**Travel to Border Destinations: Exploring the Motivations and Experiences of Tourists in Border Regions**

**Abstract**

Tourism in border regions, particularly those with geopolitical significance, has emerged as a niche but growing field within the tourism industry. This study explores the motivations, experiences, and behavioral outcomes of tourists visiting the politically sensitive border areas of Kashmir. Using a sample of 600 tourists and employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the research examines the relationships between five core motivations—cultural heritage, adventure-seeking, political curiosity, personal growth, and support for local tourism—and their effects on tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. The findings highlight that cultural heritage and political curiosity are the most significant drivers of tourist satisfaction, which in turn mediates the relationship between motivations and revisit intentions. Adventure-seeking and personal growth also positively influence satisfaction, though to a lesser extent. Tourist satisfaction is found to be pivotal in determining revisit intentions, suggesting that satisfaction serves as a key mechanism in transforming initial motivations into long-term loyalty. The study offers practical implications for destination management in border regions, emphasizing the need to enhance infrastructure, ensure safety, and promote culturally enriching experiences to foster sustainable tourism. It also underscores the unique role of border tourism in promoting cross-cultural understanding and supporting local economies in conflict-affected areas. This research contributes to the broader literature on conflict and border tourism, providing insights into how geopolitical landscapes shape tourist behavior.

*Keywords: Border tourism, Tourist motivations, Tourist experiences, Tourist satisfaction, Revisit intentions*

**Introduction**

Tourism to border regions has emerged as a distinct and intriguing niche within the broader travel industry (Saxena & Ilbery, 2010; Więckowski, 2023; Weidenfeld, 2013). While traditionally associated with political and cultural tensions, border areas have increasingly become destinations for tourists seeking unique experiences, adventure, and cultural immersion (Gelbman & Timothy, 2010; Gao et al., 2019; Xiaobo 2024). The growing interest in these regions is underpinned by various factors, including geopolitical curiosity, a desire for authentic experiences, and the thrill of visiting less-explored destinations (Zhang et al., 2024; Chauhan, 2024). From the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea to the mountainous borders of Kashmir, these destinations are characterized by their complex political and cultural landscapes, which attract tourists despite their historical and ongoing conflicts (Gelbman & Timothy, 2010; Gelbman & Maoz, 2012).

One of the primary motivations driving tourism in border regions is the desire for cultural engagement (Askanius, 2019; Tamás et al., 2021; Connor et al., 2023). Travelers often seek out the rich and diverse cultural heritage that border areas can offer, where interactions between different ethnic groups and civilizations are often heightened (Sofield, 2006; Rădoi, 2020). In regions like the European Schengen border areas, tourism plays a significant role in promoting cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, bridging divides created by historical conflicts (Stoffelen, & Vanneste, 2017; Stoffelen et al., 2017; Wróblewski & Kasperek, 2019). Similarly, the borders between Israel and Jordan, as well as Ireland and Northern Ireland, have seen increased tourist interest, partly because of peace agreements and an evolving sense of security, highlighting how political landscapes shape tourism patterns (Timothy, 1995; Gelbman & Timothy, 2010). Beyond cultural exploration, adventure tourism, rugged terrains and remote geographies also act as a key motivation for travel to border regions (Hartmann, 2016; Beedie & Hudson, 2003). For instance, the Pamir Highway between Afghanistan and Tajikistan attracts adventure-seekers who relish the challenge of navigating its treacherous routes, while the Peruvian-Bolivian border around Lake Titicaca is popular for its combination of scenic beauty and remote, high-altitude environments (Palmer, 2006; Mäki & Kalliola, 2001). Despite the appeal, tourism to border regions is not without challenges (Kwanisai et al., 2014; Timothy et al., 2016; Andrades & Dimanche, 2017; Stoffelen et al., 2017). Perceptions of safety and security remain critical factors that influence tourist decision-making (Woosnam et al., 2015; Lever et al., 2024; Crawley & Hagen‐Zanker 2019). Political instability, military presence, and the potential for conflict act as deterrents for many travellers (Carter & Butler, 2020). However, for others, these very elements of risk contribute to the allure, offering a chance to witness history in the making and experience the juxtaposition of danger and hospitality (Fourie et al., 2020; Fuchs et al., 2013; Sofield, 2006).

This study aims to explore the motivations and experiences of tourists visiting border regions, focusing on their unique position at the intersection of culture, adventure, and political significance. Through examining these aspects, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors that drive tourism in such complex and dynamic destinations. India’s diverse and vast geographical expanse includes numerous international borders, many of which are in regions of geopolitical significance (Scott, 2008). These border areas, stretching from the icy heights of the Himalayas to the deserts of Rajasthan, have emerged as important destinations for both domestic and international tourists. In India, border tourism is driven by a mix of historical, cultural, and adventure-seeking motivations, reflecting broader global trends seen in other politically significant border regions (Timothy, 2000; Gelbman & Timothy, 2010). However, the Indian context is unique due to the country's complex political landscape, which includes unresolved territorial disputes, military presence, and the ongoing tensions with neighbouring countries like Pakistan and China (Ganguly et al., 2019; Indurthy, 2016: Menon, 2022).

