IMPACT OF DESTINATION ATTRACTIVENESS ON TOURISTS’ ATTACHMENT WITH MEDIATING ROLE OF DESTINATION IMAGE

Madiha Ali¹, Muhammad Sajjad², Orangzab³*, and Bilal Tariq⁴

ABSTRACT
The dynamic role of the tourism industry is observed as a catalyst to augment the economic development of worldwide economies. Due to its crucial role in economic growth, world economies have rapidly considered tourism as an important revenue generation industry. In this regard, to enrich tourism, destination image and its competitiveness play a crucial part. The main purpose of this study is to find the mediating role of destination image between the destination attractiveness and tourism attachment relationship. This study also intends to investigate the significance of various determinants of destination attractiveness within that relationship by the collection of firsthand data from tourists who belong to diverse demographic backgrounds. Study data is collected through a questionnaire from 300 conveniently sampled respondents who have visited Dubai, UAE as tourists. Statistical analyses were conducted to deduce the results by employing PLS-SEM. The results suggested that destination attractiveness has a significant positive relationship with destination image, similarly, destination image has a significant relationship with destination attachment. Therefore, the data analysis suggests that destination image partially mediates the relationship between destination attractiveness and destination image. This study will provide unique findings to tourism practitioners and organizations to formulate tourism marketing strategies on pragmatic grounds. In conclusion, the study provides suggestions and future research recommendations.

Keywords: Destination Attractiveness; Destination Image; Destination Attachment; Destination Competitiveness; Tourism.

¹M.Phil. Candidate, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Vehari Campus, Pakistan.
²Ph.D. Candidate, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Vehari Campus, Pakistan.
³Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences, COMSATS University Islamabad, Vehari Campus, Pakistan. Email: orangzab@ciitvehari.edu.pk, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0010-7655
⁴Ph.D. Candidate, COMSATS University, Islamabad, Vehari Campus, Pakistan
*Corresponding Author
INTRODUCTION

With rapid world advancements, humans discover new ways of sustenance in the varying environment, adapting to technology and digital interface, however, human nature always remains with nature’s beauty and serenity. The desire to reconnect with the originality of nature impacts human beings and their attachment with the environment which motivates them to travel and explore. Usually, people travel places where they feel emotionally, and socially attached to the new destinations and prefer visiting places that are easy to reach. Leisure tourists usually tend to find new places experience joy and satisfaction. In recent years, the tourism industry has become one of the largest economically contributing industry, globally. Tourism is an emerging industry as people from major evolving continents and geographic sections i.e., Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East participate in tourism at domestic, intra-regional and far distant global parts of the world (Cohen & Cohen, 2015). Tourism studies have previously been carried out to understand two key constituents: destination hosts (people living at tourism destinations) and the tourists, both are interdependently beneficiary in this symbiotic relationship (Uysal, Sirgy, Woo, & Kim, 2016). In this context, this study is going to investigate various factors which revolve around the second and most vital constituent of the tourism industry i.e., “tourists”. Kandampully (2000) asserts that tourism is very important to enhance the economic conditions of economies as it brings monetary as well as social benefits through tourist traffic.

Tourists are the consumers in the tourism industry, who buy tourism experiences and tend to fetch pleasure through various attributes of the destination. Studies have been conducted rigorously to find a theoretical association between destination attachment and tourists motivation to travel (Prayag, Hosany, & Soscia, 2014), destination image (Prayag & Ryan, 2012), and past experiences of tourists with a place (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). Specifically, it is in clear consideration that destination attachment is patronized by different destination-related facilities and services that Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) can provide and manage (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Veasna, Wu, & Huang, 2013). Studies in the past reflect a direct relationship of different attributes of destination attractiveness with destination attachment but in the study of Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperdin, and Stokburger-Sauer (2016), they described tourists’ cognitive evaluation (Attitude) as mediating effect between the relationship of destination attractiveness and destination attachment, but in this proposed study, the destination image is under consideration because previous studies reveal that destination image is composed of two basic constructs of perceptual/cognitive evaluations and affective
together. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) also added by describing Image with reference to
cognitive and affective evaluations. This construct of “Image” further second by Buyong and
Rajiani (2011), study described the formation of Image with implication of cognitive and
affective evaluation. Mazursky and Jacoby (1986) discussed image formation in the context of
retail store overall image building by evaluating and integrating observations regarding
different store components. Based on those insights’ consumers use to form an overall image.
Although it has been described in retail context, but it reflects a generic process of image
formation.

