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An analysis of Pakistan's destination attributes and their effects on international tourists' intentions to visit

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to generate a clear understanding of Pakistan's important attributes and their direct and indirect influence via perceived destination images on international tourists' intentions to visit for a holiday. It employed quantitative research methods through the use of a correlation research design. Both direct and indirect effects of destination attributes on visit intentions were examined and a self-administered online survey was distributed across several social media platforms. The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that landscape, services, local attitudes toward tourists, safety and risk, sport and special events were found to be statistically significant predictors of such intentions. However, all the destination attributes were found to have an indirect influence on international tourists via the perceived destination image of Pakistan.

KEYWORDS

destination image, visit intentions, destination attributes, Pakistan, tourism

1. Introduction

Tourism has become a key driver of economic and socio-economic development in many countries. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the industry added 9.258 billion US dollars to the global economy and generated 330 million jobs worldwide in 2019 (WTTC, 2019). As the competition to attract tourists grows stronger, a question arises: which factors can effectively attract tourists to a particular destination?

This study aims to generate a clear understanding of Pakistan's important attributes and their direct and indirect influence via perceived destination image on international tourists' intentions to visit on a holiday. In doing so, this research will render useful implications for both businesses and policymakers working in the tourism sector in Pakistan. Tourism is a multifaceted and multi-cultural activity that contributes significantly to a country's economic growth by generating jobs and business and a tourism destination is the foundation of a tourist's experience. According to Keyser (2009), a tourism destination is a defined geographical region where visitors stay for at least one night and includes tourism products such as accommodation,

transportation, infrastructure, facilities and services. Prior research has identified a wide range of destination characteristics that influence the overall attractiveness of a destination such as culture and history, transport, service quality, tourism infrastructure, events and activities, and hospitality resources (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Keyser, 2009; Morrison, 2013; Rauf et al., 2022). This study, therefore, seeks to identify and examine the impact of Pakistan's most important destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit and these studies will be relevant information for further strategic plans in the country.

Like other products or services, tourists usually go through thorough planning and decision-making processes while choosing a holiday destination. To better understand the selection decision, this research will utilize a consumer motivation theory which states that "consumer motivation is one of the most crucial determinants of consumer behaviour" (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007, p. 169). Based on this theory, a destination can be viewed as a product or service, and visitors as customers. The process of such a selection decision is equivalent to the process of a consumer's buying decision and there are several motivators and/or factors that influence the selection of one destination over another.

Prior research has identified a wide range of "so-called" travel motivators for tourists. Krippendorf (1987) argued that tourists' motivation is self-centred and guided by the desire to "get away from" rather than "get closer to" something. Building on this, Swarbrooke and Horner (1999, p. 54) developed a model typology for travel motivation and attempted to categorize motivators into six broad categories: (a) physical, (b) emotional, (c) personal, (d) personal development, (e) status and (f) cultural. Dann (1977) argued that tourists' destination selection is affected by both internal and external factors which he called push and pull. Push factors can be viewed as endogenous forces that influence tourists' decisions about "whether to travel". Pull factors can be understood as exogenous forces that influence decisions about "where to travel". The pull factors are supply components from attractions or destinations which can include features, attractions or attributes of the destination, such as the environment, culture, price, infrastructure, service, climate and so on (Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016). This research exclusively focuses on pull factors, also known as destination attributes, to examine international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan.