Regions such as Ladakh (Birte et al., 2020), the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir (Timothy, 2019), Wagah border in Punjab (Yousaf, 2021), the Rann of Kutch along the India-Pakistan border (Ibrahim, 2007), and Arunachal Pradesh near the India-China border are among the most prominent destinations for border tourism in India (Aiyadurai & Lee, 2017). These areas not only offer stunning landscapes and rich cultural experiences but also present tourists with a sense of adventure and geopolitical intrigue. For instance, Ladakh, located near the contentious border with China, has seen a surge in tourist activity despite its historical role as a site of military conflict (Vogel & Field, 2020). The region's Buddhist culture, high-altitude deserts, and monasteries draw cultural enthusiasts, while its remote, rugged terrain appeals to adventure tourists (Liechty, 2017).

One of the most notable examples of border tourism in India is the Wagah-Attari border ceremony between India and Pakistan. This daily event attracts thousands of tourists, offering a unique blend of patriotism, military spectacle, and cross-border symbolism (Chhabra, 2018; Wani et al., 2023). The appeal lies in witnessing the ceremonial display of nationalism, where visitors can observe a choreographed military exchange that represents both rivalry and cooperation (Yousaf, 2021). This border tourism experience is deeply intertwined with the historical partition of India and Pakistan, making it a politically and emotionally charged destination (Mehdi, 2005; Parciack, 2018). Similarly, the border regions of Kashmir have drawn tourists interested in exploring one of the world's most historically significant territories. Despite security concerns, tourists continue to visit Kashmir's scenic valleys, attracted by its natural beauty and the unique experience of visiting a politically significant area (Timothy, 2019; Yousaf, 2021). The proximity to the Line of Control (LoC) offers a sense of curiosity and excitement for adventure seekers (Chauhan, 2024). Meanwhile, cultural, and historical interests motivate many others to explore the rich heritage and traditions of the region (Wani et al., 2022).

However, tourism in these regions is shaped significantly by perceptions of safety and security. The ongoing geopolitical tensions between India, Pakistan, and China have led to occasional closures of some border areas, impacting tourist flows (Bose, 2024; Shah & Wani, 2014). Furthermore, the presence of military personnel and checkpoints, while necessary for security, also contributes to the complex dynamics of border tourism in India (Sofield, 2006). For many tourists, the appeal of visiting these areas lies in the opportunity to experience firsthand the intersections of politics, conflict, and culture (Gao et al., 2019; Belhassen et al., 2014). This research aims to explore the motivations and experiences of tourists visiting India's border regions, focusing on how these destinations offer a unique combination of natural beauty, cultural richness, and geopolitical significance. By examining the factors that draw tourists to these areas, this study seeks to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of border tourism within the Indian context.

**Literature Review**

Tourism in border regions has garnered increasing scholarly attention due to its unique characteristics, shaped by a mix of geopolitical tensions, cultural diversity, and natural beauty (Prokkola, 2010; Gelbman & Timothy, 2011). This literature review provides an overview of the existing research on border tourism, focusing on tourist motivations, experiences, and behavioral outcomes. It also highlights how the complex intersection of tourism and geopolitics influences tourist behavior and satisfaction in border destinations.

**Tourist Motivations in Border Regions**

The motivations driving tourists to visit border regions are multifaceted, encompassing cultural, historical, and adventure-seeking factors (Yuri et al., 2017; Chen & Tsai, 2021; Weidenfeld, 2013). According to Di Giovine (2008) and Nail (2016), tourists are often motivated by a desire to experience the rich cultural heritage that border areas offer, where multiple civilizations and ethnicities have historically intersected. This is particularly true in regions like the European Schengen borders, where tourists seek to engage with both past and present cultural exchanges (Bar-Kołelis & Wendt, 2018; Stephenson, 2006)

Adventure-seeking is another important driver of tourism in these regions. Zakrisson & Zillinger (2012) argue that tourists often visit border areas for the excitement and novelty they provide. The rugged, often remote geographies of border regions, such as the Pamir Highway between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, draw thrill-seekers eager for challenging terrain and an off-the-beaten-path experience (Sadozaï & Blondin, 2023). Similarly, Gelbman (2008) mentions that borders between Israel and Jordan attract tourists interested in experiencing landscapes imbued with historical significance and natural beauty.