Although tourism is an emerging area of study still there is several insights that need attention
to study, for instance, Pike (2012) describes that although people decide for travelling on basis
of the image theoretically image building is not well described. Many authors encouraging
studies in tourism in the context of the image but its theoretical outlines are not well explained.
Especially today when tourism is pivot construct for many researchers, Destination is subjected
with various modern concepts in the context of consumer who is considered tourist in this
Industry.

The proposed study is based upon the identified gap between tourists’ perceived destination
attractiveness and attachment that has been investigated with the mediating role of tourists’
perceived Image of destination. This study also examined the significance of different
components of destination attractiveness i.e., access, local community, scenery, climate, food,
and sports & recreational opportunities in developing the image of the destination and
ultimately its effect in creating attachment of tourists with their tour destination.

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

*Destination Attachment*

Place attachment or Destination Attachment is a procedure through which people establish an
emotional relationship to destination and the feeling of being staying at home or a place is the
same, and it also makes emotional bond to a particular place. According to Halpenny (2006)
an emotional, cognitive and functional relationship of people toward the destination is place
attachment, Rubinstein and Parmelee (1992) suggested that personal visit and interaction to a
people of destination establish feeling and tourists get attached to destination (Japutra, 2020).
Destination attachment plays a vital role to inspire to develop strong feelings and it also inspires
individual loyalty (Brocato, 2006; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2007;
Simpson & Siguaw, 2008). According to Lee (2003) the more the people get attached to a
destination, the less they change their options of place. Destination attachment depends on tourist’s loyalty. If tourist attachment is higher to a destination, it means higher loyalty toward a destination (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006; George & George, 2004; Lee et al., 2007; Simpson & Siguaw, 2008). Attachment to a certain place increases if the tourist has more information about the place and having a strong feeling toward a destination (Brocato, 2006; Schultz, 2000). Different researchers have different opinions about the formation of destination attachment some described that place attachment is made of the sense of place, place identity and place dependence (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson, 1992; Williams & Vaske, 2003; Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010).

**Destination Image**

Sirakaya, Sonmez, and Choi (2001) described that in the tourism industry destination image is a blessing to any country or region. Positive images of a destination have always a high chance of flourish as compared to negative images of the destination. A concept shared by Kim and Richardson (2003) is described as the total of imprints in mind, beliefs, thoughts and feelings regarding a particular location concerning time. Murphy, Pritchard, and Smith (2000) second the concept of Kim and Richardson by defining as connections and units of information regarding a particular place, In short, that would develop a personal perception. Bigne, Sanchez, and Sanchez (2001) further raised the concept by describing Destination Image as an individual’s own way to interpret the facts regarding tour destination. Further Coshall (2000) defined the factor of Image as a personal way to perceive the various features of a tourist’s destination. In fact, Destination Image is an individual’s knowledge base, way of feeling and perceiving a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Simply it is an impression or a Perception regarding a destination (Phelps, 1986).

Several studies have described the image as constant mind processing which results in the creation of reflections, thoughts, building beliefs and mental mapping in the form of impressions regarding the destination through information from the different sources (Crompton, 1979; Liou, 2010; Milman, 2012; Reynolds, 1965). Literature in the area of tourism is evident of image role for the success of a destination that is similar to marketing studies which focus overvalue by creating image (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Crompton, 1979; Hanlan & Kelly, 2005). Lalicic, Marine-Roig, Ferrer-Rosell, and Martin-Fuentes (2021) emphasized embracing destination image analytics in the design process of destination marketing systems.

**Destination Attractiveness**
Destination Attractiveness is a basic factor among all the experiences of a Tourist during his tour (Alahakoon, Pike, & Beatson, 2021). Kušen (2002) describes attractiveness as facilities and services which may appeal to or already achieving the interest of tourists for a destination. Attractiveness possesses key importance in the tourism industry as Ritchie and Crouch (2003) in the study of destination competitiveness give key attention to attractiveness by illustrating attributes of attractiveness as major aspects which stimulate the tourists to tour a destination. Leask (2010) also seconds by explaining its significance as all factors of Attractiveness contribute a significant part in the success of a particular destination and those factors serve as instigators to attract tourists and may become assets for the residents as well. The attractiveness of a destination is a major role in choosing and selecting a destination, the way how destination satisfies, how it attracts, the decision to spend money and time to stay at destination etc. (Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa, & Tanner, 2006). Attractiveness satisfies us for entertainment, curiosity and learning, which means it may educate us as well (Hu & Wall, 2005; Leask, 2010). In larger meanings destination attractiveness is associated with economic and overall regional development (Andersson & Getz, 2009; Sofield, 2006).

