

## Article

# The Influence of Destination Image on Tourist Loyalty and Intention to Visit: Testing a Multiple Mediation Approach

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**Abstract:** Pakistan holds an important geographical status, but extremism and sabotage have severely damaged the tourism industry. In the present study, we examined the impact of destination image (DI) on tourist loyalty (TL) and intention to visit (IV) in Pakistan. Additionally, the study analyzed the mediation effects of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and tourist satisfaction (TS) on these relationships. Data was collected from 780 tourists in Pakistan. We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) to obtain the results. Our results demonstrated the positive relationships among DI, eWOM, TS, TL, and IV. This study also disclosed that eWOM has a partial mediation effect on the DI-TL relationship, and both eWOM and TS fully mediate the association between DI and IV. Hence, tourist satisfaction can be enhanced by eWOM and destination image, which directly effect tourist loyalty and intention to visit in Pakistan. The proposed framework and research findings will help stakeholders significantly to recognize the multi-facet association in the tourism industry of Pakistan. Testing the above relationships through multiple mediators is a relatively novel idea.

**Keywords:** destination image; electronic word of mouth; tourists' satisfaction; tourists' loyalty; intention to visit; SEM; developing nation; Pakistan

## 1. Introduction

Tourism has further expanded and has become a more powerful industry in the world, which highly influences the economy of a country. Also, it is associated with several other sectors, such as advertising, endorsements, product placements, sponsorships, and commercial organizations [1,2]. The tourism industry has created an actual change for millions of people's lives by driving development or growth, generating massive revenue, creating various jobs, and reducing poverty among nations across the regional and international borders [3]. The innovations and changes in technological fields, demographic transitions, and socio-economic growth are dominating factors that create more participation among different tourist destinations, which have been increased optimistically during the current period [4].

Therefore, the tourism sector has become a strong channel for development, which could result in high multiple effects and encourage the development of other sectors in the economy [5]. Moreover, tourism tremendously improves regional infrastructure. Jayawardena [6] described that the tourism

future relies greatly on the capability of a state by offering highly competent tourism products to satisfy continuously varying preferences, expectations, and the growing requirements of worldwide tourists. In the tourism sector, an important thing is to ensure that tourists revisit specific places in the future, which depends on the first visit experience and attractions [7]. The significance of the tourism sector is tourist satisfaction, which has an impact on travelers' loyalty, contains tourists' word of mouth (WOM) suggestions, and the revisit intentions of places [8]. Previous studies have illustrated that tourist satisfaction is the most imperative indicator of visitor loyalty for any attraction [2,9,10].

Moreover, tourists who experience satisfactory traveling services and destination attributes can be a source of motivation for their families and friends through their persuasive WOM, and they would have more intentions to visit the same destinations again [11,12]. WOM is regarded as a functional means of information that assists the public to assess the service quality, by either attracting or detracting their intentions to use them [13]. The advanced level of WOM is an electronic WOM (eWOM) that is currently being spread by different platforms, and it is even more helpful to assess tourism services [14]. A common belief is that a better quality of services can result in a higher level of customers' perception, which subsequently leads to a higher level of tourist loyalty [15]. Moliner et al. [16] found a relationship in their study between pleasant environment and tourist satisfaction with sustainable destinations.

Pakistan holds an important geographical status in the region, with a profound blend of landscapes with fertile lands to deserts, hills, mountains, forests, and plateaus that spread from the mountains of Karakorum Range to the coastal zones of the Arabian Sea. The population of Pakistan consists of Muslims and several other minorities, such as Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Paresis, that enjoy equal rights and opportunities that are irrespective of their ideological, religious, and political identities [17]. As per the studies of Moliner, Monferrer, Estrada, and Rodríguez [16] and Manzoor et al. [18], tourism is a source of economic growth and a sustainable indicator for protecting the natural atmosphere, as well as country development, the infrastructure of national or local level. The multicultural temperament of the state also facilitates the tourism industry and offers opportunities to explore and enjoy several festivals, varying customs, and traditions at the same place.

After 9/11, the whole globe faced severe security concerns and terrorism issues. Extremism and sabotage severely damaged the tourist economy. Pakistan is one of them, which was affected by terrorism and incurred severe losses, but now Pakistan is struggling to promote the tourism industry by using all channels, which include print media, electronic media, and social media. Therefore, a huge gap exists regarding tourist satisfaction, and this study was conducted to attempt to measure tourist satisfaction with several variables.

Mostly tourist satisfaction researches have focused on European tourism or cultures, and very few studies exist regarding tourism in Pakistan. Most of these studies clarified the backgrounds and significance of tourism destination image from a single perception, but no inclusive factors effecting tourist satisfaction have been developed yet, while the interrelationships among these factors, as well as their indirect and direct impacts on tourist satisfaction, have not yet been fully inspected. So, in this study, we demonstrated integrated eWOM and destination image for simultaneously exploring the influence on tourist satisfaction, and then the consequences of these on tourist loyalty and intention to visit for the sustainable economy as well as national or local development. We also focused on tourist behavioral intention and their loyalty, due to their essential role for destination image, eWOM, and tourist satisfaction (recommendation), because tourist satisfaction helps with the prediction of whether a tourist will be a loyal or regular visitor and provide more benefit for the destination image [19]. Destination image, eWOM, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty are essential predictors of intention to visit. Also, Yoon and Uysal [20] defined satisfaction as a direct antecedent of the tourists' attraction [21].