Political curiosity is also a strong motivational factor for tourists visiting contested or politically sensitive border regions (Mansfeld & Korman, 2015; Gelbman & Timothy 2010). McDowell (2008) and Shilo & Collins-Kreiner (2019) explored how political history and the narrative of conflict play a role in attracting tourists to such areas. Tourists are often drawn to these destinations to better understand the political and historical contexts that define the region. For instance, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Koreahas become a major attraction for those interested in Cold War history and contemporary geopolitics (Gelbman & Timothy, 2010). In this way, political tensions themselves become an allure for certain groups of tourists (Winter, 2007; Timothy, 2013).

**Satisfaction in Border Regions**

Tourist experiences in border regions are shaped by a combination of cultural engagement, adventure, and exposure to the political atmosphere of the area (Gillen & Mostafanezhad, 2019; Szytniewski et al., 2018; Timothy et al., 2016). Pine & Gilmore’s (1998) Experience Economy framework is often applied in border tourism to understand how tourists’ experiences are categorized across dimensions of aesthetic, educational, escapist, and entertainment experiences (Mehmetoglu & Engen 2011; Chang & Huang, 2014). The cultural richness of border regions, such as those in Central and Eastern Europe, provides tourists with aesthetic and educational experiences that are difficult to replicate elsewhere (Palang et al., 2006; Schimanski, 2015). Tourists visiting these regions often report a deep sense of engagement with local traditions, architecture, and historical narratives (Ilbery et al., 2007; Smith, 2015).

In more adventure-oriented destinations, such as the India-Pakistan border near Kashmir, the experience is often more escapist, where tourists seek excitement and novelty (Najar & Rather, 2023; Wani et al., 2023). The presence of political or military tensions can further amplify the intensity of these escapist experiences, providing tourists with a unique combination of thrill and personal reflection (Bigley et al., 2010; Williams & Baláž, 2015). However, tourist satisfaction in these regions is heavily influenced by external factors such as infrastructure and perceived safety (del Río et al., 2027; Çetin et al., 2022). While tourists may be initially motivated by the allure of visiting a politically sensitive area, their overall satisfaction often depends on the region’s ability to meet their basic travel needs, such as accommodation, accessibility, and security (Truong & King, 2009; Park et al., 2019). In regions where infrastructure is lacking or where perceived danger is high, even highly motivated tourists may express lower levels of satisfaction, especially when adventure-oriented travellers encounter unforeseen difficulties or risks (Seabra et al., 2013; Gnanapala, 2015; Li et al., 2017).

**Revisit Intentions of Border Tourists**

The concept of revisit intention is critical in border tourism, especially in regions marked by political volatility (Li et al., 2018). Tourist satisfaction is a key determinant of revisit intentions, which are further influenced by the interplay of motivational factors and external conditions like safety and infrastructure (Quintal & Polczynski, 2010; Alegre & Cladera, 2009). Studies on border tourism in Northern Ireland, Israel, and Cyprus have demonstrated that tourists who experience high levels of satisfaction, whether through cultural enrichment or personal adventure, are more likely to return or recommend the destination to others (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2000; Gelbman & Timothy, 2010).

In politically sensitive regions, even satisfied tourists may be reluctant to revisit due to ongoing or perceived risks (Li et al., 2018; Seetanah et al., 2020). The fluctuating political landscapes of border areas of Jammu & Kashmir between India and Pakistan deter repeat visits, despite a positive initial experience (Çetinsöz & Ege, 2013; Hasan et al., 2017). Thus, perceived safety emerges as a crucial moderating factor in determining whether tourists will choose to revisit or recommend border destinations to others (Xie et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021).

**Tourism, Geopolitics, and Sustainable Growth in Border Regions**

The intersection of tourism and geopolitics is perhaps most apparent in border regions, where tourism development often depends on political stability and cross-border cooperation (Hazbun, 2004; Causevic & Lynch, 2013; Weaver et al., 2023). Giblin (2014) and Gelbman (2019) argue that the role of tourism in such areas goes beyond mere economic benefit; it can foster cross-cultural understanding and even contribute to peace-building efforts in post-conflict zones. This is evident in regions such as Rwanda and Uganda, where tourism development in areas once affected by conflict is now being used as a tool for reconciliation and sustainable growth (Ngo et al., 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2022).

Similarly, McDowell (2008) and Goldstone (2001), discuss how tourism authorities in politically sensitive areas must balance the promotion of cultural heritage with the need to ensure tourist safety. This balance is particularly important in regions like Kashmir, where tourists are drawn both by the natural beauty and the complex socio-political history (Chauhan & Khanna, 2009). In these contexts, sustainable tourism development requires a careful approach that prioritizes safety, infrastructure improvements, and cultural preservation to ensure long-term growth and visitor satisfaction (Hall & Lew, 1998; Long & Nguyen, 2018).

**Conceptual Research Framework**

This study investigates the direct and indirect relationships between tourist motivations, tourist satisfaction (as a mediating variable), and revisit intentions in border regions, specifically focusing on the border areas of Kashmir. The key constructs are:

**Tourist Motivations**

Tourist motivations are broadly categorized into five key dimensions:

***1. Cultural Heritage Exploration:***

Many tourists are motivated by a desire to experience the history, art, and traditions of a destination. They visit cultural landmarks, historical sites, and engage in local customs to learn about and appreciate the heritage of the region.

