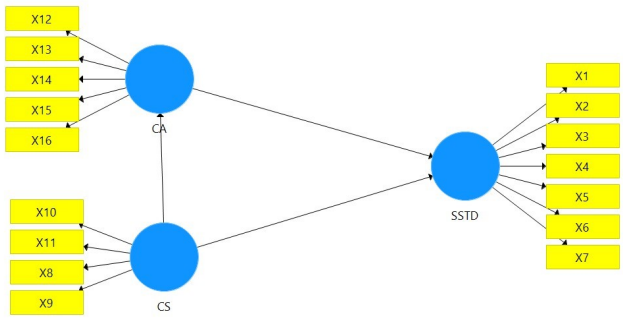

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents demographic details of a sample of 300 respondents, categorized in terms of gender, marital status, age, educational level, family size, number of earning members, income source, and annual income. Out of the total respondents, 278 are male while 22 are female. As far as marital status is concerned, 126 of the interviewees are single while 174 are married. Regarding age, 123 of the interviewees fall within the age group of 18-25, 104 between 26-40, 40 between 41-50, 30 between 51-60, and 3 are over 60.

Education-wise, 33 of the respondents are uneducated, i.e., they have no education or cannot read and write. Besides, 14 of the respondents have completed primary education, 19 have completed middle school, 38 have completed matriculation (secondary school), 34 have completed higher secondary school (11-12 grades), 74 hold bachelor's degrees, 72 have completed master's degrees, and 16 have completed an M. Phil (Master of Philosophy). Family size was also examined. 59 families consist of between 1 to 5 members, indicating small family sizes. 170 families are medium-sized with between 6 to 10 members. 63 families are large with between 11 to 20 members, and likely represent extended families. 8 families consist of between 21 to 26 members, reflecting very large family sizes. Income-wise, 123 families earn through a single member, which can mean more vulnerability to financial instability. 102 families earn through two members, which can provide a more stable financial status. 55 families

earn through 3 to 4 members, which can be a reason for higher financial security, and 20 families earn through five or more members, which can mean several sources of income.

The families have different sources of income. 108 families are assisted by government jobs, which are generally stable and secure. 67 families have members who work in the private sector, with salaries that may be competitive but perhaps less stable. 29 families make their livelihood through farming or agriculture, which may be unstable and subject to seasonal fluctuations. 22 families make their income through tourism-related activities, which may vary based on seasonal trends. 8 families earn business income related to property, and 52 families run businesses or shops. 14 families also receive income from overseas from family members working overseas, which is both a boost but also creates dependency on the outside economic climate. In terms of annual income, 14 families have income ranges of between 100,000 and 160,000 units, implying strained finances. 16 families fall in the 161,000 to 300,000 units bracket, reporting modest incomes. 39 families earn between 300,001 to 500,000 units a year, which indicates a middle-income group with improved financial stability. 98 families earn between 500,001 to 1,000,000 units a year, which indicates an improved standard of living. 133 families lastly earn over 1,000,001 units a year, which places them in the highest income category and indicates financial prosperity.

Table 2: Demographic factors

Demographic factors	Measurement scale	Total Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Males	278	93%
	Females	22	7%
Marital Status	Single	126	42%
	Married	174	58%
Age	18-25	123	41%
	26-40	104	35%
	41-50	40	13%
	51-60	30	10%
	60 and above	3	1%
Education	Illiterate	33	11%
	Primary	14	5%
	Middle	19	6%
	Matric	38	13%
	Higher Secondary	34	11%
	Bachelor	74	25%
	Master	72	24%
	M.Phil.	16	5%
Family members	5-Jan	59	20%
	10-Jun	170	57%
	20-Nov	63	21%
	21-26	8	3%
Earning Members	1	123	41%
	2	102	34%
	4-Mar	55	18%
	5 and above	20	7%
Source of Income	Govt servant	108	36%
	Private servant	67	22%
	Agriculture/farming	29	10%
	Tourism based	22	7%
	Property business	8	3%
	Shopkeeper /Business	52	17%
	Foreign remittances	14	5%

Demographic factors

Demographic factors	Measurement scale	Total Respondents	Percentage
Family Income Per Year	100000-160000	14	5%
	161000-300000	16	5%
	300001-500000	39	13%
	500001-1000000	98	33%
	1000001 and above	133	44%

The reliability test is the internal consistency of indicators for a single variable measurement. Two metrics are typically utilized in reliability tests: composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. When Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are higher than the minimum recommended values of 0.7, the item is considered reliable, according to Hair et al. (2014). All constructs in this study had composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values that are higher than the minimal recommended level of 0.7. Therefore, all constructs have good internal consistency. Figure 2 shows the result of Cronbach's alpha whereas Figure 3 depicts composite reliability results.