## 2. Theory and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Destination Image (DI)

Destination image is defined as an individual's mental representation of knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and overall perception of a particular destination [22]. Destination image plays two important roles in behaviors: To influence the destination choice decision-making process and to condition the after-decision-making behaviors, including participation (on-site experience), evaluation (satisfaction), and future behavioral intentions (intention to revisit) [23]. Destination image is generally interpreted as a compilation of beliefs and impressions based on information processing from various sources over time that results in a mental representation of the attributes and benefits sought of a destination [24].

According to Tasci and Gartner [25], the destination image is a system of interaction that is linked to opinion and belief, and even intentions with respect to a destiny. As brought into evidence by numerous studies, destination image has been a core aspect of tourism study from the last decade, even though theoretical elements were offered by other approaches over time [26]. Hunt [27] indicated the importance of destination image as a tool to enhance the number of tourists to a spot, and noted that this factor is very important because it influenced the selection of a destination, eWOM, tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, intention to visit, and individual tourist decisions [27].

### 2.2. Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Scholars have found that eWOM is also an effective mode of the promotion of goods and services [28]. Chevalier and Mayzlin [29] revealed that eWOM is an essential means whereby people can gain information regarding their own interests, such as service quality, brand products, traveling experiences, and food. A number of travel organizations use eWOM to facilitate people, as well as provide enough information about whole packages, destinations, and sites [30]. It is discussed in tourism services literature that eWOM has an encouraging impact on visiting attractions and satisfaction. Also, eWOM covers the cost of advertisement/promotion to attract people by providing services in a better way [31–33].

### 2.3. Tourist Satisfaction (TS)

In the tourism sector, visitors' satisfaction is an essential aspect of the customer services sector [34]. Customers' satisfaction plays a key role as a marketing tool to attract public interest, and for the construction of strategies for local developments and services to be transported to the tourism market [35]. Furthermore, satisfaction is vital to successful destination marketing, as well as a service organization [36]. Agyeiwaah et al. [37] and Chen and Chen [38] defined that the feelings of displeasure regarding travelers is a sign of dissatisfaction, while travelers who enjoy visiting are satisfied; therefore, tourist contentment is a considerable factor for tourists in making up their minds to visit the tourist spots again and again. Several scholars have indicated that services are linked with satisfaction, because services directly impact people [39,40].

### 2.4. Tourist's Loyalty (TL)

Oliver [41] defined that tourists' loyalty is "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior." Tourists' loyalty also considers a vital feature for destination marketers, because it is connected to a lot of desire with less cost, which includes keeping existing visitors rather than catching new visitors [42]. However, repeat tourists reduce the cost of marketing compared to attracting first-time visitors [43].

## 2.5. Intention to Visit (IV)

Previous research has generally indicated that tourists' satisfaction is significantly associated with behavioral intentions [10,44]. Tourists' satisfaction plays a role as the primary precursor of post-purchase behavioral intentions, because it positively develops the insight of tourists' towards the service, brand, or product. It might also heighten the conscious attempt of tourists to come back again in the future [45]. The previous studies have shown that boosting the traveler's satisfaction level is necessary to enhance the revisit and recommendation intentions, in addition to being an aspect of tourist loyalty [46,47]. Reichheld and Sasser [48] argued, "Companies can boost profits by almost 100 percent by retaining just 5 percent more of their customers." Several scholars have indicated that destination image, eWOM, tourist satisfaction, and intention to visit are strongly connected with each other, and they additionally stated that for the flourishing of tourism, tourist visits should be enhanced or attracted through positive destination image, eWOM, and tourist satisfaction [49,50].

## 2.6. Relationship Between Destination Image, Electronic Word of Mouth, Tourist Satisfaction, Tourist Loyalty, and Intention to Visit

Destination image is considered as the most essential antecedent of travels' post-purchase and decisions with tourists' behavior [25]. The destination image is also connected to several components, such as eWOM, tourist loyalty, intention to visit, and tourist satisfaction, which impact services for tourists [50]. The eWOM is linked to a person's knowledge or beliefs regarding the attributes or characteristics of the destination image [51]. Currently, mostly travelers describe their experience through eWOM about destination image, which impacts positively and ultimately leads to enhanced TS [52].

### **Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *The destination image is significantly associated with electronic word of mouth.*

Prior research has suggested that a favorable destination image produces higher tourist satisfaction. Chiu, Zeng, and Cheng [9] defined that "overall tourism destination image has an indirect impact on behavioral intentions through satisfaction" [53,54]. Lee, Lee, and Lee [23] argued that travelers who have a satisfactory destination image in their minds will probably have a positive insight into their on-spot experience, which results in tourists' satisfaction. On the basis of these premises, this research proposes that destination image is a precursor of inclusive spot satisfaction, which is illustrated with the next hypothesis.

### **Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *The destination image is positively associated with tourist satisfaction.*

Nowadays, researchers consider a major connection among destination image, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty, and tourist loyalty has become an essential part of sustainable tourism [41]. Several scholars have attempted to determine whether loyalty response is associated with the elements of destination image and tourist satisfaction [9,37,55]. Oliver [41] asserts that satisfaction with the destination image is a required phase in loyalty creation. In the scenario of the research, tourists' satisfaction with destination image positively influences tourists' loyalty [56]. Consequently, tourists' satisfaction and destination image impact tourists' loyalty in several sectors, such as services [57]. As a result, we propose the following hypothesis.