***2. Adventure-Seeking:***

Adventure tourists seek excitement and physical challenges, engaging in activities like hiking, climbing, or exploring remote natural landscapes. They are driven by the thrill of discovering new places and pushing personal limits.

***3. Political Curiosity:***

Some travellers are drawn to destinations with complex political histories or current events. Their motivation lies in understanding the socio-political dynamics, conflicts, or peace processes in these regions.

***4. Personal Growth:***

This motivation is centred around self-discovery and emotional development. Tourists seek transformative experiences, such as wellness retreats or spiritual journeys, that promote personal reflection and well-being.

***5. Support for Local Tourism:***

Many tourists are motivated by the desire to contribute positively to local communities. They prefer destinations that focus on sustainable tourism and support local businesses, ensuring their visit benefits the local economy.

**Tourist Satisfaction**

Tourist satisfaction reflects the emotional and cognitive evaluation of the overall experience, acting as a mediator between motivations and revisit intentions.

**Revisit Intentions**

Revisit intentions capture the likelihood of tourists returning to the destination or recommending it to others.

**Tourist Motivations**

**Cultural Heritage Exploration**

**H1a** H3a

**Revisit Intention**

Adventure Seeking

**H1b** H3b

Political Curiosity

**Tourist Satisfaction**

**H1c H2**

**H1d H3c**

Personal Growth

H3d

**H1e** H3e

Support For Local Tourism

**Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model**

**Hypotheses Development**

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

***Tourist Motivations and Tourist Satisfaction***

Tourist motivations directly influence satisfaction levels (Devesa et al., 2010). Tourists motivated by cultural heritage, adventure, or political curiosity are likely to experience different levels of satisfaction, depending on how well their expectations align with the actual experience.

H1a: Cultural heritage motivation has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H1b: Political curiosity has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H1c: Adventure-seeking motivation has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H1d: Personal growth motivation has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

H1e: Support for local tourism has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

***Tourist Satisfaction and Revisit Intentions***

Satisfied tourists are more likely to have favourable revisit intentions. Satisfaction acts as a key determinant in their decision to either return or recommend the destination to others.

**H2**:Tourist satisfaction has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

***Tourist Motivations and Revisit Intentions***

Tourist motivations may directly influence revisit intentions. Some tourists may express a desire to revisit border regions based on their motivations, such as cultural interest or the thrill of adventure.

H3a: Cultural heritage motivation has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

H3b: Political curiosity has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

H3c: Adventure-seeking motivation has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

H3d: Personal growth motivation has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

H3e: Support for local tourism has a positive impact on revisit intentions.

***Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction***

Tourist satisfaction is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between tourist motivations and revisit intentions. When tourists are satisfied with their experiences, their initial motivations are more likely to translate into a desire to revisit.

H4a: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between cultural heritage motivation and revisit intentions.

H4b: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between political curiosity and revisit intentions.

H4c: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between adventure-seeking motivation and revisit intentions.

H4d: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between personal growth motivation and revisit intentions.

H4e: Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between support for local tourism and revisit intentions.

**Methodology**

This study employs a rigorous quantitative approach to investigate the relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions in border regions. Specifically, the research utilizes **Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)** to examine the direct and indirect effects of tourist motivations on revisit intentions, with tourist satisfaction acting as a mediating variable.

**Research Design**

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted to collect data from tourists who visited the border regions of Kashmir. The primary focus of this research is on understanding the motivations driving tourists to these areas, their overall satisfaction, and the likelihood of revisiting. The use of SEM enables the simultaneous estimation of both direct and indirect effects between these variables, offering a comprehensive analysis of the underlying relationships.

**Data Collection**

***Sampling Method***

Data was collected from 600 tourists visiting prominent border areas in Kashmir, such as Gurez, Keran, Karnah, and Uri, over a period of three months. A convenience sampling technique was used due to the geographic and security constraints in the region. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of tourist nationality, gender, age, and purpose of visit, ensuring a representative sample.

***Survey Instrument***

The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire designed to measure the key variables:

**Tourist Motivations**: Seven-point Likert scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) were used to assess cultural heritage motivation (González-Pérez & Parcero-Oubiña, 2011), political curiosity (Kim et al., 2021), adventure-seeking (Pizam et al., 2001), personal growth (Hirschorn & Hefferon, 2013), and support for local tourism (Farmaki, 2012).

**Tourist Satisfaction**: Satisfaction was measured using a multi-item scale derived from Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), capturing tourists’ emotional responses to their overall experience.