Cognitive image is based upon the way how tourist perceives or take an impression of different attributes and facilities of a destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Gallerza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002). According to Formica and Uysal (2006) tourists appealing image perception is destination attractiveness. Destination’s attractiveness factors are crucial for both image formation and memorability of the staged destination experience. Here we formulate the following hypothesis:

**H1: Tourists’ perceived destination attractiveness positively affects the destination’s image.**

Many studies have described the various attributes of destination (Çakici & Harman, 2007; Chen, Chen, & Lee, 2011; Das, Sharma, Mohapatra, & Sarkar, 2007; Lee, Ou, & Huang, 2009), such attributes are now practically considered indicators for tourist’s experiences. These studies in the context of attributes support the practitioners and marketers in this industry to meet the needs of tourists about the destination because as reflected in the above-mentioned studies, a visitor decides to visit, revisit, or recommend others as well.

**Accessibility**

Accessibility is defined by various integrated factors of approach or reaches for product, service, or destination to visit. As far as tourism is concerned, studies reflect it may include infrastructure (roads, airports, seaports, railways), modes of transportation services and many
routes available to reach the destination with the frequency of services and prices charged and policies executed by the authorities about transportation like the quality of transportation and size and the number of persons in a vehicle etc. (Aksoy & Kiyci, 2011). In broader terms, the concept of Accessibility is about the way how conveniently a traveller may reach his planned destination that may include nonphysical factors of reach. Simply it is extent or level of ease for tourists to reach a destination and for this several factors are involved which have been studied as developing a smooth approach to destination, transportation with the standard of services accompanied by the availability of facts and data for all regarding a destination (Aksoy & Kiyci, 2011).

Sirgy and Su (2000) describe human instinct to look for comfort and ease and in the case of tourists, they see accessibility and other attributes to pattern their interest that is based upon image what they make in their minds. Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) further second by mentioning these attributes of destination as factors of image building that finally patronize the behaviour of tourists. Based on the above explanation, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1 (a): Tourists access to destination positively affects destination image.

Local Community
The study of Jackson and Murphy (2006) reflects the worth of the local community as describing this factor as a key medium for destination attractiveness. In this way, Shone and Memon (2008) studied local participation for destination development. Especially Michael (2007) well debated over the worth of local community as a key factor to shape destination or development of a tour location. Local people or community is an attribute that was largely described as the factor for image formation by many researchers i.e. (Ashworth & Voogt, 1990; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). In this way, we formulate the hypothesis as:

H1 (b): Local community of destination positively affects destination image.

Scenery
Keyser (2009) described that the different characteristics are major reasons for attraction towards a destination i.e., sight views and natural beauty of environment may attract the tourists. The above studies especially describe different activities like sight view, camping, riding, and hiking etc. add value to the environment of the destination. Therefore, preserving of environment and scenic beauty of the tour destination is important to keep the tourists attracted to a particular destination. Several initiatives are being taken to save and towards the
betterment of the environment and people over the different geographical parts or destinations (Laroche, Bergeron, & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001). Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown (2001) claimed in their study that natural scenic beauty is a key composition factor of the destination image. Image is also described in terms of place attitude that can be determined by Scenic beauty (Chon, 1991). It will lead towards the following hypothesis:

\[ H1 \text{ (c): Natural beauty and serenity of destination positively affect destination Image}. \]

**Climate**

Climate is a natural feature of a particular area or tour destination and is managed by natural environmental elements (Krešić, 2007). But it plays a key role in deciding to choose a tour destination. Therefore, this feature naturally becomes a competitive advantage for many destinations to attracts visitors (Krešić & Prebežac, 2011). For this, many destinations consider their environment’s climate for their marketing campaigns and strategize their marketing messages accordingly by considering the climatic factor. Many tourist’s activities are based upon climates like sunbath, beach tours, health tourism and other sports-related tour locations (Krešić & Prebežac, 2011). Gallarza et al. (2002) found climate as a factor for building destination image. Therefore, in this study, we also hypothesized that:

\[ H1 \text{ (d): Pleasant climate at destination positively affect destination image}. \]

