Antecedents and Outcomes of International Tourist Satisfaction in Ecotourism Destinations of North India

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1 Introduction

The tourism sector is growing steadily and supporting the economies of many developing countries. Destination image is a rational and sensory representation of information, emotion, and general perception. The Indian government has set a target to increase India's share of foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) to 1% of global tourist arrivals by 2020 and 2% by 2025. (FICCI, 2021). The north, east, west, and south parts of India are known for their diversity in climatic conditions, flora and fauna, cultural values , and lifestyles. (Kumar, 2020). Ministry of Tourism is also focusing on new tourism products with a special focus on niche products to overcome the seasonality aspect and promote India as a 365-day tourist destination. The Ministry of Tourism, (2022) annual report identifies areas of particular interest, including adventure, cruise medical and wellness, polo, golf, meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE), film tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and sustainable tourism. It identifies various niche tourism products that attract specific tourists.

Himachal Pradesh is in the north direction of India and situated in the lap of the Himalayas. Himachal Pradesh is surrounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Punjab in the west and south-west, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana in the south, towards the southeast, it is adjacent to Uttarakhand and east in Tibet, encompassing 55,673 square kilometers, or around 10.54% of the total land area of the Himalayas (Sidhu et al., 2013). An important contribution to Himachal Pradesh's economy is held by the tourism sector. The tourism sector has rapidly grown into one of the state's top revenue generators. Due to the lack of adequate variables for other production industries, the Himachal Pradesh government has given the tourism industry top priority.

Himachal Pradesh is very popular among domestic and international tourists. Wildlife enthusiasts and sportsmen have plenty of opportunities in Himachal Pradesh. Due to its topography and terrain, it is a paradise for hikers, mountaineers, and other adventure spirit enthusiasts. Tourists can try adventure sports such as hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, heli-skiing, and paragliding, as well as water sports such as rafting, water skiing and fishing, golf, and more. Adventurers had largely been unaware of these sports until relatively recently. Himachal Pradesh is currently drawing some enthusiastic sportsmen from around the world.

Additionally, Himachal Pradesh is also known for its hill stations, bio-culturally diversity, sanctuaries, national parks, and virgin ecosystems.

Tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention have been well studied in earlier studies at various locations on tourism marketing (Ramseook-Munhurrun et al., 2015; Breiby & Slåtten, 2018; Thi et al., 2020). Despite that, no similar study has examined tourist satisfaction, loyalty, and behavioural intention of international tourists visiting Himachal Pradesh. The objective of the current study is to determine how two antecedents' destination image and perceived value and two outcomes behavioural intentions and tourist loyalty relate to the satisfaction of international tourists. Between February 15 and April 22, 2023, 262 departing international tourists took part in a questionnaire study in the Himachal Pradesh districts of Kangra, Kullu, and Shimla. By bringing the wilderness and genuine ecosystems of Himachal Pradesh closer to the tourists, the study offered tourism professionals insights into the behaviours of international tourists, which can help to attract more international tourists while preserving tourist satisfaction and loyalty and increasing the livelihood opportunities for the local community.

2 Literature review

Destination image is one of the aspects of tourist satisfaction that is most examined in the literature on tourism. A destination picture is thought of as a mental and sensory representation of one's knowledge, emotion, and overall perception of a destination (Eid et al., 2019). Destination image typically comprises three elements: cognition, affective, and overall image (Hosany et al., 2006). An emotional or affective image is the person's attitude towards the destination, whereas a cognitive image, also known as the specified image, is their beliefs and knowledge about the general qualities of the destination. (Bigné Alcañiz et al., 2009). The literature on consumer behaviour indicates that a major predictor of tourist satisfaction is perceived value. Perceived value is considered to be a construct consisting of two components: a component representing the benefits (economic, social, and relationship-related) and a component representing the consumer's sacrifices (cost, effort, time, risk, and convenience) (Oh & Jeong, 2004). By comparing the advantages and quality offered by the items with the price of the purchase, consumers can evaluate value. Consumers' views about

the net profit of what was provided and received, in other words, may be seen as consumers' perceptions of the perceived value.