In a more recent study (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021), destination competitive factors (termed in this paper as destination attributes) were studied from suppliers operating in Zimbabwe, a country with political and economic challenges similar to Pakistan. Comparing both studies, natural attractions such as landscape, culture and history were ranked first. Hospitality/destination quality – which includes human resources, ground and airport infrastructure, hotels and tourism facilities – was ranked second for travellers regardless of economic conditions, which is consistent with this study. Tourism destinations include many important attributes that draw visitors and satisfy their needs once they arrive. Zhou (2005) identified the 13 most commonly used destination attributes by comparing 28 studies on selection or related topics. Those attributes are: (a) culture and history, (b) landscape, (c) services, (d) entertainment, (e) relaxation, (f) climate, (g) price, (h) sport, (i) safety (personal), (j) local attitudes toward tourists, (k) special events and activities, (l) accessibility (information available), and (m) adventure. These frequently used destination attributes will be used as a reference to determine Pakistan's important destination attributes. Pakistan is the home of many ancient civilizations and cultures, notably the Buddhist Gandhara civilizations, the Indus valley civilizations, the Mughal Empire, and the world's oldest living culture known as Kalasha (Fakhar, 2010). The country offers amazing activities for adventure tourists, and it features five of the world's fourteen highest peaks, including K-2 (8611 m) and Nanga Parbat (8125 m) (Arshad et al., 2018). There is also a variety of cultural festivals and sporting events for tourists to experience during their trip to Pakistan.

Despite the attractions, there are some factors which have disadvantaged Pakistan as a tourist destination. One of them is infrastructure. The earthquake in 2005 caused massive infrastructural damage in several tourist destinations (Arshad et al., 2018). Other factors include difficulty in getting visas, price competitiveness and safety. Safety and security are perhaps of the most concern for tourism in Pakistan while perception of a destination's attributes helps tourists decide whether to travel there or avoid it (Klenosky, 2002; Um et al., 2006). As a result, it can be argued that the perceived attractiveness of a destination's attributes can have an impact on their choice (Zhou, 2005). Conceptually, the tourist's perceived attraction to a destination's attributes is best defined as a cognitive appraisal of the systemic model of attitude (Bowie & Chang, 2005).

Another key factor that plays an important role in shaping tourists' destination choice is destination image and many studies in the past have demonstrated that image has a significant impact on selection (see Hunt, 1975; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015; Wisniewski et al., 2015). Destination image is a multidimensional construct with the two main ones being cognitive and affective (Lawson & Baud-Bovy, 1977). The cognitive component includes perceptions and information about its physical attributes, while the affective dimension refers to an assessment of the nature of feelings toward those

physical attributes and the surrounding environment (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). A tourist's perceptions of a particular destination's attributes form the basis of its image (Lumsdon, 2000), and based on past studies (e.g. Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016; Zhou, 2005), a conceptual model is developed (Figure 1).
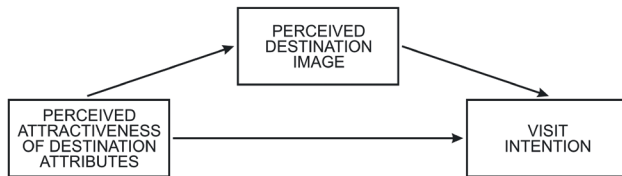

Figure 1. Conceptual model
Source: authors

2. Methodological procedures

The purpose of this research is explanatory, as it examines the direct and indirect impacts of the attractiveness of destination attributes on foreign tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan via perceived destination images. This study employs the deductive research approach to develop and test hypotheses during the research process. The selected research design proved to be effective for analysing the identified variables and testing the presented hypotheses.

The target research population comprised leisure travellers of all age groups (from 16 years old), cultures, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and social classes from all over the world. The data was gathered using a non-probability, convenience sampling technique as this was the most effective sampling method considering no databases or structured information were available for data collection for this destination. Multiple international travel blogs, Facebook pages and other online platforms were consulted to reach the specified target sample. This was necessary for collecting valid and reliable data with an acceptable balance of all genders, age groups, education levels and income groups, so as to reduce any bias in the responses. The cross-sectional data were collected between November and December 2021. Respondents were approached online via different social networks, specifically on micro-blogging sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. Response from 217 research participants was received. Although the limited response rate is one of the limitations of the research, it provided valid and reliable data for useful statistical inferences. The findings cannot be generalized based on the small sample size but this was not the aim of this study. The following online platforms were used to post the questionnaire for data collection:

– Travellerspoint forum,
– Tripadvisor forum,
– Whirlpool forums,
– Fodor's Travel (Pakistan travel forum),
– Lonely Planet Travelers (Facebook group),
– Solo Travellers (Facebook group),
– international colleagues and friends.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections with a total of 16 closed questions. These included the respondents' demographic and traveling profiles. Other sections included the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes, their ranking, the overall image of Pakistan as a holiday destination, and intentions to visit. The survey concluded with an open-ended question asking respondents for their comments/suggestions. This was important to find some explanations for their quantitative responses. The dependent variable in this research was international tourists' intentions to visit and the independent variable was the perceived attractiveness of Pakistan's destination attributes and perceived destination image. To assess how well destination attributes motivate international tourists to choose Pakistan as their next holiday destination, the perceived attractiveness of the attributes was investigated as the main independent variable.

All the instruments used were based on prior research on destination attributes or related topics in the tourism literature (see Bui et al., 2021; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2022; Chen et al., 2021; Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Hsu et al., 2009; Woyo & Slabbert, 2021; Yilmaz, 2021; Zhou, 2005). Therefore, the validity of the instruments was ensured by using previously employed statistical measures. In order to address reliability, a pilot survey was conducted using a sample of 15, and Cronbach's alpha value of 0.95 for all the scales used indicates that the instruments are reliable. In order to test the first three hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. Multiple regression analysis appeared to be an appropriate statistical technique since it examines the strength of the relationship between two or more independent variables (i.e. the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes and perceived destination image) and one dependent variable (i.e. visit intentions). For hypothesis four, this study performed a mediation analysis to investigate the mediating effect of the perceived image, using the Preacher and Hayes (2004) process macro in SPSS. This provided specific insights into the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

The following hypotheses were formulated:
Hypothesis 1:

H_0: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have no impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H_1: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

Hypothesis 2:

H$_0$: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have no impact on international tourists' perceived destination image.

H$_1$: Each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image.

Hypothesis 3:

H$_0$: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have no impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H$_1$: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit.

Hypothesis 4:

H$_0$: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will not mediate the impact of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit.

H$_1$: The perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit.

3. PAKISTAN

Pakistan is located just north of the Tropic of Cancer, bordering India, the Arabian Sea, Iran, Afghanistan and China. It has a total population of 220 million with the majority being Muslim followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus and Parsis (Rana & Bhatti, 2018). Following the 9/11 incidents, Pakistan was adversely impacted by terrorism, extremism and sabotage (Raza & Jawaid, 2013). Furthermore, a presumably biased mass media created a negative image of Pakistan as country and tourist destination (Yousaf & Huaibin, 2014), often depicting it as a proponent of "jihadism" (Sayira & Andrews, 2016). Several initiatives launched by Pakistan's security agencies to combat terrorism activities have considerably improved its security condition (Arshad et al., 2018), however, to succeed on the international tourism market, tourism planners need to clearly understand the (destination) attributes that are vital to international tourists in their decision to choose it as a future holiday destination.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

With respect to travel frequency, 40.6% of respondents took a vacation once a year, followed by frequent travellers who took a vacation several times (2–4 times) a year (28.6%) and light travellers who travel only every few years (27.6%). Finally, a sizable percentage of respondents indicated they had previously visited Pakistan (40.1%). The demographic profile of respondents could be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n = 217)

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	133	61.3
	Female	84	38.7
Age	16–25	52	24.0
	26–35	127	58.5
	36–45	26	12.0
	56 years old and more	6	2.8
Level of education	High school or lower	10	4.6
	College	19	8.8
	Bachelor's degree	113	52.1
	Master's degree	69	31.8
	PhD	6	2.8
Employ-ment status	Student/intern	30	13.8
	Unemployed	17	7.8
	Self-employed	42	19.4
	Employed	128	59.0
Annual family income	Less than USD 20,000	86	39.6
	USD 20,000–USD 39,999	72	33.2
	USD 40,000–USD 59,999	22	10.1
	USD 60,000–USD 79,999	15	6.9
	USD 80,000–USD 99,999	11	5.1
	USD 100,000 or more	11	5.1
Traveling frequency	Once a year	88	40.6
	Several times (2–4 times) a year	62	28.6
	More than 4 times a year	7	3.2
Visited Pakistan before	Yes	87	40.1
	No	130	59.9

Source: authors.