### **Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *The destination image is positively connected with tourist loyalty.*

The destination image could be measured from the intention to visit perspectives [22]. Empirical studies have defined that the affective aspect of destination image plays a higher impact on the intention to visit with satisfaction [58]. In regard to the destination image, destination image has a positive impact on the intention to visit [59]. Intention to visit is also compulsory for improving tourism. Therefore, several researchers have revealed that destination image and intention to visit are

both connected to each other [60,61]. The key focus of a service-providing organization is that tourists should be satisfied, and they will visit again and again with family or friends [60].

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *The destination image is positively associated with intention to visit.*

#### 2.7. The Relationship Between Electronic Word of Mouth, Tourist Loyalty, and Tourist Satisfaction

The Cambridge Dictionary defines word of mouth as “given or done by people talking about something or telling people about something.” The linkage of word of mouth with the service industry is the oldest, because most things can be promoted by people in the past [62]. Scholars consider it as the most effective mode of promotion about goods and services [28]. As previously mentioned, through the invention of media, word of mouth is converted into different ways, such as electronic media and print media, but also as much more [50]. It is discussed in the literature of tourism services that WOM has a positive impact on tourists’ satisfaction, and WOM covers the cost of promotion to attract people by providing services in a better way [63]. The modern era is considered as a global village, and information is acquired with a single click. Also, people are connecting through many different forms of modern social media or electronic media [28].

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Electronic word of mouth is significantly associated with tourist satisfaction.*

Chevalier and Mayzlin [29] revealed that eWOM is an essential means where people can gain or share information regarding their own interests, which includes service quality, brand products, traveling experiences, and food. After all, satisfaction or good reviews from tourists regarding services and site places create loyalty among travelers. A number of travel organizations use eWOM to facilitate people, as well as provide enough information about whole packages, destinations, and sites [64]. Previous research has revealed that eWOM and tourist loyalty have a positive link with each other [53,65].

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Electronic word of mouth is positively associated with tourist loyalty.*

#### 2.8. The Relationship Between Tourists’ Satisfaction with the Intention to Visit

Satisfaction is an important concern and is a widely discussed theme in the domain of tourism research [34]. In the tourism industry, tourist satisfaction acts as an essential responsibility and a promotional tool to catch the attention of tourists, as well as in the construction of plans regarding the goods and services that are supplied within the tourism market [35]. However, tourist satisfaction is an important element for the success of marketing related to destination visits [66]. Truong and King [40] pointed out that the eWOM and intention to visit travelers have been broadly recognized in the individual attractions, as well as in the overall economy.

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *Tourist satisfaction is positively associated with intention to visit.*

#### 2.9. The Mediating Role of Electronic Word of Mouth Between Destination Image and Tourist Loyalty

Destination image refers to a traveler’s intention to depend on the capability of a spot to do its functions regarding advertising. In other words, assuring visitors that the services provided will be reliable, hassle-free, and transparent [67]. Potential travelers are more likely to seek information regarding destination images from their colleagues, relatives, and friends who have had experience with the destination [68]. This is due to eWOM comforting customers by messages, enacting assurances, and reducing uncertainty and fear [67]. Mazursky [69] and Babakus and Mangold [70] defined that eWOM messages are a primary source to eliminate the element of risk and uncertainty for potential purchase concerning products or services. The essential impact of eWOM on tourist behavioral intentions could be stronger than the traditional WOM [50].

Communication of eWOM is more unwavering over WOM because of the absence of incentives and its anonymous nature. Wu and Ko [71] revealed that there is an association between purchase intention, brand trust, and eWOM, but the direction of eWOM will decrease or increase the trust impact on purchase purposes [72].

Oliver [41] defined the loyalty of tourists as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior.” Tourist loyalty is a very complex factor for marketers of a destination, because it is less costly, more pleasant, and to hold present customers as opposed to draw new tourists [42]. After receiving good services regarding destination, which creates loyalty in return, and when tourists express their experience with positive remarks through eWOM, it creates improved tourism [42,50]. Based on the above arguments, the study revealed a positive connection between eWOM, destination image, and tourist satisfaction. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** *Electronic word of mouth mediates the relationship between destination image and tourist loyalty.*

#### 2.10. The Mediating Role of Tourist Satisfaction Between Destination Image and Intention to Visit

The satisfaction of tourists is a positive feeling or a perception that visitors acquire or develop by being involved with leisure activities [2]. Tourist satisfaction is also essential for the management of the tourism sector, because it affects destination image and intention to visit. The previous research by Jalilvand, Samiei, Dini, and Manzari [13] indicated that satisfied travelers are more likely to express things positively regarding the destination to others. Also, it enhances the intention to visit. Lin et al. [73] defined that destination image has a substantial impact on the intention to visit when satisfaction is high. There is an open consensus among researchers that destination image serves as a valuable means for tourist satisfaction, and an increasing number of visitors minimizes uncertainty [60]. Han and Ryu [49] revealed in a study that tourists’ satisfaction levels with destination influences intention to visit. Consequently, destination image or trust can induce visitors’ emotional affection to a spot, and this connection could forecast the readiness of tourists to make monetary sacrifices in order to recoup it [74]. Therefore, scholars have revealed that tourist satisfaction is a necessary element for the improvement of destination services and enhancing the revisit intention [75,76].