**Revisit Intentions**: Revisit intentions were assessed through three Likert scale items (adapted from Kim et al., 2015), which captured tourists’ likelihood to return and recommend the destination.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 50 tourists to ensure clarity and reliability, after which minor modifications were made to enhance clarity.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis followed a multi-step process using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is appropriate for testing complex relationships between observed and latent variables. The analysis was conducted in two main stages: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the measurement model and SEM for the structural model.

**Measurement Model: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

The first step involved conducting CFA to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs used to measure tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions. The following steps were carried out:

***Internal Consistency and Reliability****:* Cronbach’s alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were calculated for each construct to ensure that the items consistently measured the same concept. A threshold of 0.70 was used for both indicators to confirm reliability.

***Convergent Validity****:* The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated to assess the extent to which the latent variables explain the variance of their indicators. An AVE of 0.50 or higher was used as the threshold for convergent validity.

***Discriminant Validity****:* Discriminant validity was tested using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which ensures that each construct is distinct from the others. The square root of the AVE for each construct was compared with the correlations between constructs.

**Model Fit**

To assess the overall fit of the measurement model, several goodness-of-fit indices were utilized. First, the Chi-square/df ratio was considered, with an acceptable threshold being a value less than 3. This measure helps determine how well the model fits the observed data compared to a baseline model. Additionally, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was examined, where a value greater than 0.90 indicates an acceptable fit, while as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was also assessed, with values above 0.90 signifying a good model fit (Hair et al., 2013). Another crucial measure was the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), which was deemed acceptable if its value was below 0.08, indicating a reasonable approximation of the model to the population data. Lastly, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was used to evaluate the model fit, with an acceptable value being less than 0.08, suggesting that the residuals between the observed and model-predicted values were minimal (Lohmöller, 1989). These indices collectively ensured that the measurement model adequately represented the data.

**Structural Model: Path Analysis Using SEM**

Once the measurement model was validated, the second step involved using SEM to estimate the relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions. The following relationships were tested:

***Direct Effects****:* The direct relationships between tourist motivations and tourist satisfaction, and between tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions, were examined. Additionally, the direct effect of tourist motivations on revisit intentions was tested.

***Indirect Effects****:* The mediating role of tourist satisfaction in the relationship between tourist motivations and revisit intentions was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to obtain bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects.

**Validity and Reliability Considerations**

Harman’s single-factor test was used to detect any potential common method bias, ensuring that no single factor accounted for most of the variance in the data. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were calculated to assess multicollinearity between variables, with a threshold of VIF < 5. The sample was split into two subsamples for cross-validation, where the structural model was first tested on one subsample and validated on the second to ensure generalizability.

**Statistical Software**

The data analysis was performed using **IBM SPSS Statistics** for preliminary analysis (e.g., descriptive statistics and reliability analysis) and **AMOS** for conducting SEM and CFA. AMOS was selected due to its ability to handle latent variables and estimate both direct and indirect effects in a single model.

**Results**

The data analysis was conducted using **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)** followed by **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** to test the direct and indirect relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions. The findings from both stages are presented below.

***Descriptive Statistics***

The sample consisted of 600 respondents, with diverse demographic characteristics. The respondents were primarily domestic tourists (91%), with the remainder being international visitors (9%). Gender distribution was fairly even, with 52% male and 48% female participants. The average age of respondents was 35 years.

**Measurement Model: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

**Reliability and Validity**

***Cronbach’s Alpha****:* All constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha values exceeding the threshold of 0.70.

***Composite Reliability (CR)****:* All constructs exceeded the CR threshold of 0.70, indicating high reliability of the measurement model.

***Average Variance Extracted (AVE)****:* AVE values for each construct were above the 0.50 threshold, demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

**Table 1.** Reliability and validity of constructs and measures.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Construct** | **Factor Loadings** | **Cronbach's Alpha** | **Composite Reliability (CR)** | **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** |
| Cultural Heritage Motivation | 0.75 | 0.83 | 0.85 | 0.62 |
| Political Curiosity | 0.71 | 0.81 | 0.83 | 0.59 |
| Adventure-Seeking | 0.78 | 0.86 | 0.88 | 0.67 |
| Personal Growth | 0.71 | 0.78 | 0.81 | 0.61 |
| Support for Local Tourism | 0.72 | 0.8 | 0.82 | 0.58 |
| Tourist Satisfaction | 0.8 | 0.87 | 0.89 | 0.65 |
| Revisit Intentions | 0.82 | 0.89 | 0.9 | 0.71 |

**Discriminant Validity**: The Fornell-Larcker criterion confirmed discriminant validity, as the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs.

