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Sustainable Tourism Development by Design: Leveraging Perceived Environmental Value, Social Media, and Destination Policies in Pakistan

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Abstract

Due to growing concerns over climate change, resource depletion, environmental pollution, and the need for tourism destinations, sustainable tourism development has become an important source of balancing economic growth with ecological and cultural preservation. Sustainable tourism development integrates environmental protection, social equity, and economic viability to ensure tourism remains a long-term driver of well-being rather than a source of degradation. Research on antecedents of sustainable tourism development has mainly been in developed countries. The purpose of this study is to empirically test the effect of perceived environmental value, social media, and sustainable tourism policy and destination on sustainable tourism development in Pakistan. Surveys were distributed among tourists, host communities, local administration, government officials, hotel owners and workers, tour operators, and tourism experts. This quantitative study analyzed data of 486 respondents. Results show that perceived environmental value, social media, and sustainable tourism policy and destination significantly and positively impacted sustainable tourism development. The study reports critical managerial implications that could make tourism management effective in the long run.

**VOL-2, ISSUE-6, 2024****INTRODUCTION**

Sustainable tourism development is a process of planning, managing, and operating tourism activities in such a way that not only the demands of present tourists and local communities are taken care of but the concern for future generations is also considered (Achmad & Yulianah, 2022; Dwyer, 2023; Elshaer et al., 2021; Firman et al., 2023; Mathew, 2022; Obradović et al., 2021; Park et al., 2022). Tourism activities should be planned in such a way that future generations' needs are not compromised. It is embedded in balancing economic growth, socio-cultural integrity, and environmental preservation. Tourism can be better managed if stakeholders such as tourists, host communities, industry, government, and the environment are listened and their needs and demands are fulfilled by keeping a balance between current and future concerns. The first dimension of sustainable tourism development is to protect the natural environment, preserve ecological balance, devise effective waste management strategies, protect biodiversity, and minimize carbon footprints (Gautam, 2023; Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2021). The environment is to be protected and tourism industry should plan effective environmental management systems. If the environment is polluted due to tourists' activities, the natural environment for which tourists visit the destinations would not remain suitable for travelling. Socio-cultural preservation is the second dimension of sustainable tourism development. This implies that cultural values, norms, and beliefs of host communities should be protected so that they do not lose their social and cultural fabric in society.

Tourists visit local communities to observe their culture and traditions. If the local culture is not maintained and respected, tourism would not remain sustainable (Gautam, 2023; Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2021). Another principle of sustainable tourism development is economic viability. Tourism should directly benefit the local hosts and if the income is not generated in host communities, tourism does not remain sustainable. Another core principle of sustainable tourism development is stakeholders' participation in decision making. If tourism is to work effectively, all stakeholders should be taken into confidence (Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021). When tourists, government, host communities, industry, and businesses come together and participate in decision making, the sense of ownership enhances and all stakeholders strive together to sustain tourism. The last principle of sustainable tourism development is long term planning. Tourism should be seen as a source of long term development. To provide tourists with unique experience, the planning should involve in simultaneously working on economic, environmental, cultural, and social aspects.

There are challenges associated with sustainable tourism development. Research shows that emphasis on short term planning, over-tourism, cultural modification, weak governance, lack of financial resources, inability to set metrics for sustainability, profits not being shifted to host communities, lack of will of government, poor infrastructure, ineffective policy implementation, resistance from local communities, and lack of support from hotel owners are some of the critical challenges in implementing sustainable tourism development (Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012; Banga et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Haribudiman, Berliandaldo, & Fasa, 2023; Grilli et al., 2021; Jeelani et al., 2023; Liu, Z. (2003; Tien et al., 2021; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2017; Tosun, 2001). There are opportunities in

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sustainable tourism development especially for developing countries. Community participation, green tourism, capacity building sessions, and education are some of the opportunities that can be exploited to plan for sustainable tourism development (Dewi et al., 2023; Haribudiman, Berliandaldo, & Fasa, 2023; Grilli et al., 2021; Jeelani et al., 2023). This research proposes that perceived environmental value, social media, and sustainable tourism policy influence sustainable tourism development.

There are three objectives of this study. First, the effect of perceived environmental value on sustainable tourism development is investigated. Second, the study suggests that social media plays an important role in shaping sustainable tourism development framework. Third, the study examines the effect of sustainable tourism policy on sustainable tourism development.