**Hypothesis 9 (H9).** *Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationships between destination image and intention to visit.*

#### 2.11. The Mediating Role of Electronic Word of Mouth, Tourist Satisfaction, Destination Image, and Intention to Visit

A number of scholars have used eWOM and intention to visit to measure satisfaction with a destination to visit, and the marketers of the tourism industry have clearly identified their benefits with a long-term relationship with destination to visit [33,67]. Nowadays, services provision organizations are building a sustainable connection with tourists through the best services. Internet users generate reviews regarding hotels, services, and destinations, which have become an essential source to gain information about tourists [37,54,60]. A report revealed that every year, several hundred tourists consult reviews online [77]. On the basis of the quality star, many travelers visit that same destination where travelers receive high satisfaction. In a global village, things are connected to each other and most travelers design their plans or select destinations from internet details [78]. The literature of tourism studies also supports tourist satisfaction to enhance tourism, and it is considered key to attracting new tourists, as well as a cause of improving intention for visits by eWOM [50,72,79]. Prior research indicates that tourist satisfaction, eWOM, and destination to visit are interlinked to increase the intention to visit [33,78].

**Hypothesis 10 (H10).** *Electronic word of mouth and tourist satisfaction mediate the relationship between destination image and intention to visit.*

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Study Design

This study was carried out to measure the intervening influence of destination image and eWOM on the relations with tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty, and intention to visit from the perspective of a developing state, which was Pakistan. We used a random sampling technique for this survey, and the sample size was 950 [80]. There were 780 responses that were selected for the analysis, and the rest of the samples were not completed. There were 780 true responses, and the responses were collected from June to August 2018.

#### 3.2. Instruments

The scale for this study was adapted from previously published studies. The destination image consisted of 8 questions [79]. With a sample question “Accessibility (entire transportation system comprising of routes, terminals, and vehicles).” Its  $\alpha$  value was 0.882. [14,79] developed 7 items of electronic word of mouth with the sample question “I frequently gather information from tourists’ online travel reviews before I travel to a certain destination.” Its  $\alpha$  value was 0.914. TS consisted of the 9 item scale developed by [54], which included the sample question “This visit was better than expected.” The tourist satisfaction scale’s  $\alpha$  value was 0.852. The tourist loyalty scale had 3 items [9] that included the sample question “I will recommend the tour to other people.” The tourist loyalty scale’s  $\alpha$  value was 0.936. The intention to visit comprised 4 items [72] that included the sample question “It is very likely that I will revisit this heritage site in the future.” Its  $\alpha$  value was 0.883. The “demographic profile” of the participants, which included gender, age, marital status, education, and occupation, is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents.

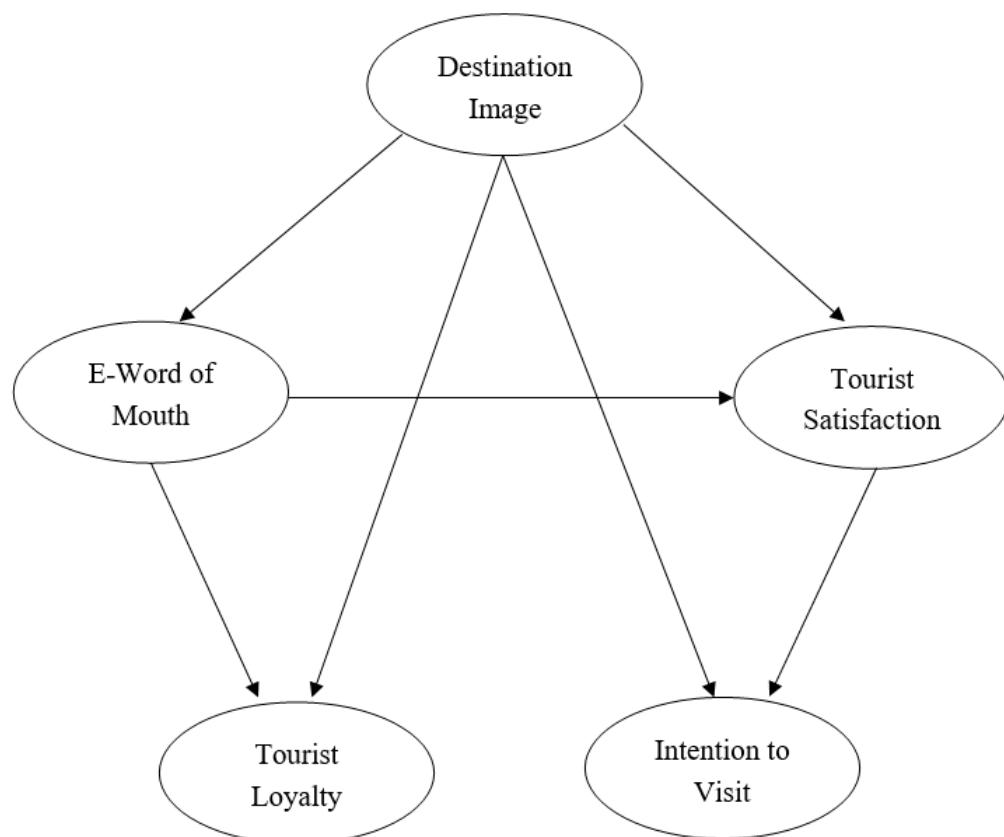
Characteristics	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	551	70.6
Female	229	29.4
Age		
16–25	120	15.4
26–35	146	18.8
36–45	306	39.2
46–55	157	20.1
56 and above	51	6.5
Marital status		
Single	206	26.4
Married	395	50.7
Divorced	135	17.3
Widow	44	5.6
Education		
Secondary/high school	199	25.5