**Table 2.** Discriminant validity of constructs.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Construct** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** |
| 1. Cultural Heritage Motivation | **0.79** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Political Curiosity | 0.55 | **0.77** |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Adventure-Seeking | 0.5 | 0.48 | **0.82** |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Personal Growth | 0.48 | 0.46 | 0.49 | **0.78** |  |  |  |
| 5. Support for Local Tourism | 0.52 | 0.51 | 0.53 | 0.47 | **0.76** |  |  |
| 6. Tourist Satisfaction | 0.58 | 0.57 | 0.56 | 0.55 | 0.54 | **0.81** |  |
| 7. Revisit Intentions | 0.6 | 0.56 | 0.54 | 0.52 | 0.58 | 0.63 | **0.84** |

#### Note: Square root of AVE in bold. Under the bold diagonal are estimated correlations.

#### **Model Fit**

The model fit indices indicate an acceptable fit between the proposed model and the observed data. The chi-square/df value is 2.11, which falls within the acceptable range of less than 3, demonstrating a good fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.94, exceeding the threshold of 0.90, and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.93, also above the acceptable minimum of 0.90, both of which suggest a strong model fit. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.048, well below the acceptable upper limit of 0.08, indicating a close approximation of the model to the data. Lastly, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is 0.041, also below the threshold of 0.08, further supporting the model’s adequacy. These results collectively confirm that the model provides a robust representation of the data.

**Structural Model: Path Analysis Using SEM**

After validating the measurement model, the structural model was tested to examine the hypothesized relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions.

***Direct Effects***

The standardized regression coefficients (β) and significance levels (p-values) for the direct effects are summarized below:

The findings from the study reveal significant relationships between various tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions. Cultural heritage motivation emerged as the strongest predictor of tourist satisfaction (β = 0.45, p < 0.001), indicating that tourists who are motivated by a desire to explore cultural heritage are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction. Similarly, political curiosity (β = 0.31, p < 0.001), adventure-seeking motivation (β = 0.22, p < 0.01), personal growth motivation (β = 0.27, p < 0.001), and support for local tourism (β = 0.30, p < 0.001) were all positively and significantly associated with tourist satisfaction, supporting hypotheses H1a through H1e.

Furthermore, tourist satisfaction was found to have a strong and direct impact on revisit intentions (β = 0.58, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H2. This suggests that satisfied tourists are significantly more likely to express an intention to revisit the destination. Additionally, the study examined the direct effects of various motivations on revisit intentions. Cultural heritage motivation (β = 0.24, p < 0.001), political curiosity (β = 0.18, p < 0.01), adventure-seeking motivation (β = 0.14, p < 0.05), personal growth motivation (β = 0.16, p < 0.01), and support for local tourism (β = 0.19, p < 0.01) all had significant positive effects on revisit intentions, supporting hypotheses H3a through H3e.

**Table 3.** Hypotheses testing of direct effects.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hypothesis** | **Relationship** | **β (Standardized Coefficient)** | **p-value** | **Result** |
| H1a | Cultural heritage motivation → Tourist satisfaction | 0.45 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H1b | Political curiosity → Tourist satisfaction | 0.31 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H1c | Adventure-seeking motivation → Tourist satisfaction | 0.22 | < 0.01 | Supported |
| H1d | Personal growth motivation → Tourist satisfaction | 0.27 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H1e | Support for local tourism → Tourist satisfaction | 0.30 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H2 | Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.58 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H3a | Cultural heritage motivation → Revisit intentions | 0.24 | < 0.001 | Supported |
| H3b | Political curiosity → Revisit intentions | 0.18 | < 0.01 | Supported |
| H3c | Adventure-seeking motivation → Revisit intentions | 0.14 | < 0.05 | Supported |
| H3d | Personal growth motivation → Revisit intentions | 0.16 | < 0.01 | Supported |
| H3e | Support for local tourism → Revisit intentions | 0.19 | < 0.01 | Supported |

***Indirect Effects: Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction***

The study employed bootstrapping with 5,000 samples to examine the mediating role of tourist satisfaction in the relationship between various tourist motivations and revisit intentions. The results indicate that tourist satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between tourist motivations and revisit intentions, highlighting its significance as a key mechanism in shaping tourists' intentions to return.

Cultural heritage motivation had a significant indirect effect on revisit intentions through tourist satisfaction (β = 0.26, p < 0.001), supporting H4a. Political curiosity also demonstrated a significant indirect effect on revisit intentions via tourist satisfaction (β = 0.18, p < 0.01), supporting H4b. Adventure-seeking motivation showed a significant indirect effect on revisit intentions through tourist satisfaction (β = 0.13, p < 0.05), supporting H4c. Personal growth motivation had a significant indirect effect on revisit intentions, mediated by tourist satisfaction (β = 0.15, p < 0.01), supporting H4d. Support for local tourism exhibited a significant indirect effect on revisit intentions through tourist satisfaction (β = 0.17, p < 0.01), supporting H4e.

These findings suggest that tourist satisfaction plays a crucial mediating role in translating tourists' motivations into their intentions to revisit a destination. The partial mediation implies that while motivations directly influence revisit intentions, satisfaction acts as an important intermediary, enhancing the overall impact of these motivations.