This study intends to fill three gaps in the current literature. The first gap is the research context. Sustainable tourism development in Pakistani context has not been studied before. The government is working on increasing revenues through promotion of tourism activities but the emphasis has mainly been on building infrastructures and facilitating tourist inflows. The long term planning of tourism is missing and that is why it is important to investigate antecedents of sustainable tourism development in Pakistan's context. The second gap that this study intends to fill is related to use of social media in shaping sustainable tourism development framework. Although current literature has identified a number of determinants of sustainable tourism development, the focus on social media is minimally investigated. This study would fill the gap by proposing that social media in today's world can help to a great deal to bring together various stakeholders of tourism sector and chart out effective sustainable tourism development framework. Third, sustainable tourism development literature has mainly focused on qualitative studies and there are fewer quantitative studies in this regard. This study is a quantitative research that would add to the sustainable tourism development literature. Theoretical framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Among antecedents identified for sustainable tourism development, infrastructure (investments in transport, accommodation, and tourism-specific facilities boost sustainable tourism) is the most studied determinant (Altinay & Hussain, 2005; Gössling, 2000; Kapera, 2018; Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010). Developing countries benefit more from tourism-focused infrastructure than general infrastructure. Governance, Policy & Institutional Support (effective policies, regulations, incentives, and global standards encourage sustainability; includes government–community collaboration), and Community Participation & Empowerment (Community-based tourism fosters local ownership, cultural preservation, and socio-economic benefits; locals align tourism with community values) are some of the antecedents identified in previous studies (Gössling, 2000; Kapera, 2018; Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005). Environmental Conservation & Cultural Resource Preservation (Protecting ecosystems, heritage, and cultural identity ensures tourism), Technology & Digital Innovation (Use of information technology, big data, artificial intelligence, and smart planning improves resource management, visitor flow, and community well-being while meeting SDGs), Destination Management & Marketing (Strategic branding, eco-labeling, and cooperation among stakeholders attract responsible tourists and ensure long-term



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viability), and Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Conditions (it provides capital, technology, and expertise; favorable economic indicators support reinvestment in tourism; sustainable management avoids overuse) are the determinants of sustainable tourism development (Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010).

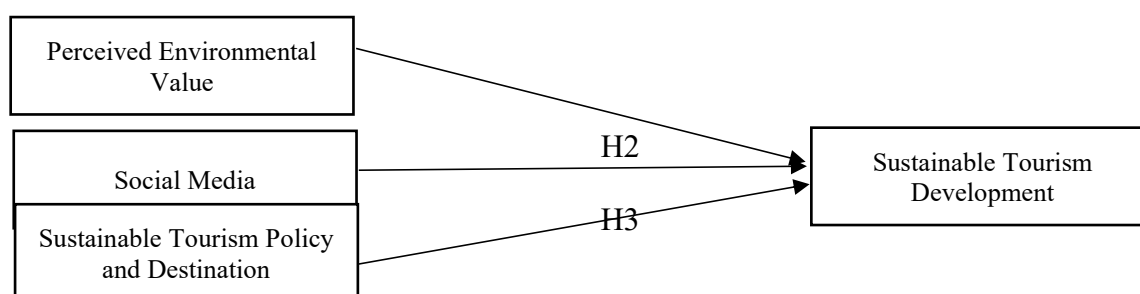


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Sustainable tourism development deliver a number of advantages. Some of the most studied outcomes of sustainable tourism development are economic growth and employment opportunities (generating stable income and jobs for local communities and increased employment in eco-lodges and tour services) and environmental protection (conserves natural resources and biodiversity). Sustainable tourism development helps in preserving cultural values and maintaining local traditions, festivals, heritage sites, and cultural identity (Achmad & Yulianah, 2022; Dwyer, 2023; Elshaer et al., 2021; Firman et al., 2023; Mathew, 2022; Obradović et al., 2021; Park et al., 2022). Community empowerment and increase in local participation to make decisions related to tourism and improved infrastructure in form of development of sustainable transport, and public facilities are among some of the advantages of sustainable tourism development.