**Table 1.** Cont.

Characteristics	Frequency	%
College	379	48.6
University	202	25.9
Occupation		
Businessman	124	16
Leisure	285	36.5
Professional	75	9.6
Visiting families or friends	213	27.3
Others	83	10.6

#### 4. Data Analysis

We used AMOS and SPSS for empirically assessing and analyzing the proposed study model [81]. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied [82], which is exhibited in Figure 1, to examine all the hypotheses [83]. We used several fit signs, which incorporated a TLI, CFI, SRMR, IFI, RMSEA, and a chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) [84] to validate the model fit. As per Bennett et al. [85], the values of  $\chi^2/df$  must be lower than 3 for a model fit [86], and the values of “CFI, IFI, and TLI should be greater than 0.90” [87]. SRMR and RMSEA values should not exceed 0.08 [88].

**Figure 1.** Conceptual model.

#### 4.1. Model Fit Indices

Before using SEM, we executed a CFA [89]. The fit indices are exhibit in Table 2, and the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) values, the value of  $\chi^2/\text{df}$ , the degrees of freedom (df), CFI, TLI, IFI, SRMR, RMSEA, NCP, and the lowest value of the discrepancy (FMIN) were implemented for the model fit estimation, which is exhibited in Table 3. The values in this study are bigger than the suggested standards [88].

**Table 2.** Fit statistics.

Fit indices	Model Value	Reference Value
$\chi^2/\text{df}$	2.862	<5.00
CFI	0.973	>0.90
IFI	0.981	>0.90
TLI	0.976	>0.90
Standardized RMR	0.037	<0.05
RMSEA	0.049	<0.10
PCLOSE	0.887	>0.05
NCP	1943.182	>NCP saturated (.00) <NCP independence (50068.5)
FMIN	4.193	>FMIN saturated (.00) <FMIN independence (67.0)

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Factors	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Destination Image	2.97	0.812	-				
2. E-Word of Mouth	2.85	0.819	0.421 **	-			
3. Tourist Satisfaction	2.28	0.793	0.374 **	0.304 **	-		
4. Tourist Loyalty	4.01	0.624	0.398 **	0.291 **	0.275 **	-	
5. Intention to Visit	3.56	0.765	0.336 **	0.327 **	0.349 **	0.319 **	-

Significance of correlations: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

#### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics and correlation values of variables are shown in Table 2. The values of SD extended from 0.624–0.819, and the mean values ranged from 2.28–4.01. It can be checked in Table 2 that the correlation values among destination image (DI), electronic word of mouth (eWOM), tourist satisfaction (TS), tourist loyalty (TL), and intention to visit (IV) are substantial and positive. Table 2 auxiliary described the discriminant validity amid all the items where the values of “average variance extracted” as above the inter-correlation values [90].

#### 4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The measurement model of the current study was measured based on the CFA. Primarily, we analyzed the measurement model by calculating the discriminant, content, and convergence validities [91]. Construct validity is the most challenging method [92] but is essential for the current study, as the value of the construct can change through data collection, and participants might observe dissimilar meanings [93]. Convergent validity inspects the extent to which items are correlated with the theoretical model’s other constructs. Convergent validity was determined by assessment of the average variance extracted, CR and reliability test values, and the standardized factor loadings [94]. Cronbach’s alpha is a commonly operated statistical technique for assessing the reliability of construct [95,96], and it denotes the inner consistency amid the constructs of a latent variable. The reliability of the construct specifies whether results are reliable. Moreover, inner consistency was also assessed

by evaluating CR, discriminant validity, and convergent validity for all elements to provide more validity of the data and the research model (see Table 4). As an evidence from Table 5, composite reliability of every factor extended from 0.932 to 0.863, which exceeds the recommended criteria ( $CR > 0.7$ ) [97], whereas the statistical values of AVE for every loaded construct extended from 0.678 to 0.753, exhibiting convergent validity, which must be greater than 0.50 [98]. To assess discriminant validity, every statistical value of the square root of AVE was bigger than all inter-factor correlation values as suggested by Lindem et al. [99].