Demographic profiles

Table 2 illustrates Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on several destination attributes. As seen in Table 2, landscape, local attitudes toward visitors, adventure and price appear to be the most appealing attributes for international tourists, while nightlife and entertainment, and safety and risk appear to be the least appealing. This makes intuitive sense, given that Pakistan's

nightlife is not particularly appealing compared to EU countries, and the country still has to make significant reforms to ensure the safety of international travellers.

Table 2. Perceived attractiveness of destination attributes (*n* = 217)

Attribute	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Landscape	1	5	4.02	1.016
Culture and history	1	5	3.83	1.005
Nightlife and entertainment	1	5	2.36	1.214
Services	1	5	3.44	1.104
Accessibility	1	5	3.18	1.147
Local attitudes toward visitors	1	5	3.94	1.074
Safety and risk	1	5	3.16	1.271
Relaxation	1	5	3.86	1.077
Climate	1	5	3.68	1.075
Price	1	5	3.89	0.968
Sport	1	5	3.22	1.231
Special events	1	5	3.52	1.255
Adventure	1	5	3.94	1.239

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Mean ranking of attributes

In addition to measuring Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on destination attributes, respondents were asked to rank each attribute in terms of its importance when it comes to selection decisions, with 1 being *the most important* and 9 being *the least important*. Table 3 displays the mean ranking of destination attributes in ascending order. The attribute with the lowest mean rank is the most significant, while the attribute with the highest is the least significant. As shown in the table, the most important attributes for international tourists in their destination selection are landscape, culture, and history; and hospitality and security; while nightlife and entertainment are the least important. Overall, these findings are consistent with past findings of the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes.

Table 3. Mean ranking of attributes (*n* = 217)

Attribute	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Landscape, culture and history	1	9	3.58	3.131
Hospitality	1	9	4.45	2.121
Security	1	9	4.50	2.236
Relaxation and climate	1	9	4.80	1.884
Services and accessibility	1	9	4.83	2.247
Value for money	1	9	5.02	2.226
Adventure activities	1	9	5.44	2.417
Sports and special events	1	9	5.96	2.783
Nightlife and entertainment	1	9	6.43	2.831

Note: 1 – *most important*, 9 – *least important*; *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Pakistan's perceived destination image

Table 4 displays the mean value of the perceived destination image, which serves as the mediator variable in this research. This study posits that the perceived destination image will influence the relationship between Pakistan's perceived attractiveness on destination attributes and visit intentions. A series of semantic differential scales were used to assess respondents' general impression of Pakistan as a holiday destination, with 1 reflecting *a negative image* and 7 representing *a positive image*. As seen in the table, the mean rating of Pakistan's perceived destination image is highly positive (5.8184), indicating that its perceived image as a vacation destination is on average quite positive.

Table 4. Perceived destination image (*n* = 217)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Destination image	1.00	7.00	5.8184	1.22112

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Visit intentions

Table 5 displays the mean value of international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan on a holiday, which acts as the dependent variable in this study. Respondents were asked to rate their intention to visit on a holiday using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). As seen in the table, the mean visit intention is highly positive (3.9647), indicating that on average international tourists indeed intend to visit on a holiday.

Table 5. Visit intentions (*n* = 217)

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Visit intentions	1.00	5.00	3.9647	1.02954

Note: *SD* – standard deviation.
Source: authors.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1 states that "the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit". To examine the impact of the attractiveness of Pakistan's destination attributes on visit intentions, a multiple regression analysis was performed whereby all thirteen variables are simultaneously entered into the calculation.