**Table 4.** Hypotheses testing of indirect effects.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hypothesis** | **Relationship** | **Indirect Effect (β)** | **p-value** | **Mediation Type** |
| H4a | Cultural heritage motivation → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.26 | < 0.001 | Mediated |
| H4b | Political curiosity → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.18 | < 0.01 | Mediated |
| H4c | Adventure-seeking motivation → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.13 | < 0.05 | Mediated |
| H4d | Personal growth motivation → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.15 | < 0.01 | Mediated |
| H4e | Support for local tourism → Tourist satisfaction → Revisit intentions | 0.17 | < 0.01 | Mediated |

**Discussion**

This study aimed to examine the complex relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions in the context of border tourism, with a specific focus on Kashmir. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), we explored how various motivational factors influence tourist satisfaction and how satisfaction mediates the relationship between motivations and revisit intentions. The findings offer several important theoretical and practical implications.

**Tourist Motivations and Satisfaction**

The results confirmed that tourist motivations—including cultural heritage exploration, political curiosity, adventure-seeking, personal growth, and support for local tourism—have significant positive effects on tourist satisfaction. Among these, cultural heritage motivation emerged as the strongest predictor of tourist satisfaction (β = 0.45, p < 0.001), aligning with Beerli & Martín (2004), who emphasized that cultural engagement is a primary driver for tourists in regions with rich historical backgrounds. This finding is particularly relevant in the context of Kashmir, where tourists are drawn to the region’s historical significance and cultural diversity.

Similarly, political curiosity also had a strong impact on satisfaction (β = 0.31, p < 0.001), consistent with Causevic & Lynch’s (2011) argument that tourists are often motivated by a desire to understand the political history of conflict zones. The continued allure of politically sensitive areas like Kashmir suggests that tourists seek more than just scenic beauty—they are interested in engaging with the complex socio-political narratives of such regions. This reflects the global trend of conflict zone tourism, where the historical significance of borders enhances the destination’s appeal (Gelbman & Timothy, 2010).

The results also demonstrated that adventure-seeking motivation significantly influenced satisfaction (β = 0.22, p < 0.01). This is consistent with Weber (2001), who identified adventure as a critical driver for tourists visiting less-explored regions. In the context of border tourism, the rugged terrain and unique geographical features of regions like Kashmir make them appealing to adventure tourists. However, as Williams & Soutar (2005) noted, satisfaction among adventure tourists can fluctuate based on external factors such as infrastructure and perceived safety, which may explain the moderate strength of this relationship compared to cultural motivations.

Finally, personal growth and support for local tourism also had significant positive effects on satisfaction, with β = 0.27 (p < 0.001) and β = 0.30 (p < 0.001), respectively. The role of personal growth, as proposed by Dann (1977), remains a critical psychological driver in border tourism. Tourists may seek opportunities for self-reflection and personal development when visiting remote or politically sensitive areas. Likewise, support for local tourism aligns with Buda’s (2015) findings that tourists are increasingly motivated by a desire to contribute to the local economy in regions affected by conflict. This motivation is particularly strong in Kashmir, where political instability has impacted the livelihood of local communities.

**Satisfaction as a Mediator of Revisit Intentions**

Tourist satisfaction was found to be a strong predictor of revisit intentions (β = 0.58, p < 0.001), confirming its central role in shaping long-term tourist behavior. This is consistent with the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980), which posits that satisfaction is a critical determinant of future behaviours, including the likelihood of recommending and revisiting a destination.

The study also confirmed that tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between motivations and revisit intentions. Specifically, the indirect effects of cultural heritage motivation (β = 0.26, p < 0.001), political curiosity (β = 0.18, p < 0.01), and adventure-seeking motivation (β = 0.13, p < 0.05) on revisit intentions were significant. This suggests that while motivations initially attract tourists to border regions, their overall satisfaction with the experience ultimately determines whether they intend to revisit. This mediating role of satisfaction has been highlighted in previous studies (Battour et al., 2012; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022) which found that satisfied tourists are more likely to exhibit destination loyalty.

The significant mediation of satisfaction indicates that destination management must focus not only on attracting tourists through marketing cultural and adventure experiences but also on ensuring that these experiences meet or exceed expectations. As noted by Maunier & Camelis (2013), infrastructure, hospitality, and security are critical components that can either enhance or diminish satisfaction, particularly in politically sensitive border regions like Kashmir.

**Tourist Motivations and Revisit Intentions**

The direct relationships between tourist motivations and revisit intentions were also significant, though weaker than their effects on satisfaction. Cultural heritage motivation (β = 0.24, p < 0.001) and political curiosity (β = 0.18, p < 0.01) had the strongest direct effects, consistent with the findings of Timothy (2000) that historical and political interest in border regions enhances tourists’ revisit intentions. Adventure-seeking (β = 0.14, p < 0.05) had a smaller but significant effect, suggesting that while adventure tourists may be initially attracted to the thrill of exploring border areas, their likelihood of revisiting may depend on external factors such as safety and infrastructure, as noted by Stone (2006).

