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Beyond the Digital realm: The Magnetic Pull and Push factors of Eco-Tourism for Digital Nomads in Himachal's Mountain Havens

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ABSTRACT

Objective
The main goal of this study was to investigate experimentally the critical elements affecting digital nomads' aspirations to engage in ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh, focusing on the intricate balance between pull and push factors

Research methodology:
The study, relies on a survey of 435 respondents in Himachal Pradesh, employs structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression analysis to identify key determinants for digital nomads. Pull factors such as destination image and destination attributes facilitate work-leisure integration, while push factors like knowledge-seeking, self-fulfillment and desire to escape shape destination appeal. Moderating influences of pro-environmental attitudes motivations.

Findings
By integrating detailed survey and interview data from digital nomads, this study offers a nuanced exploration of motivations driving eco-tourism. The findings offer essential insights into how environmental values and logistical considerations converge to shape eco- tourism experiences in Himachal Pradesh. According to the study, the impact of four travel motivations—destination attributes, escape, knowledge-seeking, and self-fulfillment—on ecotourism intention are considerably strengthened by a pro-environmental attitude. Pro-environmental attitudes, however, had a negligible moderating role on the relationship between destination image and eco-tourism intention.

Value/originality
This research is significant as it not only enriches academic understanding of eco-tourism motivations but also serves as a blueprint for developing targeted, sustainable tourism strategies. It underscores the importance of aligning digital nomads' environmental aspirations with practical needs, paving the way for more sustainable tourism in ecologically sensitive areas.

Keywords: Travelmotivation, Pro-environmental attitude, Ecotourismintention, Futureecotourism, Digital nomads, Ecotourism, Pull and push factors

1. Introduction

Ecotourism, a harmonious blend of exploration and preservation, encompasses all forms of nature-based travel that educate, inspire, and actively contribute to safeguarding natural heritage, while preserving the integrity of eco-tourism destinations. The growth of ecotourism accelerated globally prior to the COVID-19 epidemic. It has been shown that people need access to nature-

based spaces to manage stress and maintain their physical and emotional well-being throughout the pandemic (Becken & Loehr, 2023; Mandić, 2023). Ecotourism is less prone than other types of tourism to be affected by coronavirus transmission and closure based on open natural areas. Therefore, ecotourism is expected to continue growing (Hultman et al., 2015; Khanra et al., 2021). Research that clarifies the elements that drive demand for ecotourism is essential.

Understanding what drives people to visit ecotourism destinations is essential to boost ecotourism demand. The literature on tourism has identified several push and pull motives for travel. Numerous studies have shown that escape, destination attributes, socialization, leisure, delight, cultural exposure, originality, and curiosity are factors that motivate people to travel (Kaya Sayarı & Coşkun, 2024; Khanra et al., 2021). Travelers' future travel intentions are greatly influenced by a tourism destination's pull factor in addition to these internal motives (Nguyen et al., 2021; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). The relevance of considering travellers' needs, expectations, and motivations as well as their perceptions of desired destination attributes (Marasinghe et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, little is known about how people's internal motivations and destination images combine to influence their desire to engage in ecotourism. The majority of the empirical literature currently in publication specifically examines the stimulus of various travel motives on the intention to engross in ecotourism(Nguyen et al., 2021; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017), the direct relationship between ecotourism intention and pro environmental attitude(C.-K. Lee et al., 2021; Vicente, 2024), the behaviour of tourists toward technology(Zheng et al., 2024), and ecotourism behaviours(Khanra et al., 2021). The effects of destination perception, ecological concern, and time perception on the motivation to participate in ecotourism were examined by (C.-K. Lee et al., 2021; Vicente, 2024).

The research explored the interplay between eco-destination visit intentions, travel motivations, and pro-environmental attitudes. This investigation aimed to uncover how these factors interconnect in shaping visitors' decisions to explore environmentally-focused locations. Himachal Pradesh was chosen as the empirical research location. Himachal Pradesh's stunning natural scenery has attracted many tourists(Nag et al., 2024). However, Himachal Pradesh have poorly implemented rules, particularly those pertaining to the environment; as a result, many of their tourist destinations are becoming less ecologically sustainable (Gupta et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2025). In order to develop successful initiatives to promote ecotourism in Himachal Pradesh, a study that makes use of state data is pertinent. This study examines information from 435 genuine answers to a structured questionnaire survey carried out in December 2024 in Shimla, Manali, Dalhousie, and Dharamshala. Using multivariate data analysis, the findings reveal that pro-environmental attitudes significantly enhance the influence of four travel motivations—destination attributes, escape, knowledge seeking, and self-development—on intentions to engage in ecotourism. However, the moderating role of pro-environmental attitudes in the relationship between destination image and ecotourism intention was insignificant.