Table 6a presents the ANOVA output, which shows that the regression model is statistically significant. Table 6b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance. For example, the table illustrates that the attractiveness of the landscape attribute had a positive and statistically significant impact on visit intentions. This means that the higher the attractiveness of Pakistan on the landscape attribute the greater will be the tourists' intentions to visit on a holiday. Similarly, services, local attitudes towards visitors, safety and risk, sports activities, and special events were all statistically significant predictors of visit intentions. Furthermore, the standardized coefficients column indicates that local attitudes towards visitors were the most important attribute in attracting international tourists to Pakistan, followed by landscape and services.

Table 6a. ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F-test	Sig.
Regression	70.407	13	5.416	6.935	0.000
Residual	158.544	203	0.781	–	–
Total	228.951	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; SS – sum of squares, df – degrees of freedom, MS – mean square, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

On the other hand, culture and history, nightlife and entertainment, accessibility, relaxation, climate, pricing and adventure were found to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, the findings provided partial support for hypothesis 1, since as many as 7 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing the visit intentions of international tourists.

Hypothesis 2 states that "the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image".

Table 7a presents the ANOVA output, which shows the overall significance of the regression model. As

Table 6b. Regression of visit intentions on the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes

Attribute	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	SE	β	t-test	Sig.[a]
(Constant)	1.371	0.327	–	4.189	0.000***
Landscape	0.164	0.078	0.162	2.109	0.018**
Culture and history	0.002	0.074	0.002	0.033	0.487
Nightlife and entertainment	–0.008	0.056	–0.009	–0.138	0.445
Services	0.140	0.070	0.150	1.991	0.024**
Accessibility	–0.011	0.071	–0.012	–0.151	0.440
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.162	0.082	0.169	1.973	0.025**
Safety and risk	0.090	0.060	0.111	1.494	0.068*
Relaxation	0.007	0.079	0.008	0.092	0.463
Climate	–0.030	0.073	–0.031	–0.414	0.339
Price	0.005	0.079	0.005	0.065	0.474
Sport	0.090	0.064	0.108	1.394	0.082*
Special events	0.102	0.072	0.124	1.409	0.080*
Adventure	–0.003	0.077	–0.004	–0.045	0.482

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; β – the slope between the variables, SE – standard error; Sig. – significance, [a] p-values are one-tailed, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 7a. ANOVA

Model	SS	df	MS	F-test	Sig.
Regression	132.845	13	10.219	10.962	0.000
Residual	189.241	203	0.932	–	–
Total	322.086	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: destination image; *SS* – sum of squares, *df* – degrees of freedom, *MS* – mean, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

seen in the table, the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 10.962$, significance = 0.000). Table 7b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance. In comparison to the effects of destination attributes on visit intentions, the influence on destination image was slightly different. Like visit intentions, the table illustrates that attractiveness of landscape, local attitudes towards visitors and sports activities were statistically significant predictors of the perceived destination image. The adventure attribute was also statistically significant in positively influencing international tourists' perceptions of Pakistan's image as a holiday destination. However, services, safety and risk, and special events turned out to be without statistical significance. Looking

at the standardized coefficients column, it can be seen that landscape was the most important attribute in enhancing the perceived destination image of Pakistan as a vacation destination, followed by local attitudes towards visitors and adventure attributes.

On the contrary, culture, and history, nightlife and entertainment, accessibility, safety and risk, relaxation, climate, pricing and special events were found to be statistically insignificant. Like hypothesis 1, the analysis of perceived destination image only found partial support for hypothesis 2, as 9 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing international tourists' image perceptions of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 3 states that "the perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit".