**Food & Beverages**

Food is among the major features to attract visitors to the destination. It has its worth by considering its role in terms of different ways of Food services like Seafood at beaches, famous restaurants with special cultural dishes, different traditional meals, and specific taste with the particular style of cookery at a particular destination. Moreover, studies reflect such factors attract tourists and even these may attract non-visitors to visit and taste foods specifically managed by different tour destinations and their governments and countries (Dann, 1996). Food and Beverages are considered among the needs of tourists which are meant to be satisfied and considered a major factor to create the image. Food plays a major role in building the perceived image of the destination and also plays a competitive role among the various destinations or tour places (Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Fox, 2007). Therefore, this is a highly important element in the tourism industry and hotels as well (Ardabili, Rasouli, Daryani, Molaie, & Sharegi, 2011). In short, destination management organizations may properly work on this component to manage the image of the destination (Konecnik & Go, 2008). We formulate a hypothesis as:
H1 (e): Food & beverages availability at destination positively affect destination image.

Sports & Recreational Opportunities

Among the important factors for tourism development, we may find sports clubs, fun and recreational resorts and water parks that play a vital role in the development of the tourism industry. Of course, recreational activities include many sports activities like football, basketball, high jumping, long jumping, badminton etc. Commonly recreation is considered participation in different sports and related activities and definitely, for a particular location these may earn for economic growth and may reward in terms of healthy human experience as well if properly managed by the government. For the first time, visitor information or branding regarding sports events play a very important role (Court & Lupton, 1997; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) and play a more important role in positively revisit intentions based upon the built image (Bigne et al., 2001; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Marketers of different destinations give attention to hosting different sports events to build destination image in mind of tourists (Chalip, Green, & Hill, 2003; Chalip & McGuirty, 2004; Dimanche, 2003; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003). Based on the above explanation, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1 (f): Sports & recreational opportunities at destination positively affect destination image.

Destination Image and Destination Attachment

Based on the recent literature destination or place attachment is a multi-concept that is associated with different insights of Tourism (i.e., Destination Image and Attractiveness etc.) e.g., (Brown, Smith, & Assaker, 2016; Nazneen, Xu, & Din, 2020). Destination Attachment is a positive emotional factor or an affective link that is an image of the destination, between an individual and concerned destination (Debenedetti, Oppewal, & Arsel, 2014), that builds the concept of place affect which is Image factor in studies (Brown et al., 2016). Affect, emotion and feelings are a composition for Image formation to drive the basic concept of place attachment (Tonge, Ryan, Moore, & Beckley, 2015). In this context, Ramkissoon, Weiler, and Smith (2012) described emotional bonding, sentimental associations towards the destination in the particular meaning of cognitive or effective imaging. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) expand the literature of Gunn (1972) and described that image is formed in tourist minds because of their repeated experience. Further (Birgit, 2001) described that tourist decision to visit a destination is based on their experience. Moreover, changes happen to occur in the destination image perceptions due to experiences (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Bigne et al. (2001)
described that image of a destination influence tourist’s behaviours. And the image of a destination also creates feeling (Davidoff & Davidoff, 1983). Moreover, the image of a place and attractiveness from past experience both affect a tourist’s attachment toward a destination (Lee, 2001). Hou et al. (2005) further described that image and attractiveness of place influence the power of attachment in various groups. Literature proves that image of destination influence individual destination attachment toward the destination (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Veasna et al., 2013), that image is the antecedent of destination attachment (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). This will lead towards the following hypothesis:

**H2: Positive image of the destination increases the tourist’s attachment towards the destination.**

**Destination Image as a Mediator**

The notion of the destination image is the basic concept in tourism studies regarding the process of selecting a destination. We can call this a junction concept between various other variables in tourism studies (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). The image of a destination can be defined in terms of its strengthening factors (like access, local community, scenery, climate, food and sports & recreational opportunities etc.) of the destination for the tourists (Augustyn & Ho, 1998; Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007). Several studies describe the image as tourists or visitor’s overall understanding and their perception about a destination (Alhemoud & Armstrong, 1996; Bigne et al., 2001), and further defined as a key factor for decision making to visit a destination that leads to the attachment (Nazir, Yasin, & Tat, 2021; Um & Crompton, 1992; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989).