**Table 4.** Confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model.

Latent Factor Construct/ Factors	Items	EFA	CFA	$\alpha$
<b>Destination Image</b>	DI1	0.826	0.881	0.882
	DI 2	0.902	0.986	
	DI 3	0.665	0.545	
	DI 4	0.905	0.990	
	DI5	0.915	0.989	
	DI 6	0.885	0.833	
	DI 7	0.877	0.849	
	DI 8	0.904	0.982	
<b>E-Word of Mouth</b>	WM1	0.858	0.984	0.914
	WM 2	0.698	0.651	
	WM 3	0.864	0.972	
	WM 4	0.704	0.634	
	WM 5	0.865	0.978	
	WM 6	0.877	0.882	
	WM 7	0.772	0.916	
<b>Tourist Satisfaction</b>	TS1	0.720	0.984	0.852
	TS2	0.793	0.811	
	TS3	0.812	0.825	
	TS4	0.797	0.786	
	TS5	0.819	0.839	
	TS6	0.795	0.727	
	TS7	0.730	0.758	
	TS8	0.797	0.782	
	TS9	0.819	0.836	
<b>Tourist Loyalty</b>	TL1	0.779	0.731	0.936
	TL2	0.837	0.793	
	TL3	0.922	0.984	
<b>Intention to Visit</b>	IV1	0.767	0.837	0.883
	IV2	0.807	0.891	
	IV3	0.778	0.785	
	IV4	0.732	0.803	

**Table 5.** Reliability and validity analysis.

Factors	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Destination Image	0.913	0.715	<b>0.846</b>				
2. E-Word of Mouth	0.932	0.753	0.0437 **	<b>0.868</b>			
3. Tourist Satisfaction	0.863	0.678	0.319 **	0.273 **	<b>0.823</b>		
4. Tourist Loyalty	0.916	0.703	0.351 **	0.226 **	0.269 **	<b>0.838</b>	
5. Intention to Visit	0.889	0.691	0.307 **	0.262 **	0.343 **	0.299 **	<b>0.831</b>

Significance of correlation: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted. Bold values are square root of AVE showing discriminant validity.

#### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

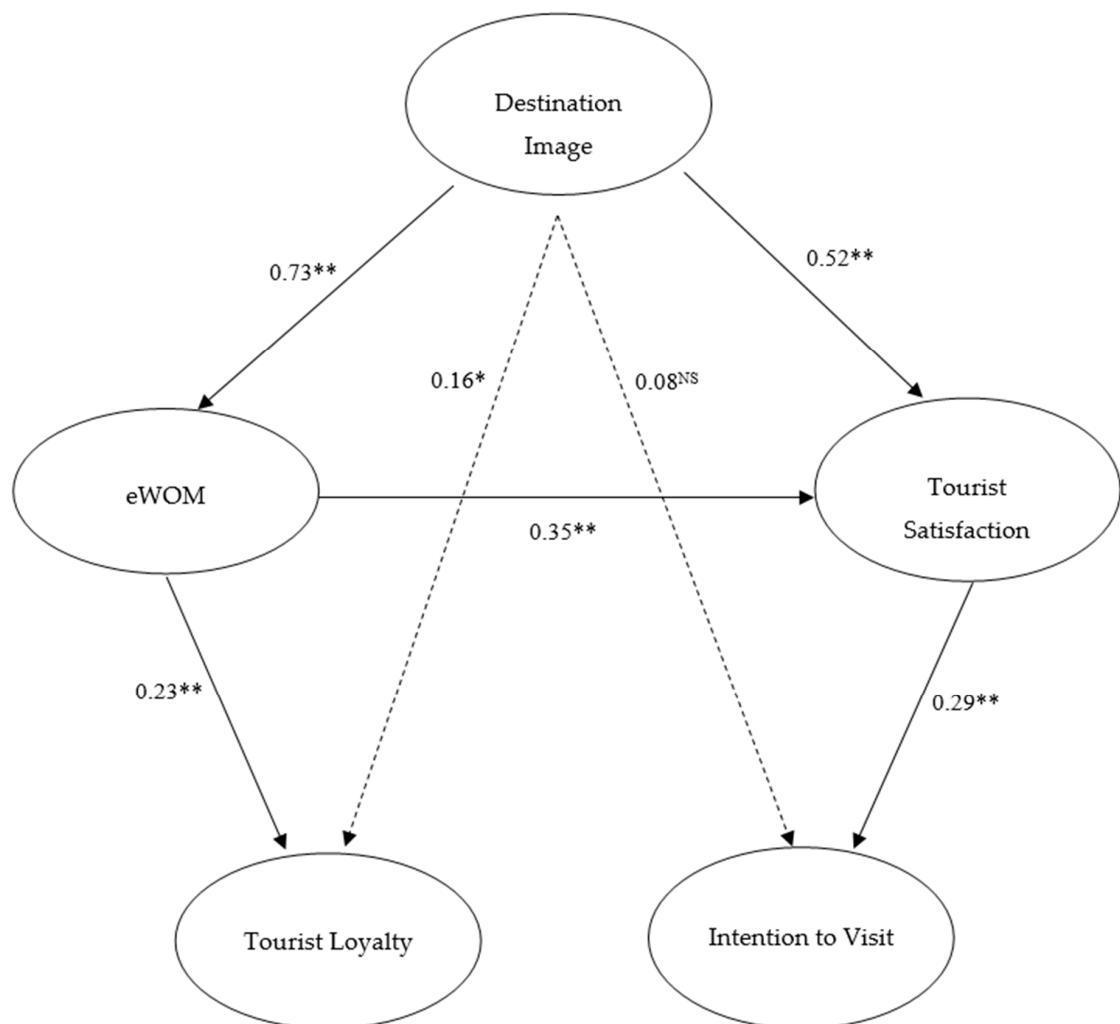
Hypotheses 1–7 were tested and proven using regression weights ( $\beta$ ) that are presented in Table 6. H1 projected there would be a positive and significant association between DI and eWOM. We found that this was supported ( $\beta = 0.39$ ,  $t = 8.125$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). H2 was that DI is positively related to TS. Table 6 offer confirmation for this hypothesis ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $t = 7.556$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). H3 projected that DI is positively associated with TL, and we got supportive indication ( $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $t = 8.039$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is illustrated in Table 6. H4 was that DI is positively associated with IV, and our results offered support (standardized  $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $t = 6.364$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is given in Table 6. H5 was that eWOM is positively related to TS, and we found a positive association between eWOM and TS ( $\beta = 0.26$ ,  $t = 5.909$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). H6 projected that eWOM is positively associated with TL ( $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $t = 6.889$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These values are illustrated in Table 6. H7 demonstrates that TS is positively related to IV. We received support for H7 ( $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $t = 7.708$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Moreover, the significance of the results is also proved, because the values of t-statistics are also significant and are greater than the cutoff value of 1.96 [100,101].