Table 8a presents the ANOVA output, which shows the overall significance of the regression model. By looking at the *F* value and significance, the regression analysis of perceived destination image and visit intentions is statistically significant. Table 8b provides the regression output, including the effects and their significance, by analysing the β value and significance. First, most of the demographic characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, level of education

Table 7b. Regression of perceived destination image on the perceived attractiveness of destination attributes

Attribute	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	β	SE	β	t-test	Sig.ᵃ
(Constant)	2.038	0.358	–	5.699	0.000***
Landscape	0.248	0.085	0.206	2.919	0.002**
Culture and history	0.028	0.081	0.023	0.341	0.367
Nightlife and entertainment	–0.013	0.062	–0.013	–0.209	0.417
Services	0.090	0.077	0.082	1.175	0.120
Accessibility	0.013	0.078	0.013	0.173	0.431
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.194	0.090	0.170	2.157	0.016**
Safety and risk	0.030	0.066	0.031	0.454	0.325
Relaxation	0.080	0.086	0.070	0.925	0.178
Climate	0.050	0.079	0.044	0.624	0.266
Price	0.033	0.087	0.027	0.385	0.350
Sport	0.120	0.070	0.121	1.709	0.044**
Special events	–0.006	0.079	–0.006	–0.077	0.469
Adventure	0.130	0.084	0.132	1.538	0.062*

Note: dependent variable: destination image; β – the slope between the variables, *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance,
ᵃ *p*-values are one-tailed, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

and employment status were found to be statistically insignificant in influencing visit intentions. Annual family income had a negative and statistically significant effect which suggests that tourists belonging to a higher income category were less inclined to visit Pakistan on a holiday. Moreover, visiting Pakistan previously had a positive and statistically significant effect on visit intentions. This implies that international tourists who had already visited were more likely to visit again as compared to those who had not.

Table 8a. ANOVA

Model	*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*-test	Sig.
Regression	98.365	7	14.052	22.490	0.000
Residual	130.587	209	0.625	–	–
Total	228.951	216	–	–	–

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; *SS* – sum of squares, *df* – degrees of freedom, *MS* – mean square, Sig. – significance.
Source: authors.

Table 8b. Regression of visit intention on perceived destination image

Attribute	β	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.[a]
(Constant)	2.602	0.507	5.133	0.000***
Gender	−0.060	0.114	−0.529	0.298
Age	−0.075	0.072	−10.041	0.149
Level of education	0.029	0.072	0.398	0.345
Employment status	−0.023	0.053	−0.437	0.331
Annual family income	−0.057	0.041	−1.373	0.085*
Visited Pakistan before	0.527	0.119	−4.436	0.000***
Destination image	0.438	0.049	8.992	0.000***

Note: dependent variable: visit intentions; β – the slope between the variables, *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, [a] *p*-values are one-tailed, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Finally, the coefficient for perceived destination image was positive and statistically significant at a 1% significance level, showing that a favourable image perception of Pakistan would indeed encourage international tourists to visit Pakistan. Therefore, the results showed full support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 states that "the perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of the perceived attractiveness of each of its destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit". To investigate the mediating effect of this perceived image, this study performed a mediation analysis.

The authors also suggest using a Sobel *z*-test to establish mediation on the statistical significance of the indirect effect of the independent variable via the mediator variable.

To conduct mediation analysis, using Zhao et al.'s (2010) approach, this study implements the Preacher and Hayes (2004) process macro in SPSS. This technique uses the bootstrap method to determine the significance of the indirect effect. The bootstrap method computes the 95% confidence interval for the estimates, and an estimate is considered statistically significant if the confidence interval does not contain 0. The mediation model applied in this research is as follow (Figure 2).
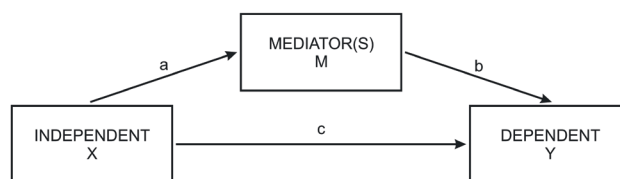

Figure 2. Results of testing hypothetical model
Source: authors

Table 9a shows that the total effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is positive and statistically significant, as the *p*-values were less than 0.05.