Perceived environmental value boosts tourist satisfaction and loyalty, stabilizing revenues for sustainable tourism development. When visitors perceive high environmental value (e.g., healthy ecosystems, visible conservation), their satisfaction and loyalty rise, which strengthens repeat visitation and word-of-mouth—key to the financial viability of sustainable operations. Obradović et al. (2021) found that visitors showed environmental value (a sub-dimension of perceived value) significantly uplifted satisfaction and downstream pro-environmental commitment and loyalty. The environment is to be protected and tourism industry should plan effective environmental management systems. If the environment is polluted due to tourists' activities, the natural environment for which tourists visit the destinations would not remain suitable for travelling. Socio-cultural preservation is the second dimension of sustainable tourism development (Kapera, 2018; Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005). This implies that cultural values, norms, and beliefs of host communities should be protected so that they do not lose their social and cultural fabric in society.

Tourists visit local communities to observe their culture and traditions. Perceived environmental value fosters environmentally responsible behavior, lowering destination impacts (Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021). Higher perceived value of the natural environment is linked to stronger environmentally responsible behavior (e.g., waste reduction,

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compliance with rules), which preserves carrying capacity and supports long-term destination quality. Recent work in desert tourism found perceived value (via awe/place attachment) drives environmentally responsible behavior; broader evidence also ties environmental perceptions to environmentally responsible behavior in coastal and nature contexts (Gautam, 2023; Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021). If the local culture is not maintained and respected, tourism would not remain sustainable (León-Gómez et al., 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2021).

Another principle of sustainable tourism development is economic viability. Tourism should directly benefit the local hosts and if the income is not generated in host communities, tourism does not remain sustainable. Another core principle of sustainable tourism development is stakeholders' participation in decision making. If tourism is to work effectively, all stakeholders should be taken into confidence (Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021). When tourists, government, host communities, industry, and businesses come together and participate in decision making, the sense of ownership enhances and all stakeholders strive together to sustain tourism. The last principle of sustainable tourism development is long term planning. Tourism should be seen as a source of long term development.

Perceived environmental value enhances 'green image' and trust, which increases revisit intentions consistent with sustainable tourism development (Kapera, 2018; Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010). When tourists recognize and value environmental stewardship, destinations and firms earn a greener image and trust—predictors of revisit and recommendation intentions that reward sustainable practices over extractive ones. Residents' environmental value perceptions increase support for sustainable tourism development policies and participation (Font et al., 2023). Community backing is essential for zoning, visitor management, and conservation finance. Studies in nature-based destinations show that when residents value environmental quality, they're more supportive of sustainable development and more likely to engage in conservation behaviors that reinforce sustainable tourism development. Perceived environmental value strengthens the market for green products and services, aligning firm incentives with sustainable tourism development (Achmad & Yulianah, 2022; Dwyer, 2023; Elshaer et al., 2021; Firman et al., 2023). In hospitality and tours, perceived environmental corporate social responsibility raises green perceived value and pro-green attitudes, nudging demand toward eco-certified offerings and rewarding low-impact operations. This market signal helps mainstream sustainability investments.

Perceived environmental value reduces risk perceptions (safety/quality) and improves destination choice sets toward well-managed sites (Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010). Tourists who see high environmental value (cleanliness, biodiversity protection, visible management) infer safer, higher-quality experiences and choose such destinations more often—channeling flows to places managing resources sustainably. Evidence links perceived value/image to responsible behavior and selection in coastal and event tourism contexts. System-level studies tie environmentally sound development to sustainability metrics, consistent with perceived environmental value-driven preferences. At regional scales, work on major river basins and destination systems shows that tourism tied to environmental stewardship better maintains environmental performance—compatible with the

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demand-side pressure created by high perceived environmental value. Based on these arguments, the study proposes:

H1: Perceived environmental value positively impacts sustainable tourism development.

In recent years, global tourism has witnessed substantial growth, fueled by diverse opportunities for entertainment, investment, and leisure offered by destinations worldwide. A key driver of this surge has been the transformative role of social media, which has redefined how travelers discover, evaluate, and choose their destinations. Visual content, reviews, and shared experiences across digital platforms have become powerful tools for inspiring travel, shaping perceptions, and fostering trust among potential visitors. Many countries have recognized the strategic value of social media as more than a showcase for scenic attractions (Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012; Banga et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Haribudiman, Berliandaldo, & Fasa, 2023; Grilli et al., 2021; Jeelani et al., 2023; Liu, Z. (2003; Tien et al., 2021; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2017). It has evolved into an influential platform for promoting tourism-related investment, creating engagement programs, and enhancing overall visitor experiences. The persuasive nature of curated images, authentic testimonials, and targeted promotions has altered traveler expectations, placing greater emphasis on safety, feasibility, and value for money. This shift has not only attracted new visitors but also encouraged repeat travel through sustained digital engagement.