A broad evaluation of the experience of acquiring and utilizing a product is called tourist satisfaction. (Vukmir, 2006). It can be viewed as an evaluation of the experiences, or if they met customers' expectations. Tourist satisfaction is described as "the outcome of the interaction between a tourist's experience at the destination and the expectations he had about that destination" in the context of tourism (Kozak, 2001). Satisfied tourists are more likely to make repeat visits, which is one of the most crucial components of effective destination marketing (Ramseook-Munhurrun et al., 2015).

There have been several interpretations to understand customers' behavioural intentions. Customers' behavioural intentions are recognised in the research as a significant determinant of service industry profitability (Anderson, E.W.; Fornell, 1994). Recurring business, positive word-of-mouth referrals, and customer satisfaction all affect business expenses and revenue. Furthermore, there is much evidence that service quality affects consumers' behavioural intentions directly or indirectly, through the medium of customer satisfaction (Caruana, 2002). The study conducted by Afshardoost & Eshaghi, (2020) revealed that the image of the destination has a significant role in influencing the behaviour of tourists. The choice of destinations the use of products related to tourism, and the freedom to return are likely to be influenced by tourist satisfaction, hence obtaining is essential for the successful marketing of destinations

Customer loyalty is the foundation of marketing and is closely related to business success. Additionally, maintaining and retaining existing customers is less expensive than acquiring prospective customers. (Reichheld, 1993). Consequently, maintaining client relationships and promoting customer loyalty has been a strategic priority for businesses. Several scholars examined the loyalty of tourists to a particular destination in their studies (Cossío-Silva et al., 2018; Hultman et al., 2015). Regarding the probability and ratio of purchase, the behavioural factor concerned customers' consistency with prior brand purchases. Finally, to create the idea of customer loyalty, the composite dimension included behavioural and attitudinal

characteristics. It had been suggested that satisfied tourists resulted in their loyalty to a destination.

Furthermore, the primary review of the literature makes it abundantly evident that there is a need for further investigation into the methods of positioning for the Indian tourism sector., particularly in Himachal Pradesh, as there are not enough recent publications on the subject. To the best of our understanding, no reviews or studies of the literature have specifically addressed the topic of "A positioning strategy for a tourist destination, based on analysis of customers' perceptions and satisfaction."

3 Hypothesis development

Most of the earlier empirical research suggested that tourists will value tourism destinations higher when they have a favourable perception of them (Kim et al., 2013; Jin et al., 2015). International tourists will be more affected by the impact of destination image on perceived value since they often put extra effort into organising their trips, stay longer, demand greater quality, and pay more money (Frey & Steiner, 2012). As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H1 The perception value among the international tourists in ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh is favourably correlated with the destination image.

Numerous studies carried out throughout the world revealed that tourist satisfaction is directly impacted by the positive perception of the destination (Nguyen Viet et al., 2020; Jeong & Kim, 2020; Hossain et al., 2021). The association between tourist satisfaction and perceived value has been tested at Yuelu Mountain, Changsha, Hunan Province, China by Su et al., (2021) and Gyeongju City in the far eastern part of North Gyeongsang Province in South Korea by Jeong & Kim, (2020) revealed that the utmost significant antecedent of perceived value and tourist satisfaction was destination image. As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H2 The satisfaction of international tourists in ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh is favourably correlated with the destination's image.

Regarding how it affects loyalty and satisfaction, perceived value has also been accorded substantial weight by marketing researchers (Wang et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2023). There has been research on the association between perceived value and tourist satisfaction at guesthouses in Maldives by Waheed & Hassan, (2016) and at Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam by Khuong & Phuong, (2017) revealed a moderate to high positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and perceived value. As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H3 The satisfaction of international tourists in ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh is strongly correlated with perceived value.