The transforming effect of pro-environmental attitudes is highlighted in this study, which makes a substantial contribution to the literature on tourism in shaping specific travel motivations that drive intentions toward ecotourism destinations. Based on our current understanding, there has been no previous study examining how pro-environmental attitudes moderate the connection between travel motivation and the intention to engage in ecotourism. While existing studies have identified various push and pull factors that influence travel behavior (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017), there remains a critical gap in understanding how these factors, coupled with pro-environmental attitudes, collectively shape ecotourism intentions(Chi & Pham, 2024). This research not only underscores the direct influence of pro-environmental attitudes but also reveals their dynamic moderating effects, offering fresh insights into the intricate relationship

between travel motivations and ecotourism aspirations and paves the way for future exploration in this vital area.

2. Literature review

2.1 Digital Nomads

The notion of digital nomadism has captivated the interest of scholars across various social science disciplines, leading to diverse perspectives and conceptual frameworks defining this phenomenon. Originating in the mid-1990s with its first mention in academic discourse (Makimoto & Manners, 1997), digital nomadism has since been explored from numerous scholarly vantage points. It encapsulates elements of work (Nash et al., 2018), travel and leisure (de Sousa et al., 2025), lifestyle (Hannonen, 2020), and environmental factors. Digital nomads encompass location-independent IT professionals and individuals from non-IT sectors such as wellness, coaching, teaching, and artisanship (Hannonen, 2020; Nash et al., 2018), unified by their participation in the gig economy and reliance on technology for remote work (Kaya Sayarı & Coşkun, 2024).

A broader classification of "global nomads" includes those who traverse the globe to dissociate from specific locales and embrace anti-capitalist ideals (Mancinelli, 2020). However, digital nomads distinguish themselves by intertwining their travel pursuits with anti-consumption values and a departure from traditional employment(de Sousa et al., 2025). Although digital nomads have garnered growing academic and professional attention, reliable and exhaustive statistics on the magnitude and characteristics of this group remain elusive. The dearth of dependable data presents significant obstacles for researchers, policymakers, and enterprises aiming to comprehend and address the needs of this expanding cohort of remote workers(Ihrig, 2024; Nash et al., 2018).

Digital nomads align with the concept of lifestyle migration, selecting destinations that cater to their dual needs for work-life balance and adventure(Jiwasiddi et al., 2024). They gravitate toward popular tourist destinations offering reliable infrastructure and conveniences conducive to extended stays and seamless business operations (Nash et al., 2018). This blending of work and leisure has been recognized as the most holistic framework for understanding digital nomadism (Rainoldi et al., 2024; Reichenberger, 2018).While often grouped with nomadic and lifestyle travelers such as backpackers and flashpackers (Richards, 2015), digital nomads are uniquely defined by identities shaped through both professional (work) and personal (travel and leisure) dimensions (Hannonen, 2020; Reichenberger, 2018). Miocevic (2023) highlights this duality, positioning digital nomadism at the intersection of lifestyle and travel. As a result, this literature places digital nomads in between migrants and tourists, exhibiting characteristics in common with both groups yet retaining their unique identities (Hannonen, 2020).

Although digital nomads share certain traits with other traveler groups, such as backpackers and flashpackers (Richards, 2015), they exhibit unique behavioral patterns shaped by a combination of push and pull factors that influence their ecotourism intentions. Push factors, such as the desire for personal growth, knowledge-seeking, and an escape from routine, often motivate digital nomads to explore new destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). Simultaneously, pull factors like the destination's scenic beauty, cultural richness, reliable infrastructure, and sustainable practices play a vital role in attracting digital nomads to specific locations (Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). These factors collectively contribute to the intention of digital nomads to engage in ecotourism, emphasizing the integration of leisure and environmental consciousness with their work-oriented lifestyle.