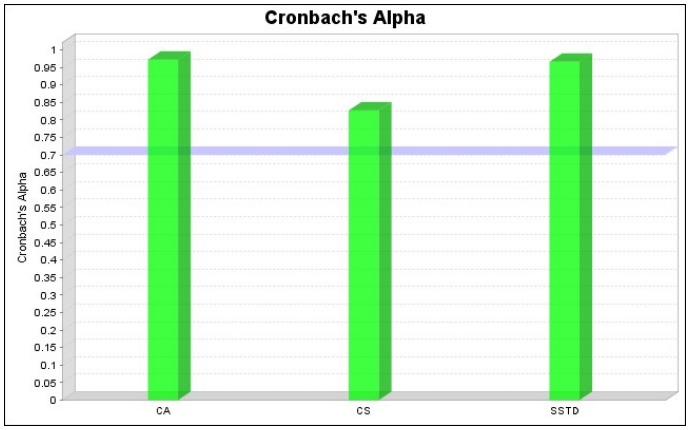

Figure 2: Cronbach's Alpha

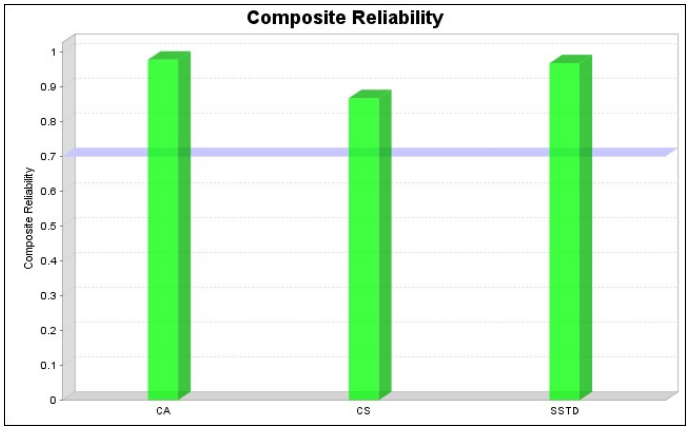

Figure 3: Composite Reliability

Discriminant validity and convergent validity are the two categories of validity tests. Convergent validity is assessed using two metrics: indicator loading and average variance extracted (AVE).When both the AVE value and the indicator loading value are greater than 0.5 and 0.7, respectively, Hair et al. (2014) state that the item is legitimate. Nonetheless, 0.6 for the indicator loading value can be considered acceptable for exploratory study. Figure 1 demonstrates that all item All item indicator loading levels exceeded the minimum threshold value of 0.7, and AVE values are higher than the minimum recommended value of 0.5. This means that the inner model can be measured with any item. Figure 4 displays the findings of the average variance.

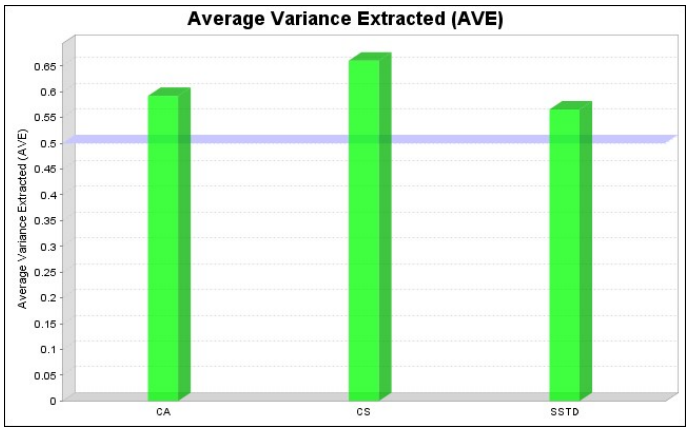

Figure 4: Composite Reliability

According to Hopkins (2015), the goal of discriminant validity is to empirically distinguish one variable from another and all construct measurements that are meant to measure. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell-Larcker Criterion were used to test discriminant validity. This approach displays the variable or construct with the highest indicator variance value in relation to other variables. As a result, according to Hair et al. (2014), the root average variance extracted (AVE) value of each item is the highest square correlation with another variable or construct. Table 2 displays the Fornell-Larcker Criterion values. All items met the standards suggested by Hair et al. (2014). Figure 4.4demonstrates the Fornell-Larcker Criterion values, which indicate that every item met the standards suggested by Hair et al. (2014). For instance, the AVE value of QLC1 to QLC's root square (0,948) is the highest figure in the table when compared to the other variables and indicators. Accordingly, every item satisfies the Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