Positive economic effects, such as a rise in the number of tourists and revenues, are often a result of increasing tourists' patronage, loyalty, and acquisition. Achieving tourist satisfaction is essential to the success of destination marketing since it is likely to have an impact on the choice of locations, the use of tourism goods, and the decision to return. The level of tourist satisfaction appeared to be a strong predictor of tourists' inclination to return and recommend the destination to others, and it was demonstrated by several empirical studies that tourists' experiences were the cause of their satisfaction (Farhat et al., 2020; Tien et al., 2021). As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H4 Himachal Pradesh's popularity as an ecotourism destination is positively correlated with the satisfaction of international tourists.

In recent research, the cognitive-affective-conative framework is typically used to examine behavioural intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Li et al., 2022). The relationship between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intentions has been tested at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, a heritage tourism site in Victoria, Australia by (Huang et al., 2015) and at the Malaysian states of Terengganu and Kedah by (Ali et al., 2016) revealed that to uphold behavioural intentions, satisfaction plays an integral role. As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H5 The satisfaction of international tourists with ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh is significantly correlated with their behavioural intentions.

Tourist loyalty is one way to reveal behavioural intentions (Nimako & Mensah, 2013). T. Li et al., (2021) revealed that overall satisfaction precedes attribute satisfaction, and both attribute satisfaction and total satisfaction influence loyalty. Attitudinal loyalty indicators, which are indicators of both attitudinal and affective loyalty, include intentions to switch, repurchase, and make the destination tourist's first choice (Stylos & Bellou, 2019). As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H6 International tourists' behavioural intentions significantly correlate with tourist loyalty.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model.

4 Methodology

This cross-sectional study used data gathered from a questionnaire survey conducted between 15 February and 22 April 2023, from the ecotourism destinations of Kangra, Kullu, and Shimla of Himachal Pradesh, India. The study's target population consists of international tourists who have visited Himachal Pradesh. Only tourists above the age of 18 were given the questionnaire form to ensure the legitimacy of the results. Three locations received 350 sets of the questionnaire. The response rate was 74.85%, with 262 of the 350 sets distributed returning with usable answers.

A survey instrument was set up to test the hypotheses with two aspects for destination image i.e., cognitive image and affective image. Cognitive image (5 items) adapted from Chen & Kerstetter, (1999) and measured on a Likert scale with five points ranging from 1= "strongly disagree" to 1= "strongly agree". Affective image (3 items) adapted from Baloglu & Brinberg, (1997) and measured by using a bipolar semantic differential scale with seven points. Numbers −3 and 3 represent an extremely strong sensation, −2 and 2 an equally strong feeling, 1 and −1 an equally weak feeling, and 0 an uncertain feeling. Perceived acquisition value (4 items) and perceived transaction value (3 items) adapted from Grewal et al., (1998) are the two aspects. — have been used to quantify perceived value. Tourist satisfaction (4 items), behavioural intentions (4 items), and Tourist loyalty (4 items) adapted from Žabkar et al., (2010) have been used and measured on a Likert scale with five points ranging from 1 for "strongly disagree" and 5 for "strongly agree". A survey instrument measuring five constructs was created with 27 items.

Study factors were examined using the SPSS 24. The item and construct validity and reliability of the measurement model were assessed, and proposed relationships between the structural model were examined using the R program's partial least squares path modeling (PLS-PM). PLS-PM was selected over the more traditional covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) because of the non-normal distribution of the data. Additionally, PLS-PM was thought to be a suitable technique for examining big and complicated models that include first, and higher-order latent components (Valle & Assaker, 2016). To test the hypotheses, a 27-item survey instrument measuring seven constructs was developed.

5 Results

Table 1 Demographic profile

n=262		
Profile	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	164	62.5
Female	98	37.4
Age		
19-30	87	33.2
31-40	117	44.6
41-50	41	15.6
Above-51	17	6.4
Nationality		
United States of America	39	14.8
United Kingdom	38	14.5
Bangladesh	33	12.5
Australia	31	11.8
Canada	29	11
Malaysia	22	8.3
Germany	21	8
Singapore	19	7.2
France	18	6.8
Italy	12	4.5
Education		
Secondary education or less	8	3
Under Graduation	86	32.8
Post-graduation	123	46.9
M.Phil./Ph.D.	45	17.1
Occupation		
Student	31	11.8
Employee	137	52.2
Businessperson	73	27.8
Unemployed	8	3
Retired	13	4.9
Length of the stay		
1 night	13	4.9
2-3 nights	158	60.3
4-7 nights	81	30.9
8 nights and more	10	3.8
Number of times visited Himachal Pradesh		
Visited once	172	65.6
2-5 times	72	27.4
More than 5 times	18	6.8