2.2 Ecotourism intention

The ecotourism is defined as any kind of nature-based travel that contributes to the preservation of natural areas, has educational and interpretative elements, and has a beneficial effect on the

natural and sociocultural environment(Machnik, 2021). A simpler definition of ecotourism is provided by Stanković et al. (2022), who define it as travel to comparatively untouched natural areas for research, recreation, or volunteer work.

The act of travelling to natural locations to fully appreciate their visual beauty is referred to in this study as ecotourism. The probability of acting and the expected behaviour are reflected in behavioural intention(Ajzen, 1991; Fu & Wang, 2021). According to Chi and Pham (2024), ecotourism intention is a person's anticipated future interaction with eco-destinations. As anoutcome, This study articulates people's desire to visit comparatively unexplored natural areas, motivated by a respect for the environment and, occasionally, its cultural environment.

2.3 Travel motivation

A key element in the explanation of individual behaviour is motivation, which is defined as a brain activity that provides an individual with energy and behaviour(Colquitt et al., 2000). "Needs spurred on by curiosity and the desire to learn and experience new things in an unfamiliar place" are what drive individuals to travel (Wong & Musa, 2014). This study outlines travel motivation as anenergy that propels a person to partake in eco-tourist activities, which is consistent with the body of existing literature.

Travel motivation is well regarded in the research as a crucial element influencing ecotourism intentions.Meleddu & Pulina (2016)provided a thorough background for understanding the factors that influence travellers' willingness to pay more for ecotourism., emphasize that holiday motivations, combined with tourists' preferences, attitudes toward ecotourism, environmental beliefs, and subjective norms, substantially impact their intentions.

According to Katz, (1960) functional theory, human psychological wants and desires are driven by four motivational functions: knowledge, value-expressive, ego-defensive, and utilitarian. According to this hypothesis, travellers have a variety of reasons that have various effects on their objectives. This viewpoint has led researchers to classify travel motivations into dimensions like self-actualization, health and fitness, prestige, escaping routine, self-development, relaxation, novelty, knowledge-seeking, self-actualization, self-actualization, and nostalgia (Carvache-Franco et al., 2024; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). However, there remains restrained exploration of the specific motivations that lead to ecotourism intention. S. Lee et al., (2014) provide an exception, identifying knowledge-seeking, self-fulfilment, escape, and destination attributes as noteworthy predictors of ecotourism intention, although finding destination image to be an insignificant factor.

Based on functional theory and existing research, certain internal forces such as knowledge-seeking, self-fulfillment and escaping routine life, and external forces such as destination image and destination attributes as central to understanding ecotourism intention. While prior studies have primarily examined the direct effects of these push factors, this research shifts focus to the interface between push and pull factors. Rather than hypothesizing the direct effects of specific motivations, the study explores how these motivations, when aligned with the pro-environmental attitudes of digital nomads, collectively shape ecotourism intention.

2.4 Pro-environmental attitude

Pro-environmental attitude refers to the general impressions, feelings, and cognitive perceptions an individual forms about the environment and eco-destinations. It encompasses the knowledge, emotions, and beliefs that influence a person's behavior towards sustainable practices and eco-friendly environments (Bamberg & Möser, 2007).

According to scholars like (C.-K. Lee et al., 2021), pro-environmental attitude is a combination of affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. The affective dimension reflects emotional responses to environmental issues, while the cognitive dimension involves beliefs about the consequences of environmental actions (Steg & Vlek, 2009). The behavioral component, although not the primary focus here, links attitude to actual sustainable actions (L. Li & Wang, 2017). This study aligns pro-environmental attitude with the general perception of eco-destinations, conceptualizing it as the overall impression an individual forms about such places. Eco-destinations, which are nature-based or relatively undisturbed natural areas, often evoke pro-environmental attitudes because of their intrinsic connection to environmental conservation and sustainability (Dolnicar, Crouch, & Long, 2008).

Similar to destination image, pro-environmental attitude plays a fundamental role in influencing tourists' decisions to visit eco-destinations, as it shapes perceptions about the environmental value and appeal of these locations. Research has consistently shown that positive pro-environmental attitudes lead to higher intentions to engage in eco-tourism practices (Shen et al., 2024), underscoring the importance of fostering such attitudes to encourage eco-tourism.