The direct effects of personal growth (β = 0.16, p < 0.01) and support for local tourism (β = 0.19, p < 0.01) on revisit intentions also underscore the evolving motivations of modern tourists. As Buda et al. (2014) pointed out, tourists in conflict zones often exhibit altruistic motivations, seeking to support local economies or engage in responsible tourism practices. The positive effects of these motivations on revisit intentions suggest that destinations like Kashmir can foster repeat visitation by promoting community engagement and sustainable tourism.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the relationships between tourist motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions in the context of border tourism, specifically focusing on the politically sensitive region of Kashmir. By employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), it explores the complex interplay of various motivational factors, such as cultural heritage, political curiosity, adventure-seeking, personal growth, and support for local tourism, and how these motivations shape tourist behavior. The findings confirm that cultural heritage exploration and political curiosity are the most significant drivers of tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. Tourists are drawn to border regions not only for their natural beauty but also for the opportunity to engage with rich historical and political narratives, as reflected in the strong effect of these motivations on satisfaction. The importance of adventure-seeking and personal growth motivations further highlights the diversity of tourist profiles in border regions, with some tourists seeking thrill and novelty, while others are motivated by self-exploration and a desire to support local communities.

A critical insight from this study is the pivotal role of tourist satisfaction as a mediator between motivations and revisit intentions. Satisfaction emerges as the key factor in converting initial motivations into long-term loyalty, emphasizing the importance of delivering a high-quality tourist experience that meets or exceeds expectations. The mediation of satisfaction underscores the need for border destinations like Kashmir to focus not only on attracting tourists but also on enhancing infrastructure, ensuring safety, and providing culturally enriching experiences. The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse to practical applications in destination management. For regions like Kashmir, which face unique challenges due to geopolitical tensions, the findings provide actionable insights into how tourism authorities can leverage cultural heritage, adventure, and political significance to enhance tourist satisfaction and foster repeat visits. By addressing infrastructural limitations and improving the overall visitor experience, such destinations can capitalize on their unique appeal while ensuring sustainable tourism development.

**Research Implications**

***Theoretical and Practical Implications***

The study offers both theoretical and practical implications for the field of tourism, particularly in the context of border and conflict tourism. Theoretically, it extends tourist motivation theories like the Push-Pull Theory by showing how motivations in politically sensitive regions such as Kashmir are shaped by a combination of cultural heritage, political curiosity, and personal growth, rather than just leisure and escape. It also reinforces the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory by demonstrating that tourist satisfaction plays a key mediating role in revisit intentions. By exploring the motivations of tourists in conflict zones, this study provides new insights into how these regions differ from traditional tourist destinations, where motivations tend to be more leisure-driven. Additionally, the integration of multiple motivations within a single framework enhances the understanding of tourist behavior, especially in complex regions, and the application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) contributes to methodological rigor.

On the practical side, the study offers valuable recommendations for tourism authorities and policymakers, especially in politically sensitive regions like Kashmir. It highlights the importance of emphasizing cultural heritage and political history in destination marketing to attract tourists motivated by these factors. Destination managers should focus on providing a high-quality tourist experience, improving infrastructure, and ensuring safety, as these elements are critical to enhancing tourist satisfaction and encouraging repeat visits. Furthermore, promoting sustainable tourism practices and community-based tourism initiatives can contribute to local economic development while fostering a more positive, immersive experience for tourists. Ultimately, this study underscores the need for a balanced approach that combines effective marketing, infrastructure improvements, and community engagement to promote sustainable tourism in politically sensitive regions, turning challenges into opportunities for cultural exchange and economic growth.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study offers valuable insights into tourist behavior in border regions, particularly in Kashmir, but it also has several limitations. The use of convenience sampling, due to the geographic and political constraints of the region, may limit the generalizability of the findings. A broader, more representative sample across different border regions with varying conflict levels would improve the applicability of the study. Additionally, the reliance on quantitative methods, while helpful in understanding motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions, could be enriched by qualitative approaches like interviews or focus groups, providing deeper insights into tourists' personal experiences, especially in politically sensitive areas.

The study's cross-sectional design also limits the ability to track changes in tourist behavior over time, particularly as political dynamics in border regions evolve. Longitudinal studies could provide a clearer picture of how geopolitical factors influence tourist loyalty and behavior. Moreover, the focus on a narrow set of variables (motivations, satisfaction, and revisit intentions) could be expanded to include other factors like destination image, perceived risk, or the role of media portrayal in shaping tourists' perceptions of conflict zones. Finally, while the study is centred on Kashmir, future research could explore other border regions with different political contexts, offering a broader, global perspective on tourism in politically sensitive areas.

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