The demographic profile indicated in Table 1 depicts that male respondents (62.5%) were more than female respondents (37.4%). Most of the respondents were from the following countries; the United States of America (14.8%), the United Kingdom (14.5%), Bangladesh (12.5%), Australia (11.8%), Canada (11%), Malaysia (8.3%), Germany (8%), Singapore (7.2%), France (6.8%), and Italy (4.5%). Maximum respondents were in the range of (31-40) age group followed by (19-30) age group. Most of the respondents were highly qualified (97%) holding at least an undergraduate degree. Only (3%) were found unemployed and (11.8%) were students. More than half of the respondents (60.3%) spent 2-3 nights. Most of the respondents (65.6%) visited Himachal Pradesh for the first time.

5.1 Evaluation of the measurement model

A pair of analyses were conducted to evaluate the measurement model: higher-order constructs and lower-order constructs. Before using the first-order constructs (aspects) as indicators for the second-order construct, it was vital to make sure they satisfied the reliability and validity criteria since higher-level constructs were used to model the perceived value and image of the destination. All the first-order construct items in Table 2 have factor loadings ranging from 64 to 90, implying that they load highly on the associated constructs and poorly on other constructs. This suggests that the items possess both discriminant and convergent validity. Even though neither of the two items meets the factor loading threshold criteria i.e., .7, the study decided against removing them for two reasons: first, their removal does not significantly increase composite reliability; and second, their removal does not improve the justification of a significant portion of the variance of each item that the construct extracts. (Henseler et al., 2009). Furthermore, For the first-order structures, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are higher than .75, indicating strong reliability, as shown in Table 3. When the first-order constructs' average variance extracted (AVE) is more than.50, it means that the corresponding components account for more than half of the variation. Constructs are more strongly correlated with their items than with objects of other constructs in the model, as seen by the square root of AVE for each first-order construct being larger than the correlation coefficient between lower-order constructs. The study uses a principal component analysis (PCA) to calculate scores from the first-order components since they satisfy the reliability and validity standards. Second-order structures will subsequently be shown by the scores.

In the second analysis, evaluation was done on second-order assumptions such as perceived value and destination image. together with additional constructs including tourist satisfaction, behavioural intention, and tourist loyalty.

Table 2 shows the factor loadings and cross-loadings for the first-order constructs of perceived value and destination image.

	CI	AI	TV	AV
CI1	**.71**	.26	.35	.34
CI2	**.72**	.31	.36	.31
CI3	**.79**	.22	.37	.32
CI4	**.64**	.20	.32	.33
CI5	**.66**	.25	.33	.32
AI1	.31	**.86**	.34	.27
AI2	.34	**.88**	.37	.28
AI3	.26	**.89**	.31	.29
TV1	.43	.28	**.84**	.61
TV2	.42	.32	**.90**	.63
TV3	.44	.37	**.83**	.64
AV1	.29	.26	.63	**.81**
AV2	.41	.28	.66	**.90**
AV3	.40	.30	.60	**.88**
AV4	.42	.23	.60	**.82**

Notes: CI stands for Cognitive Image; AI stands for Affective Image; TV stands for Transaction Value; AV – Acquisition Value. At $p < .001$, each variable loading on the corresponding constructs is significant.

Table 3 The correlation matrix, means, and standard deviations describe the first-order construct of the destination image and perceived value.