**Table 6.** Regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) for testing hypotheses 1–7.

	Path		$\beta$	SE	T
Destination Image	→	E-Word of Mouth	0.39 **	0.048	8.125
Destination Image	→	Tourist satisfaction	0.34 **	0.045	7.556
Destination Image	→	Tourist Loyalty	0.41 **	0.051	8.039
Destination Image	→	Intention to Visit	0.28 **	0.044	6.364
E-Word of Mouth	→	Tourist satisfaction	0.26 **	0.044	5.909
E-Word of Mouth	→	Tourist Loyalty	0.31 **	0.045	6.889
Tourist Satisfaction	→	Intention to Visit	0.37 **	0.048	7.708

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . SE: Standard error.

Moreover, Figure 2 demonstrates the SEM results where a path from DI to eWOM is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.73$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Paths from eWOM to TL were positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.23$  and  $p < 0.01$ ). The path from DI to TS was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.52$  and  $p < 0.01$ ), and the path from TS to IV was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.29$  and  $p < 0.01$ ). It is clear from Figure 2 that the direct path from DI to TL ( $\beta = 0.16$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) was significant in the presence of a mediator and provides support for partial mediation. On the other hand, the direct path from DI to IV in the presence of mediators ( $\beta = 0.08$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) was insignificant and proved full mediation. These values provide support for hypotheses 8–10.



**Figure 2.** SEM Results for mediating effects; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; NS: Non-significant.

## 5. Discussion

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors and is also a driving force for so many developed—as well as developing—and sustainable economies. It is the largest source of development or employment opportunities, and a huge wealth originator and a greater contributor to the diversified economy [7]. The empirical researches of Onder and Durgun [102] and Balaguer and Cantavella-Jorda [103] that highlighted the effect of tourism demand on employment pointed out that tourism has a significant impact on employment, development, and pleasant atmosphere. According to the studies of Mathieson and Wall [104] and Archer and Fletcher [105], tourism impacts directly and indirectly on the developments of employment opportunities, infrastructure, economy, etc. However, research in this context is inadequate in Pakistan. Therefore, we investigated this gap and found a significant impact that the tourism sector has had on country betterment.

In this study, the relationship of destination image and electronic word of mouth on tourist satisfaction has been evaluated, while, in addition, the direct effect of destination image and association effect of destination image with tourist satisfaction and electronic word of mouth were analyzed on tourist loyalty and intention to visit [50]. So, this research examined the mediating role of eWOM and tourist satisfaction on destination image–tourist loyalty and destination image–intention to visit associations. The structured model of these variables was measured through CFA and SEM to analyze discriminant, content, and convergence validities [92,93,95,99]. Our results validate the positive relationships among all variables, i.e., destination image, eWOM, tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty,

and intention to visit. In detail, we found that eWOM and destination image have a direct relation to tourist satisfaction in Pakistan [106]. Previously, it was also confirmed that tourists who have an inspiring opinion towards a destination image and a feeling of a sense of control (eWOM) have a greater level of tourist satisfaction [107].

Further, this study also exposed that eWOM has a partial mediation effect on the destination image–tourist loyalty relationship, and both eWOM and tourist satisfaction fully mediate the association amid destination image and intention to visit [108]. So, testing the above associations through multiple mediators is a relatively novel idea. Tourists' well-satisfied feelings and experiences toward destination image encourage their intention to visit the destination [60]. These datasets identified a constructive association among eWOM, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty, and intention to visit [109]. Tourists with greater satisfaction of the services quality, self-determination, and customer values are happier and loyal to intention to visit with the destinations [33].

Prior studies have shown what eWOM offers travelers the opportunity to enhance inspiring visit plans and acknowledge their consideration regarding the achievements of that destination [14,110]. According to Han and Hyun [76], eWOM is seen as a driving factor to give information about tourist satisfaction. In addition, these tourists are inspired by how other travelers felt about the destination's image, meaningfulness of services, and enjoyable or peaceful attachments [53]. The studies were conducted by several scholars: Han and Hyun [76]; Abubakar and Mavondo [67]; and Nadarajah and Ramalu [111] defined that the destination image is positive for tourism development, as well as has a significant impact on visits to the place in the future.