Pakistan serves as a prime example of a destination that has effectively harnessed social media to strengthen its global presence. By highlighting its natural beauty, cultural richness, and affordability, the country has positioned itself as both an attractive and accessible travel option. Digital campaigns showcasing immersive experiences and budget-friendly packages have resonated with international audiences, significantly boosting tourism revenue. The integration of social media into tourism marketing has also transformed decision-making processes. Potential travelers now rely heavily on real-time visuals, peer recommendations, and interactive content to plan their trips. This transformation has contributed to sustainable tourism growth by increasing economic returns, enhancing destination visibility, and promoting experiences that align with environmental and cultural preservation. Ultimately, social media has emerged as a critical enabler of tourism development, influencing both the quantity and quality of visitor engagement while reinforcing the long-term sustainability of destinations. Therefore, the study hypothesizes:

H2: Social media has a significantly positive effect on sustainable tourism development.

The concept of destination management emerged in tourism discourse during the 1980s and evolved significantly by the late 1990s. It involves the coordinated integration of all elements that make up a destination within a defined geographic area, guided by strategic tourism planning. Destination management is widely regarded as a cornerstone of destination competitiveness, yet traditional measures of competitiveness—such as market share and tourist arrivals—often overlook the importance of sustainability (Font et al., 2023; Krce Miočić, Razović, & Klarin, 2016; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019; Yrza & Filimonau, 2022). A truly competitive destination goes beyond attracting visitors and generating economic returns; it ensures that environmental integrity and social values are preserved alongside economic growth. Such destinations tend to offer richer, more meaningful tourism experiences while fostering the well-being of local communities. In this sense, sustainable tourism

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policy and destination management focus on achieving a balance between maximizing economic benefits and maintaining the attractiveness, cultural authenticity, and environmental health of the destination. Sustainable tourism calls for thoughtful planning, effective governance, and the active participation of local communities (Font et al., 2023; Krce Miočić, Razovič, & Klarin, 2016; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019). Demand must be managed in ways that protect resources while ensuring long-term competitiveness.

Community involvement not only enhances tourism's benefits but also strengthens social cohesion and preserves cultural and natural heritage. In destinations that depend heavily on tourism, adopting sustainable practices can improve environmental quality, empower local communities, stimulate economic growth, and enhance quality of life (Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019; Yrza & Filimonau, 2022). Ultimately, sustainable tourism development is not an endpoint but an ongoing process—one that relies on well-crafted policies, strategic management, and cooperation between all stakeholders to balance economic prosperity with social and environmental responsibility. Therefore, the study hypothesizes:

H3: Sustainable tourism policy and destination would influence sustainable tourism development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This is a quantitative study and data were collected through surveys. In order to better understand the concept of sustainable tourism development, it is important to include all key stakeholders. The stakeholders that the study identified in implementing sustainable tourism development are tourists, host communities, local administration, government officials, hotel owners and workers, tour operators, and tourism experts. To collect data from tourists and local villagers, the researcher selected Naran and Swat valleys in Pakistan. A total of 128 tourists filled surveys. 79 of these tourists were staying in Swat valleys and 49 were visiting Naran. Tourists were given surveys only after they showed their willingness to participate in the study. Tourists were selected on purpose such that those who frequently travel to different areas were in better position to give their opinions about sustainable tourism development. Next, the researcher selected local villagers and households for data collection purpose. A total of 113 local households were selected conveniently from Swat and Naran. These include community leaders, local villagers, female households, and general shopkeepers in these areas. Then, data were also collected from local administration, government officials, hotel owners and workers, tour operators, and tourism experts. A total of 245 surveys were collected (local administration (61), government officials (35), hotel owners (19) and workers (81), tour operators (28), and tourism experts (21)). Local administration included employees from tourism development authority and local representatives. Government officials included officers from the ministry of tourism and tourism development corporation. So in total, 486 respondents filled surveys. Among these respondents, 39% were females, and average age was 39.2 years.