	M	SD	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
CI	3.80	.62	.76	.82	.52	**.71**			
AI	5.95	1.09	.83	.90	.76	.35	**.89**		
TV	3.78	.74	.84	.91	.77	.49	.37	**.86**	
AV	3.71	.76	.87	.92	.72	.45	.31	.72	**.85**

Notes: CI stands for cognitive image; AI stands for Affective Image; TV stands for Transaction Value; CR = Composite Reliability; α = Cronbach's Alpha; AV stands for Acquisition Value; AVE stands for Average Variance Extracted; Squared Root of AVE values lie at the diagonal line. At p <.001, every correlation coefficient is significant.

To determine each construct's reliability score, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used. Alpha values for Cronbach's alpha test range from .52 to .90. The remaining four variables, except for the destination image, are all above the .7-cutoff criterion, indicating acceptable reliability. The coefficients of composite reliability range from .82 to .93, which indicates good reliability.

Factor loadings, all above, show both discriminant and convergent validity at the item level.7 and loaded greater emphasis on those specific constructs, but not as much on other constructs, as Table 4 depicts. The factor loadings for each construct fall within the following ranges: destination image (.76–.84), perceived value (both are.92), tourist satisfaction (.83–.87), behavioural intentions (.77–.84), and tourist loyalty (.78–.92).

Table 5 demonstrates that the AVE scores for all constructs in the set vary from .63 to .77. This shows that each item accounts for a minimum of 50% of the variance of the construct, indicating good convergent validity at the construct level. Through comparison of the correlation coefficient between the related components and the squared root of AVE, discriminant validity was evaluated at the construct level. The construct has a greater connection with its items than with those of the other constructs in the model, as demonstrated by the correlation coefficients between the constructs being less than the squared root of AVEs. The findings suggest that discriminant validity is sufficient at the concept level. The data analysis continues to evaluate the structural model when the construct and item levels of reliability, discriminant, and convergent validity criteria are fulfilled.

Table 4 Factor loading and cross-loading

	DI	PV	TS	BI	TL
DI1	**.84**	.50	.61	−.03	.62
DI2	**.76**	.36	.52	−.06	.47
PV1	.53	**.92**	.60	−.02	.52
PV2	.47	**.92**	.63	−.06	.57
TS1	.60	.64	**.83**	−.10	.65
TS2	.59	.56	**.86**	−.02	.63
TS3	.58	.52	**.84**	−.02	.64
TS4	.62	.60	**.87**	−.03	.70
BI1	−.03	−.04	−.03	**.77**	−.06
BI2	−.02	−.07	−.04	**.81**	−.03
BI3	−.02	−.07	−.04	**.84**	−.02
BI4	−.09	−.07	−.03	**.81**	−.03
TL1	.51	.46	.62	−.03	**.78**
TL2	.62	.52	.71	−.04	**.90**
TL3	.61	.56	.69	−.06	**.92**
TL4	.57	.53	.68	−.05	**.92**

Notes: DI stands for Destination Image; PV stands for Perceived Value; TS stands for Tourist Satisfaction; BI stands for Behavioural intentions; TL stands for Tourist Loyalty. At $p < .001$, every factor loading on the corresponding constructs is significant.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

|	M	SD	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
DI[*]	–	–	.53	.82	.67	**.81**				
PV	3.71	.71	.92	.92	.63	.54	**.80**			
TS	3.85	.75	.86	.91	.72	.69	.68	**.85**		
BI	2.87	1.32	.84	.90	.67	−.02	−.04	−.03	**.83**	
TL	3.88	.83	.90	.93	.77	.63	.59	.75	−.01	**.87**

Notes: DI[*] describes Destination Image as composed of two aspects with distinct scales; PV describes Perceived Value; TS stands for Tourist Satisfaction; BI stands for Behavioural intentions; TL stands for Tourist Loyalty. α stands for Cronbach's Alpha; CR stands for Composite Reliability; AVE stands for Average Variance Extracted; The AVE squared root is

represented by values along the diagonal. At p <.001, all correlation coefficients among the constructs are significant., except for BI.