Table 9a. Total effect of X on Y

Attribute	Effect	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.
Landscape	0.3023	0.0625	4.8397	0.000***
Culture and history	0.2602	0.0616	4.2236	0.000***
Nightlife and entertainment	0.1568	0.0522	3.0014	0.000***
Services	0.3137	0.0551	5.6892	0.000***
Accessibility	0.2069	0.0551	3.7576	0.000***
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.3459	0.0555	6.2314	0.000***
Safety and risk	0.2278	0.0483	4.7139	0.000***
Relaxation	0.2925	0.0563	5.1936	0.000***
Climate	0.2502	0.0585	4.2763	0.000***
Price	0.2848	0.0645	4.4174	0.000***
Sport	0.2511	0.0510	4.9230	0.000***
Special events	0.2720	0.0502	5.4192	0.000***
Adventure	0.3016	0.0505	5.9764	0.000***

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions; *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 9b shows the direct effects of the attractiveness of destination attributes on respondents' intentions to visit Pakistan for holidays. Except for landscape, culture and history; and climate; the table revealed that all other destination attributes had a statistically significant direct effect on visit intentions at 10%, 5% and 1% significance levels.

Table 9b. Direct effect of X on Y

Attribute	Effect	*SE*	*t*-test	Sig.
Landscape	0.0967	0.0623	1.5523	0.122
Culture and history	0.0778	0.0593	1.3128	0.191
Nightlife and entertainment	0.0796	0.0460	1.7300	0.085*
Services	0.1687	0.0531	3.1798	0.002***
Accessibility	0.0865	0.0503	1.7190	0.087*
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.1631	0.0574	2.8421	0.005***
Safety and risk	0.1195	0.0447	2.6717	0.008***
Relaxation	0.1110	0.0564	1.9699	0.050**
Climate	0.0867	0.0558	1.5540	0.121
Price	0.1100	0.0613	1.7954	0.074*
Sport	0.1145	0.0487	2.3499	0.020**
Special events	0.1513	0.0473	3.1991	0.002***
Adventure	0.1366	0.0517	2.6413	0.009***

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions; *SE* – standard error; Sig. – significance, * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 9c shows the indirect effects of the attractiveness of destination attributes on respondents' intentions to visit. These indirect effects demonstrate the impact on respondents' visit intentions that occur via destination image. As shown in the table, no bootstrap confidence interval contains the value 0 which means that the indirect effect of each destination attribute is statistically significant at a 5% significance level. In other words, the perceived destination image of Pakistan indeed mediates the effect of the attractiveness of destination attributes on visit intentions. As a result, the findings fully supported hypothesis 4.

Table 9c. Indirect effect of X on Y through M

Attribute	Effect	Boot *SE*	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Landscape	0.2055	0.0474	0.1210	0.3046
Culture and history	0.1823	0.0403	0.1094	0.2680
Nightlife and entertainment	0.0772	0.0269	0.0296	0.1350
Services	0.1450	0.0359	0.0793	0.2195
Accessibility	0.1204	0.0312	0.0642	0.1866
Local attitudes toward visitors	0.1827	0.0405	0.1041	0.2656
Safety and risk	0.1083	0.0286	0.0551	0.1677
Relaxation	0.1815	0.0436	0.1010	0.2750
Climate	0.1636	0.0370	0.0953	0.2421
Price	0.1748	0.0432	0.0984	0.2666
Sport	0.1366	0.0336	0.0739	0.2064
Special events	0.1206	0.0307	0.0651	0.1837
Adventure	0.1650	0.0362	0.098	0.2409

Note: X – perceived attraction of destination attributes, Y – visit intentions, M – destination image; Boot *SE* – bootstrap standard error, Boot LLCI – bootstrap lower limit confidence interval, Boot ULCI – bootstrap upper limit confidence interval.
Source: authors.

4.1. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

In this subsection, we examine the empirical support for the proposed hypotheses regarding the influence of various destination attributes on international tourists' visit intentions and perceived destination image of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 1: The findings provided partial support for hypothesis 1, since 7 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing the visit intentions of international tourists (Tables 6a and 6b).