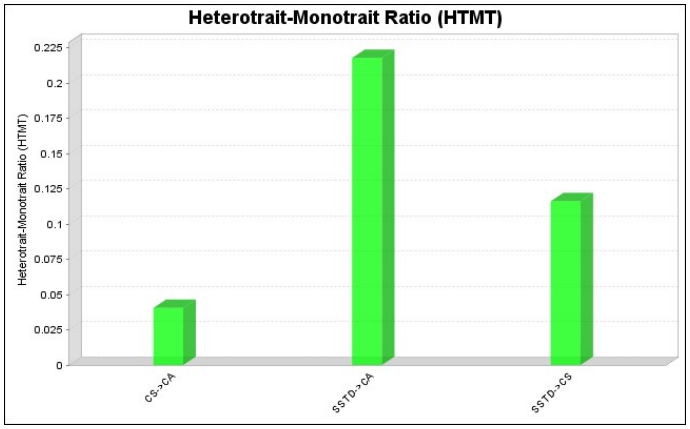

Figure 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

This figure depicts a structural equation model (SEM) with three latent constructs: CA, CS, and SSTD. Each latent construct is represented by a blue circle, and their respective factor loadings are shown in the yellow boxes with their observed variables. CA has four observed variables (X12, X13, X14, X15) ranging from 0.707 to 0.820 and the item X16 is dropped as it's value is below minimum acceptable value. CS is associated with four observed variables (X10, X11, X8, X9) with loadings between 0.754 and 0.854. SSTD construct relates to seven observed variables (X1, X2, X3, X4, X5, X6, X7) with loadings ranging from 0.705 to 0.780. The path from CA to SSTD has a coefficient of 0.353, suggesting a moderate relationship. The path from CS to SSTD has a coefficient of 0.503, indicating a stronger relationship. The path from CA to CS has a coefficient of 0.625, showing a significant relationship. CA has an R-squared value of 0.391, indicating that about 39.1% of the variance in CA is explained by CS. SSTD has an R-squared value of 0.600, meaning that 60% of the variance in SSTD is explained by its predictors.

This study finds that community attachment has a positive impact on support for sustainable tourism. Several

researchers evaluated the connection between community attachment and sustainable tourism development (Hunt & Stronza, 2014). Tourism scholars and researchers have used forms of tourist support using community attachment to explore its effect on people's perception of the positive effects of tourism as well as their attitude towards tourism. Community attachment has been cited as a key factor that influences support for tourism development (Adongo, Choe, & Han, 2017). Gursoy et al. (2010) found that the community attachment receives a positive association for sustainable tourism development. In the same manner, Adongo et al. (2017) also highlighted the positive association of sustainable tourism development and community attachment. The results of this study point to a positive association of support for sustainable tourist development and community satisfaction. The conclusion of this study concurs with that of Vargas-Sanchez et al. (2009) and Vargas-Sanchez, Porras-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejia (2011), who identified a connection between sustainable tourist development and community satisfaction. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) argued that tourism development predicts community satisfaction and community satisfaction enhances with positive tourism impacts like sustainable tourism development which surpasses negative impacts of tourism. Ribeiro et al. (2017) also emphasized the link between community satisfaction and the growth of the tourism industry, while Fakhrana and Zafran (2020) provided evidence linking community satisfaction to the development of the industry. Community satisfaction and community attachment are positively correlated. While there is a positive correlation between community affiliation and satisfaction, examined the relationship between the two (Chen & Dwyer, 2018). The positive association among community attachment, community satisfaction and sustainable tourism development is because tourism maybe serving as a bridge that fosters agreement within the community in study area. Likewise, tourism is a major source of revenue, income along with positive environmental aspects in the study area. The infrastructure is well-maintained, public services are reliable, and there's a strong emphasis on sustainability and community welfare in the area so community is satisfied, attached and supports tourism. The influx of tourism positively impacts the community by boosting the local economy. Job creation in hospitality, retail, and service sectors raises income levels for residents. Moreover, tourism encourages investment in public amenities, such as parks and cultural sites, which enhances community development and tourism in the study area. The friendliness fosters connections in community is laying the foundation for sustainable tourism. In order to support community development, the tourism sector had to embrace corporate social responsibility.