5.2 Evaluation of the structural model

The two antecedents of the structural model are the perceived value and the destination image, as seen in Figure 2, and the behavioural intention and tourist loyalty of tourist satisfaction are the two outcomes. As per hypothesis tests, data supported four of the six hypotheses. Additionally, the model accounts for 33% of the variance in perceived value, 61% in tourist satisfaction, and 58% in tourist loyalty. Notably, a substantial and favourable association has been found. (β =.58; t = 13.00; p <.001) between the destination image and perceived value, supporting the first hypothesis. The findings confirm and support the second hypothesis, which states that there is a positive and moderate association between tourist satisfaction and destination image (β =.46; t = 9.78; p <.001). According to the third hypothesis test, there is a positive and moderate relationship between perceived value and tourist satisfaction (β =.40; t = 8.74; p <.001). Therefore, the data support H3. According to the results of the fourth hypothesis test, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty have a positive and significant relationship (β =.72, t = 18.98, p <.001). H4 is therefore likewise supported. The fifth hypothesis test findings, however, show that there is just a modest correlation and minimal statistical significance between tourist satisfaction and behavioural intention. (β = −.04, t = −.79, p =.372). Therefore, the data do not support H5. In the same way, it is also found that there is a very weak and non-statistically significant correlation between behavioural intention and tourist loyalty (β = −.03, t = −.68, p =.412). Consequently, the findings do not support H6 either. The goodness-of-fit index is 52 % overall (GoF =.52).

Figure-2 Structure model
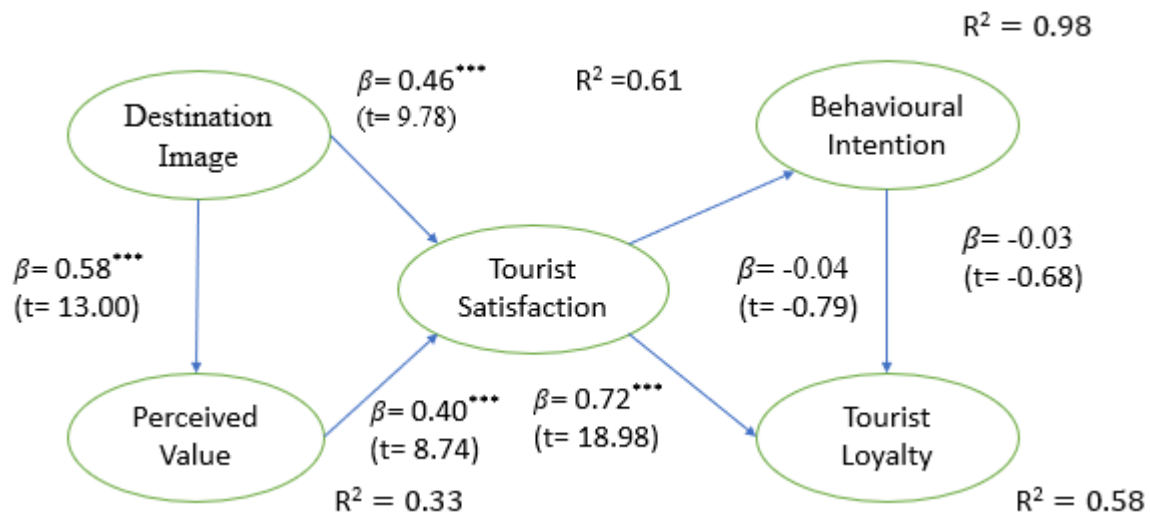
Note: *p <.05; **p <.01, ***p <.001. GoF = .52

6 Discussion

This study investigated two antecedents and two outcomes of tourist satisfaction, along with the level of satisfaction among international tourists in Himachal Pradesh popular ecotourism destination in northern India. Many significant findings are presented in this study. These findings are noteworthy because, till now, no published study has been done on the behaviour of international tourists in Himachal Pradesh, especially after the global COVID-19 pandemic year of 2019. Even though this study did not specifically address the COVID-19 pandemic and does not appear to have any detrimental effects on the perceptions of international tourists to Himachal Pradesh. First, it suggests that tourist satisfaction is closely and favourably correlated with destination image and perceived value, which eventually influences tourist loyalty and supports the findings of a previous study conducted by C. F. Chen & Tsai,(2007); Kim et al.,(2012). Tourist satisfaction and destination image can logically affect the perceived value because they contain some antecedents with similar effects, including push and pull aspects. To put it further, the perceived value and destination image play a major role in fostering tourist loyalty. Previous studies conducted by (Lee et al., 2011; Jeong & Kim, 2020) concluded that tourist satisfaction significantly contributed to tourist loyalty. Retaining tourist loyalty is one of the main components of destination

marketing. Enhancing the destination's competitive position can be significantly affected by tourist satisfaction because input from tourists on their holiday experiences gives destination managers important information to assess how they are currently doing business and develop their management plans.