Image is all about the way a tourist or visitor interpret or give the meaning of feelings and beliefs regarding a destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigne et al., 2001). This determines the behaviour towards the destination (that can be an attachment with that destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This concept is endorsed by Prayag and Ryan (2012) which seconds it as the image is the originator of destination attachment. Based on these studies and brief reviews it is assumed that a more satisfactory destination image will create a strong cognitive attachment with the destination in the reference of destination attractiveness. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

**H3: Image of the destination mediates the relationship between destination attractiveness and destination attachment.**
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The essence of methodology is related to the philosophical approach used in the study which explains how the data was gathered, analyzed, and evaluated. The model was constructed based on two theories i.e., image theory (Beach & Mitchell, 1987) and attachment theory (Bretherton, 1985). Data was collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire where all the questions are close-ended and adapted from well-established and authenticated sources. Further, a formative model is implied in the study based on previous studies (Jiang, Ramkissoon, Mavondo, & Feng, 2017; Le Chi, 2016). The questionnaire was articulated in such a comprehensive way that the tourists can easily fill it without the presence of an interviewer. However, contact details of the interviewer are given in case of clarification and feedback. The population of this study were tourists who use to travel for the tour purpose to Dubai belong to different cultures and demographic backgrounds. The sample was selected from different travel agents’ tour clients by applying convenient sampling. Data collected from 300 respondents and the sample size was determined based on (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data. The reliability of data was checked through Cronbach Alpha. Multiple regression analysis was applied to test the hypothesis proposed in the study. This regression analysis was performed through the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique.
EMPIRICAL RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

Sample Profile

Table 1 provides the sample profile, which shows that a total of 300 respondents took part in the study, from those 300 respondents 215 respondents were male and the remaining 85 respondents were female. Five age groups were developed the first age group is less than 30 years, the second is 30-35, the third age group is 36-40, the fourth is 41-45 and the fifth is more than 45 years. Out of 300 respondents, 152 respondents are less than 30 years. Out of 300 respondents, 119 respondents are business executives, 88 respondents are corporate employees, 21 respondents are engineers, 14 are doctors while 58 respondents belonged to other professions.

Table 1. Respondents’ Profile

| Factors      | Valid No. | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender       |           |                |
| Female       | 85        | 28.3           |
| Male         | 215       | 71.7           |
| Age          |           |                |
| Less than 30 years | 152     | 50.7           |
| 20-35        | 75        | 25             |
| 36-40        | 49        | 16.3           |
| 41-45        | 18        | 6              |
| More than 45 years | 6       | 2              |
| Profession   |           |                |
| Engineer     | 21        | 7              |
| Doctor       | 14        | 4.7            |
| Business Executive | 119  | 39.7           |
| Corporate Employee | 88    | 29.3           |
| Other        | 58        | 19.3           |

Source: Study Findings

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Cronbach alpha and composite reliability are used to test the reliability of data. If the value of alpha and composite reliability is 0.70 or greater than 0.70 then the result is satisfactory. Table 2 shows that all variable alpha value and composite reliability values are greater than 0.70, it means data is reliable. Discriminate validity exists if AVE for all items of the construct is greater than 0.40. The values of AVE in table 2 is greater than 0.5 which satisfy the criteria of discriminate validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

| Factors   | Cronbach’s Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|-----------|------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Access    | 0.76             | 0.76  | 0.86                   | 0.68                             |
| Climate   | 0.72             | 0.72  | 0.88                   | 0.78                             |
| D-Attachment | 0.80         | 0.85  | 0.87                   | 0.63                             |

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Multi-Collinearity

Results of the regression model were affected by the presence of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity affects the results by tumbling the ability to forecast the dependent variable and determine the diverse effect of explanatory variables (Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2010). According to Hair et al. (2010) multicollinearity is identified by testing the “Variance of Inflation Factor (VIF)”. To find out collinearity value of VIF are required. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) stated that the threshold value for VIF should be below 5.0. Results can be seen in table 4.

| Independent Variable | Statistics VIF |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Access               | 1.268          |
| Local Community      | 1.387          |
| Scenery              | 1.409          |
| Climate              | 1.302          |
| Food                 | 1.619          |
| Sports & R. Opportunities | 1.672 |

Structural Model

According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006) structural model provides information regarding the association in the hypothesized model of the study. T-values are used to determine the significance of the relationship among the constructs of the study, which are additionally utilized for decision making regarding proposed hypotheses. Figure 2 represents the structural model of the study.
Table 4 provides the values of path coefficient, p-values, and t-values. All the p-values are less than .05 and t-values are greater than 1.96 that’s why all hypotheses were supported except H1(a), and H1(d) because p-values are greater than .05 and t-values are less than 1.96.