Even though visitors also had accommodating etiquette that is connected to the various level of satisfaction, it was professed better [58]. Tourists who have an insight into the services with a stout sense of control and vigor with concern regarding their destination feel efficiently dedicated to visiting the destination again. Hence, eWOM and tourist satisfaction have mediating impacts on destination image–tourist loyalty and destination image–intention to visit associations, while the direct impact of eWOM and destination image on tourist satisfaction is the main finding of this study. Pakistan has a lot of potential concerning the tourism industry due to the ignorance of previous governments, so it needs to make serious decisions to promote the tourism industry.

## 6. Conclusions

The conclusion of this study consists of several facts and findings regarding destination image, eWOM, tourist satisfaction, as well as tourist loyalty and intention to visit [9]. Destination image is strongly associated with tourist satisfaction, because tourist satisfaction relates to feelings that are created by cognitive features with tourism activities and the accumulated assessment of numerous features and components of the destination image [112]. Tourism is based on several factors, such as destination image, tourist satisfaction, eWOM, tourist loyalty, and intention to visit. Tourist satisfaction is also closely associated with eWOM [13]. In the scenario of Pakistani tourism, eWOM is not considered for promoting tourism and attracting tourists, while in the current report from the World Economic Forum (WEF), Pakistan was ranked 123th regarding tourism attraction—and other South Asian countries ranked better than Pakistan [113]. Ladhari and Michaud [50] indicated that eWOM is the best way to enhance tourism, and our study defined that eWOM, as well destination image, directly affects tourist satisfaction that further reduces tourist loyalty and intention to visit.

As per the results of our study, Pakistani tourism can be better—and even the best—and it will be able to be ranked higher through branding eWOM and providing the best facilities at destination image for tourist satisfaction. The main finding is that Pakistan should be building a favorable destination image to create tourist satisfaction, use all channels through eWOM, understand tourist loyalty, and develop a reliable relationship with the tourism industry. It needs to take immediate measures to provide professional training and development, improve the quality of the working environment in order to reduce attrition in the industry, provide proper career planning, implement good manpower

planning, and provide job descriptions and specifications required at all the stages of the service provider organizations, such as resorts, restaurants, hotels, and motels in Pakistan.

Electronic word of mouth (WOM) is ranked the most important information source because it would seem that the eWOM sources play an increasingly important role in the tourist decision-making process [14]. In almost all progressive countries, all electronic travel agency sites now offer web pages that feature customer reviews of the products. These sites offer numerous first-hand commentaries and ratings posted by travelers, assessing, discussing, and dissecting virtually every ship afloat, as well as most hotels and restaurants in any major city or resort worldwide. But in Pakistan, eWOM, which is directly impacting the tourist satisfaction, needs to be seriously improved. The government and the private sector need to work together for this concern, and they need to use all channels, which include print media, electronic media, and social media, for travelers' reviews to attract tourists to Pakistan. Hence, in conclusion, in the scenario of Pakistani tourism, eWOM and destination image need to be extremely improved to heighten tourist satisfaction, which, in consequence, will boost tourist loyalty, as well their intentions to visit in Pakistan.

## 7. Implications

For the growth of the Pakistani economy, the tourism industry is a motivating force. The growing tourism sector can bring much optimism to the sustainable tourism economy, mainly in terms of income, GDP, generation of employment, and economic growth.

These findings suggested several essential theoretic implications for tourism literature. Firstly, by exploring the mediating effect of eWOM, tourism satisfaction in the relationship amid destination image, tourists' loyalty, and intention to visit. Our research provides an improved consideration of the principal mechanisms where tourists linked these approaches with satisfaction. The results of our research recognized that destination image encourages tourists' feelings of satisfaction, and eWOM by exhibiting the precedents that eventually improves tourist satisfaction level and revisits the promise of loyalty with them. This study will be participating as a theoretical contribution to the tourism literature, as well as playing a map role for new scholars.

Our results confirmed the reported proof that tourism satisfaction functions as an essential inspirational source for travelers to be more satisfied and highly dedicated to their services [2,20]. Additionally, examining electronic word of mouth, tourism satisfaction as a mediator assists us with a better understanding of why and how tourists' satisfaction can be enhanced by services. Moreover, this research was organized in a developing state, which was Pakistan, and the newly elected government has a high emphasis on the tourism industry, and these empirical findings will better impact on tourism sector outcomes in the Pakistani context. This research will be playing the role of bridge among services provider organizations in Pakistan, policymakers, as well as in the literature of tourism for making the sustainability sector of tourism.

## 8. Limitations

The present study has several limitations. The first one is that the current research was conducted in the context of Pakistan for attracting tourists for promoting tourism as a sustainable sector regarding destination image, electronic word of mouth, tourism satisfaction, tourists' loyalty, and intention to visit. Secondly, in the future, scholars could conduct studies in other regions or countries through this framework, as well as an enhanced model or sampling size. Third, this research could be useful for promoting festivals of Pakistan, such a religious, supports, cultural, etc. Fourth, the present study applied the random sampling method for data collection, although the random sampling technique is not able to represent the whole population. Therefore, a more accurate technique should be adopted for future research.

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S.K. and J.H.; writing—original draft preparation: S.K.; writing—review and editing: S.K., Z.L., M.A., J.H., A.H., and A.J.

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