Hypothesis 2: Landscape was the most important attribute in enhancing the perceived destination image of Pakistan, followed by local attitudes towards visitors, and adventure attributes (Tables 7a and 7b). The analysis of perceived destination image found only partial support for hypothesis 2, as 9 of the 13 destination attributes were statistically insignificant in influencing international tourists' image perceptions of Pakistan.

Hypothesis 3: Based on Tables 8a and 8b, most of the demographic characteristics of respondents were found to be insignificant in influencing visit intentions. Tourists belonging to a higher income category were less inclined to visit Pakistan. Moreover, international tourists who had already visited were more likely to revisit. Finally, a favourable image perception of Pakistan would indeed encourage international tourists to visit. Therefore, the results showed full support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4: The findings showed that the total effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is positive and statistically significant (Table 9a). It also shows that after controlling for the effects of respondents' demographic characteristics, the direct effect of the services attribute to international tourists' intentions to visit Pakistan was statistically significant and positive (Table 9b). Lastly, the indirect effect of each destination attribute on visit intentions is significant (Table 9c). In total, the perceived destination image of Pakistan indeed mediates the effect of the attractiveness of destination attributes on visit intentions. As a result, the findings fully supported hypothesis 4.

The summary of the results of hypothesis testing is shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Hypothesis testing

	Hypotheses	Results
H$_1$	The perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit	Partially supported
H$_2$	The perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' perceived destination image	Partially supported
H$_3$	The perceived destination image of Pakistan will have a significant positive impact on international tourists' intentions to visit	Fully supported
H$_4$	The perceived destination image of Pakistan will mediate the impact of the perceived attractiveness of each of Pakistan's destination attributes on international tourists' intentions to visit	Fully supported

Source: authors.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR HOSPITALITY, TOURISM RESEARCH AND INDUSTRY PRACTICE

The following summarizes the answers to all four research questions, respectively:
1. The multiple regression analysis highlighted six destination attributes (landscape, services, local attitudes towards tourists, safety and risk, sports and special events). Pakistan should focus on these attributes throughout its market positioning activities.
2. Only four attributes (landscape, local attitudes towards visitors, sports and adventure) were found to have a significant influence on Pakistan's perceived destination image.
3. The perceived destination image has a significant effect on tourists' visit intentions and the variable also indicates that people who had already visited were more likely to visit again.
4. All the attributes have an influence on Pakistan's destination image and thus influencing tourists' intentions to visit.

Overall, this study revealed that destination attributes play a significant role in forming the overall image of Pakistan, which leads to favourable visit intentions. It is worth mentioning that some of the attributes are related to the tourist attraction type and items focused on the tourist infrastructure. Both are central points to future tourist planning and should be considered in a tourist national and regional plan. Based on the analysis the following recommendation can be made:
1. Pakistan must highlight its natural attractions.
2. The government should improve the infrastructure including roads and bridges.
3. Local attitudes towards female visitors should be addressed – the government should raise public awareness of women's rights in society to increase the female tourists' confidence and provide safety, one of the more important attributes found in the study.
4. More lodgings should be built since they are part of the tourist infrastructure and, according to the data, this item can also influence tourists' decisions.
5. Universities should include hospitality and management in their academic curriculum to develop a professionally qualified workforce.
6. The government should promote international events or sports festivals since these events could convert Pakistan into a showcase to other countries and it can be an opportunity for free promotion.
7. The government together with local administrations should develop and publicize worldwide tourism promotional material focused on relevant attributes to increase the perceived image of the destination.

One limitation of this is that a survey does not provide in-depth knowledge of the study variables. Future researchers could use "focus groups" and perform qualitative research. Secondly, the perceived destination image was used as a mediation factor, but there may be other factors that modify the influence of the perceived destination image. Other research possibilities are expanding the scope to specific regions, comparing the impact of destination attributes on visit intentions between Pakistan and its rival countries, and examining both international and domestic tourists' visit intentions.

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