### Table 4. Results of Hypotheses Testing

| Hypothesis | Relations | Parameter Estimator | T-value | p-value |
|------------|-----------|---------------------|---------|---------|
| H1         | Destination Attractiveness → Destination Image | 6.815 | 7.162 | 0.000 |
| H1(a)      | Access → Destination Image | 0.014 | 0.227 | 0.820 |
| H1(b)      | Local Community → Destination Image | 0.222 | 3.424 | 0.001 |
| H1(c)      | Scenery → Destination Image | 0.311 | 4.746 | 0.000 |
| H1(d)      | Climate → Destination Image | 0.053 | 0.963 | 0.336 |
| H1(e)      | Food → Destination Image | 0.154 | 2.173 | 0.000 |
| H1(f)      | Sports & Recreational Opportunities → Destination Image | 0.299 | 3.833 | 0.000 |
| H2         | Destination Image → Destination Attachment | 0.455 | 8.301 | 0.000 |
| H3         | Destination Image → Destination Attachment → Destination Attractiveness | 0.255 | 4.605 | 0.000 |

*Source: Study Analysis*
**Mediation Analysis**

Table 5 represent that destination attractiveness has a significant impact on destination attachment (p < .05) and the R square value is 0.206. By including destination image as a mediator, the impact of destination attractiveness on destination attachment is reduced while the value of R square increased (0.375) while this impact remains significant. Therefore, we conclude that destination image mediates the relationship between destination attractiveness and destination image.

**Table 5. Mediation with Destination Image**

| Direct Impact | Indirect Impact (with mediator) |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Path Coefficient | P-Value | R Square | Path Coefficient | P-Value | R Square |
| 0.454 | 0.000 | 0.206 | 0.255 | 0.000 | 0.375 |

*Source: Study Analysis*

**Figure 3. Direct Model**
**DISCUSSION**

In this study, we investigated the significance of different determinants of destination which make it attractive. Secondly investigated these factors’ influence on destination attachment by measuring the behaviour of tourists by studying the Destination Image as an important and working mediating variable. In this way, it is observed that the majority of the proposed hypotheses were supported by our research findings. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of destination attractiveness on destination attachment with mediating role of the destination image. The finding of this study shows that there is a significant relationship between destination attractiveness and destination attachment. These findings agree with those of previous studies (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008; Reitsamer et al., 2016). The result of our study shows that destination attractiveness has a significant relationship to the destination image. In previous studies different components of image were studied, our study uses the overall image defined by (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In this study out of six dimensions of destination attractiveness, two dimensions access, and climate have a non-significant relationship to the destination image.
CONCLUSION

The results of the study significantly confirmed our research hypothesis. Results represent that destination attractiveness influences destination image. Scenery, local community, food, sports & recreation opportunities are important determinants of destination attractiveness, that are positively linked with destination image. The image of a destination builds positively in minds of tourists, and processes image for destination attachment. Further, this study confirmed and significantly supported mediating role of destination image between key variables of attractiveness and attachment.

Findings of this study give extension to the previous studies of image formation (Crompton, 1979; Rein, Kotler, & Haider, 1993), the schema of image theory (Beach & Mitchell, 1987), attachment theory (Berman & Sperling, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and behavioural interaction that leads attachment (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005). Further, the destination image study as mediating variable is being confirmed with our results that will provide healthy insight of study for future research, especially in tourism. It was previously just studied as an antecedent concept of destination attachment Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Veasna et al., 2013). Now further, this study provides direction for other researchers in tourism studies to work on this model with different other destination factors and settings.

This research study provides a strong basis for practitioners in tourism. Based on this research, destination managers in Dubai strategize their offerings to attract tourists. They will be aware of factors that are more significant to design their market mix. Further, they may think to add different factors like they may plan to host events based upon local culture and traditions i.e., camel rides or desert safari tours in Dubai. They can invest in facilitating the local cuisine with cultural taste as it was reflected the significance of food & beverage in this study. These factors can increase not only the attractiveness but build the image of the destination in minds of tourists which can be led to destination attachment.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study did not investigate among the first, second, third and multi-time visitors. Because this is a behavioural study involving a humanistic tourism approach. Therefore, their opinions may vary based upon the number of visits to a destination. The mediating role of destination image can be further discussed individually with determinants of destination attractiveness which will especially provide strong managerial implications in future research with the help of this model.
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