The constructs of this study were quantified on the basis of previous scales. To measure sustainable tourism development, six items scale developed by Eslami et al. (2019). Sustainable tourism policy and destination was measured with the help of seventeen items developed by Goffi and Cucculelli (2019). A four item scale developed by Chang et al. (2022) was modified and used to measure social media. A



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fourteen item scale developed by Mayer & Frantz (2004) was used to measure perceived environmental value. All items were measured on a five point Likert scale.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted using AMOS 20 and SPSS 20. Initially, the measurement model was assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the distinctiveness of the study constructs. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations, are reported in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.78 (social media) to 0.89 (perceived environmental value), exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, thus confirming the internal consistency of the measures. Correlation analysis revealed that perceived environmental value was positively associated with sustainable tourism development ($r = .39, p < .001$). Social media was also positively related to sustainable tourism development ($r = .31, p < .01$), and sustainable tourism policy and destination showed a positive relationship with sustainable tourism development ($r = .25, p < .05$).

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, RELIABILITIES, AND CORRELATIONS

Variables	Mean (SD)	α	1	2	3	4
1 Perceived Environmental Value	3.68(.33)	.89	1			
2 Social Media	4.13(.41)	.78	.17	1		
3 Sustainable Tourism Policy and Destination	3.75(.32)	.83	.21	.14	1	
4 Sustainable Tourism Development	3.92(.38)	.84	.39***	.31**	.25*	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

To validate four key constructs (perceived environmental value, social media, sustainable tourism policy and destination, and sustainable tourism development), the research model was estimated with a confirmatory factor analysis. Table 2 shows reliabilities, composite reliabilities, standard factor loadings, and average variance extract. The test result of adaptability for four-factor model were $\chi^2 = 892.18$, $df = 419$, $\chi^2/df = 2.12$, RMSEA = 0.065, GFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.97, and CFI = 0.97.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Items	Standardized factor loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extract
Perceived Environmental Value (PEV)		0.862	0.615
PEV1	0.739		
PEV2	0.728		
PEV3	0.817		
PEV4	0.772		
PEV5	0.784		
PEV6	0.914		
PEV7	0.846		
PEV8	0.883		
PEV9	0.782		
PEV10	0.705		

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PEV11	0.785		
PEV12	0.777		
PEV13	0.869		
PEV14	0.812		
Social Media (SM)		0.871	0.629
SM1	0.784		
SM2	0.727		
SM3	0.738		
SM4	0.883		
Sustainable Tourism Policy and Destination (STPD)		0.853	0.595
STPD1	0.815		
STPD2	0.737		
STPD 3	0.626		
STPD4	0.784		
STPD5	0.888		
STPD6	0.876		
STPD7	0.729		
STPD8	0.794		
STPD9	0.852		
STPD10	0.693		
STPD11	0.765		
STPD12	0.726		
STPD13	0.782		
STPD14	0.794		
STPD15	0.818		
STPD16	0.823		
STPD17	0.864		
Sustainable Development (STD)		0.882	0.627
Tourism			
STD1	0.814		
STD2	0.821		
STD3	0.919		
STD4	0.727		
STD5	0.742		
STD6	0.785		

Table 3 presents the results of the standardized regression weight and t-values which indicates the coefficient of effect between variables. According to the results from the regression paths of the hypothesis development, perceived environmental value is positively affecting sustainable tourism development ($t = 6.291$, $b = 0.373$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1; social media has a positive effect on sustainable tourism development ($t = 4.936$, $b = 0.317$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2; and sustainable tourism policy and destination is positively influencing sustainable tourism development ($t = 8.388$, $b = 0.479$, $p < 0.005$), supporting H3.

**VOL-2, ISSUE-6, 2024****TABLE 3: STRUCTURAL ESTIMATES**

Hypothesis	Standard estimate	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: perceived environmental value → sustainable tourism development	0.373	6.291	<0.001	Supported
H2: social media → sustainable tourism development	0.317	4.936	<0.001	Supported
H3: sustainable tourism policy and destination → sustainable tourism development	0.479	8.388	<0.005	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study investigates the effect of perceived environmental value, social media, and sustainable tourism policy and destination on sustainable tourism development in Pakistan. The study confirms that when environmental value is perceived to be pro-environmental, tourism development becomes sustainable. When visitors perceive high environmental value (e.g., healthy ecosystems, visible conservation), their satisfaction and loyalty rise, which strengthens repeat visitation and word-of-mouth—key to the financial viability of sustainable operations. Obradović et al. (2021) found that visitors showed environmental value (a sub-dimension of perceived value) significantly uplifted satisfaction and downstream pro-environmental commitment and loyalty. The environment is to be protected and tourism industry should plan effective environmental management systems. If the environment is polluted due to tourists' activities, the natural environment for which tourists visit the destinations would not remain suitable for travelling. Socio-cultural preservation is the second dimension of sustainable tourism development (Kapera, 2018; Lee, 2013; Lordkipanidze, Brezet, & Backman, 2005). This implies that cultural values, norms, and beliefs of host communities should be protected so that they do not lose their social and cultural fabric in society. Tourists visit local communities to observe their culture and traditions. Perceived environmental value fosters environmentally responsible behavior, lowering destination impacts (Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021). Higher perceived value of the natural environment is linked to stronger environmentally responsible behavior (e.g., waste reduction, compliance with rules), which preserves carrying capacity and supports long-term destination quality. Recent work in desert tourism found perceived value (via awe/place attachment) drives environmentally responsible behavior; broader evidence also ties environmental perceptions to environmentally responsible behavior in coastal and nature contexts (Gautam, 2023; Go & Kang, 2023; Han et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2021).