Secondly, there is no correlation between behavioural intention and both tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty which contradicts the research that found that tourist satisfaction favourably affected the behavioural intentions and tourist loyalty (Ali et al., 2016; Zeng & Li, 2021; Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022). Consequently, it is not necessary that tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty both affect the behavioural intention, to visit or not to visit the destination in the future. Current literature evaluates ecotourism destination perception of tourist attraction from both cognitive and affective images. However, existing literature served as the foundation for this study model. This is arguably believed novel because the international tourist incorporated the multi-dimensional destination image satisfaction structure.

7. Implication and Limitations

As a result of the finding's, perceived value does not always have as much of an influence on tourist satisfaction as destination image. As was previously stated to enhance the destination image, it may be quantified in terms of two aspects: cognitive and affective image. To improve the perception of the destination among international tourists, several hospitality and tourism industry stakeholders should think about coordinating enhanced efforts to organize events like protecting the environment, offering well-equipped eco-friendly facilities for tourists, developing, and maintaining public infrastructure, accessibility, and local people involvement. The multi-stakeholder role in marketing Himachal Pradesh as an ecotourism destination should be understood by policymakers. The government has a plethora of chances to investigate more satisfied and loyal tourists. Tourist satisfaction has no impact on behavioural intention and behavioural intention on tourist loyalty, however positive word-of-mouth, as a component of behavioural intention, not only predicts tourists' inclinations to return to these destinations but also provides tourists with reliable information. Therefore, cultivating tourist loyalty may turn into a top strategy for maintaining the allure of a tourist destination.

The study has several limitations and related recommendations for future research. Firstly, convenience samples were used to conduct this study at the three ecotourism destinations in Himachal Pradesh. Since International tourists may go to other destinations of Himachal Pradesh, the study's sample may not accurately reflect the state's overall international tourist population. Convenience samples can also be biased by sampling. Respondents may be chosen at random from among each "nth" tourist at the designated study sites to minimize sampling bias. Secondly, from 15 February and 22 April 2023, cross-sectional research was carried out. In the future, researchers might consider doing a longitudinal and experimental study to ascertain the causal connections between the main variables. Finally, this study's questionnaire was developed in the English language. International tourists whose mother tongue is not English could find it difficult to understand the questions. Research might determine the main categories of international tourists using the data on tourist arrivals, allowing the questionnaire to be developed in each of their mother tongue languages. Quota sampling may be a better option than convenience sampling if the aim is to generalize the sample characteristics to the population.

8 Conclusion

The study contributed to confirming the significant impact of destination image in the tourism literature and the perceived value on international tourist satisfaction in the ecotourism destinations of Himachal Pradesh. To make Himachal Pradesh a viable eco-tourism destination, various stakeholders associated with the tourism sector should engage proactively to capitalize on satisfied and enthusiastic international tourists. Satisfied tourists could encourage others to visit Himachal Pradesh. When tourists are happy, they are more likely to stay at the same destination again, and the government of Himachal Pradesh may analyse their preferences and create programs that encourage them to do so or recommend them to others. A steady growth in the tourism industry might have a huge long-term advantage for Himachal Pradesh. To attract international tourists. Himachal Pradesh's ecotourism government officials should enhance their management abilities, educate ecotourism product suppliers, and strengthen the state's infrastructure. Moreover, it would provide professionals in the tourism and hospitality sectors with the opportunity to reassess

their current offerings, enhance their size, and adjust them as needed to accommodate the evolving demands of global tourists.

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