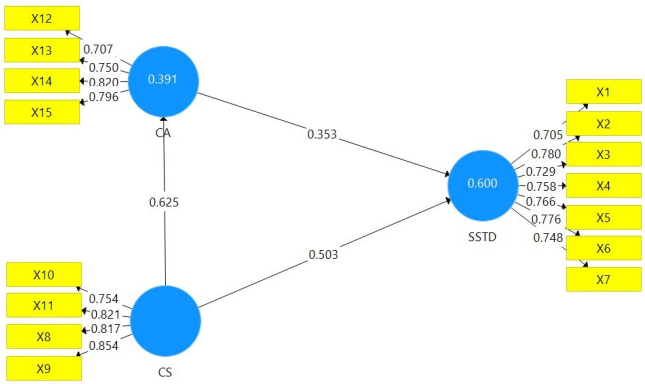

Figure 6: Structural Equation model Results

CONCLUSION

Swat Valley tourism has immense potential to trigger regional growth and long-run economic development and thus is an important topic to research. This valley, being bestowed with natural beauty and heritage, can significantly contribute to the overall economic situation in Pakistan. Tourism can yield numerous benefits, including the creation of jobs, stimulation of entrepreneurship, and enhancement of the economic well-being of the population in the region. By gaining a more insightful understanding of the effects of tourism on the region, policymakers and local leaders are able to establish the key drivers of economic growth and implement policies that achieve the highest economic returns from the sector. Therefore, research on the interconnection of community satisfaction,

community attachment, and support for sustainable tourism development is of immense importance. To examine this interconnection, the research focused on some of the most prominent tourist destinations in Swat Valley, including Kalam, Kashora, Marghazar, Madyan, and Saidu Sharif. These places were selected because of their popularity among tourists and their potential for sustainable tourism development. Data were collected from stakeholders and residents in tourism to analyze how they view tourism impacting their community. The study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the data and examine the connection between community satisfaction, community attachment, and support for sustainable tourism. The study made sure both internal and external validity were rigorously tested before analyzing data to guarantee the strength of the results. The findings of the study reveal that there is a positive correlation between community satisfaction, community attachment, and support for sustainable tourism in Swat Valley. That is, as the residents are more satisfied with the impacts of tourism on their community and are more attached to the tourism industry, they are more supportive of sustainable practices in the industry. This is a significant observation because it highlights the necessity of having a proper relationship between the tourism industry and the locals to achieve long-term success.

Based on these findings, the study makes some recommendations to improve the development of sustainable tourism in Swat Valley. First, there is a necessity to involve the local people in the decision-making process of tourism development. In this manner, community members will also have a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for tourism ventures, which can be turned into stronger attachment and loyalty to sustainable tourism ideals. This participatory approach ensures that the benefits of tourism are evenly distributed and that local people have an effective voice in shaping the future of their region. Besides, the study identifies the need to develop local infrastructure and services that are integral to the evolution of community satisfaction. These include improving road systems, utilities, health care provision, and other essential facilities. Highly developed infrastructure not only elevates the locals' quality of life but also renders the environment more attractive for tourists. Addressing these matters is likely to result in greater levels of satisfaction among the residents, which can, in turn, build their support for tourism development. A second priority recommendation is to increase equity in the tourism benefit distribution. By ensuring that all sectors of society benefit from tourism—either through employment, business opportunities, or access to improved public services—it is feasible to create more community-based support for the sector. When residents see that tourism's benefits are being shared equitably, they are more likely to view tourism as a desirable driver of economic development. To enhance support for sustainable tourism, the study suggests conducting sensitization campaigns to inform the residents of the long-term benefits of embracing sustainable tourism practices. The sensitization campaigns are to inform residents how responsible tourism can be used to conserve the local culture and environment and how it can yield economic benefits. By encouraging an appreciation of sustainable tourism, locals are more likely to engage in and promote activities that go toward the conservation of their community's unique resources. Moreover, the study stresses the necessity to implement policies aimed at protecting the environment and local culture. When the locals see that their natural environment and cultural heritage are being preserved, they will be more receptive to adopting tourism activities that are geared towards sustainability. Policies must be implemented towards mitigating the environmental effects of tourism and protecting cultural sites with respect and preservation for future generations.

Finally, the study suggests offering training to residents about how to build sustainable tourism. These programs can contribute to building the ability of residents to participate in the tourism industry and encourage sustainability simultaneously. Finally, the improvement of communication and coordination between local government, residents, and tour operators is crucial to the long-term success of sustainable tourism initiatives in Swat Valley. In conclusion, as per this study, it is imperative to foster community satisfaction, attachment, and support in the context of sustainable tourism development in Swat Valley. Local stakeholders can contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive, and economically viable tourism sector by implementing the recommendations laid out in this study. These projects will not only promote the tourism sector but also guarantee long-term benefits to the local population and the environment, eventually rendering tourism a source of sustainable regional growth in Swat, Pakistan.

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