This study also confirms that use of social media is an important determinant of sustainable tourism development. When social media is actively used by stakeholders, tourism development becomes sustainable. Visual content, reviews, and shared experiences across digital platforms have become powerful tools for inspiring travel, shaping perceptions, and fostering trust among potential visitors. Many countries have recognized the strategic value of social media as more than a showcase for scenic attractions (Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012; Banga et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Haribudiman, Berliandaldo, & Fasa, 2023; Grilli et al., 2021; Jeelani et al., 2023; Liu, Z. (2003; Tien et al., 2021; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen, 2017). It has evolved into an influential platform for promoting tourism-related

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investment, creating engagement programs, and enhancing overall visitor experiences. The persuasive nature of curated images, authentic testimonials, and targeted promotions has altered traveler expectations, placing greater emphasis on safety, feasibility, and value for money. This shift has not only attracted new visitors but also encouraged repeat travel through sustained digital engagement.

The study found that tourism policy and destination management serve as critical antecedent of sustainable tourism development. Destination management is widely regarded as a cornerstone of destination competitiveness, yet traditional measures of competitiveness—such as market share and tourist arrivals—often overlook the importance of sustainability (Font et al., 2023; Krce Miočić, Razović, & Klarin, 2016; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019; Yrza & Filimonau, 2022). A truly competitive destination goes beyond attracting visitors and generating economic returns; it ensures that environmental integrity and social values are preserved alongside economic growth. Such destinations tend to offer richer, more meaningful tourism experiences while fostering the well-being of local communities. In this sense, sustainable tourism policy and destination management focus on achieving a balance between maximizing economic benefits and maintaining the attractiveness, cultural authenticity, and environmental health of the destination. Sustainable tourism calls for thoughtful planning, effective governance, and the active participation of local communities (Font et al., 2023; Krce Miočić, Razović, & Klarin, 2016; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019). Demand must be managed in ways that protect resources while ensuring long-term competitiveness. Community involvement not only enhances tourism's benefits but also strengthens social cohesion and preserves cultural and natural heritage. In destinations that depend heavily on tourism, adopting sustainable practices can improve environmental quality, empower local communities, stimulate economic growth, and enhance quality of life (Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019; Yrza & Filimonau, 2022).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Sustainable tourism development is an important and timely aspect of tourism management. This study recommends that use of social media by tourists, hosts, hotels, government agencies, and tour managers can create a difference by planning long term tourism development. Destination management is also critical and without effective sustainable tourism policies, the development of tourism in the long run would not be possible. The policy should be made by mutual collaboration and taking perspective of all key stakeholders. Host communities should be involved in decision making process so that they become direct stakeholder of tourism industry. Local hosts know about new destinations and they should be given due preference in planning for destination management. If policies are made with focus on future, the effect would be enormous. It is important for the policy makers to develop sustainable tourism so that problems related to environment and over-crowding can be resolved timely.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study collected data from Pakistan which restricts the generalizability of the research model. Future research should investigate these proposed relationships in other developing countries' context. Data was collected from only two areas of Pakistan. Future research should include data from multiple destination points so that deeper understanding can be achieved. Sustainable tourism development is a complex phenomenon since it involves a number of stakeholders. The quantitative nature of

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this study is another limitation because deeper understanding of underlying mechanisms could not be investigated in this study. Future studies should collect data from interviews and observations. Another way to collect data might be to compare sustainable tourism development frameworks of other Islamic and developing countries and make an integrated framework on the basis of these studies.

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