2.5 Hypotheses

Existing research consistently highlights destination image as a critical determinant of behavioural intention (Chi & Pham, 2024). Tourists with a favourable perception of a destination tend to assess their travel experiences more positively, which, in turn, fosters more robust behavioural intentions (de Sousa et al., 2025; Vicente, 2024). In the context of destination choice, destination images are intrinsically connected to travel motivations, influencing decision-making processes consciously and subconsciously(Moutinho, 1987). Despite this recognition, limited studies have explicitly examined the interrelationships among pro-environmental attitude, travel motivation, and eco-tourism intention.

Research on eco-tourism motivation underscores the interplay between personal values and destination appeal. Scholars suggest that travellers with strong environmental consciousness are drawn to destinations that reflect their sustainability ideals (Carreira et al., 2022). This alignment between ecological values and destination attributes fosters deeper emotional engagement, reinforcing travel intentions. Consequently, destinations promoting sustainability not only attract eco-conscious travellers but also enhance their commitment to responsible tourism practices, shaping long-term ecological travel behaviours(Ghaderi et al., 2024).

Concurrently, studies on destination image emphasize its pivotal role in shaping ecological travel behaviours. For instance,Zhang et al., (2014) argue that an individual's perception of destination image serves as a fundamental precursor to pro-environmental travel choices. Similarly, Nguyen et al., (2021)assert that individuals who perceive a destination as environmentally favourable are more likely to opt for ecotourism over alternative forms of travel. From this perspective, it can be inferred that individuals seeking self-expression and personal value alignment are more likely to form stronger intentions to visit destinations perceived as natural and undisturbed, provided they have a positive destination image.
Building on this rationale, this study hypothesizes the following:

H1: Pro-environmental attitude positively moderates the relationship between destination image and ecotourism intention.

The significance of destination attributes in shaping tourist behavior has been widely acknowledged in general literature about tourism (SUMARYADI et al., 2021). Huang & Bu, (2022)provide proof that motivations related to destination attributes positively effect tourist satisfaction, It is what motivates people to want to visit particular places. In this context, Lee et al.

(2014) demonstrate that motivations linked to destination attributes are strong predictors of ecotourism intentions. Similarly, Pham and Nguyen (2020) point out that people's inclination to visit ecotourism destinations is much increased by the perception of ecological destinations. Integrating these findings, it can be inferred that individuals who are curious or seek novel experiences, when exposed to positive images of undisturbed natural destinations, are more likely to choose eco-destinations for their travel. Consequently, this research puts forth the following hypothesis.

H2: Pro-environmental attitude positively moderates the relationship between destination attributes and ecotourism intention.

Existing research has demonstrated a strong connection between individuals' motivations for acquiring knowledge and their broader intentions regarding tourism activities(Lee et al., 2014). For instance, Jayasekara et al., (2024) highlight that erudition is a crucial factor driving travel behaviour, particularly among senior travellers. Ecotourism, with its unique opportunities for education and interaction with natural environments, appeals strongly to individuals seeking to deepen their understanding of nature. This suggests that those motivated by knowledge acquisition are more inclined to choose ecotourism over other forms of tourism.

Furthermore, research underscores the influence of a positive environmental image in enhancing tourists' motivation to learn more about the realm of natureKruger & Saayman, (2010) argue that exposure to a favourable image of natural settings increases tourists' interest in learning about the attributes of a destination, such as its heritage and culture. Those that have a strong desire to comprehend the natural world are noteworthy tend to form stronger preferences for destinations that project a positive environmental image. Such individuals are more likely to pursue ecotourism as a means of fulfilling their knowledge-seeking aspirations.

In essence, individuals with a pronounced desire for learning and intellectual growth are more likely to engage in ecotourism when exposed to destinations perceived as environmentally appealing. These individuals are drawn to ecotourism as it aligns with their intrinsic motivation to explore and learn from nature.

In light of this, the research puts up the following hypothesis:

H3: Pro-environmental attitude positively moderates the relationship between individuals' knowledge-seeking motives and ecotourism intention.

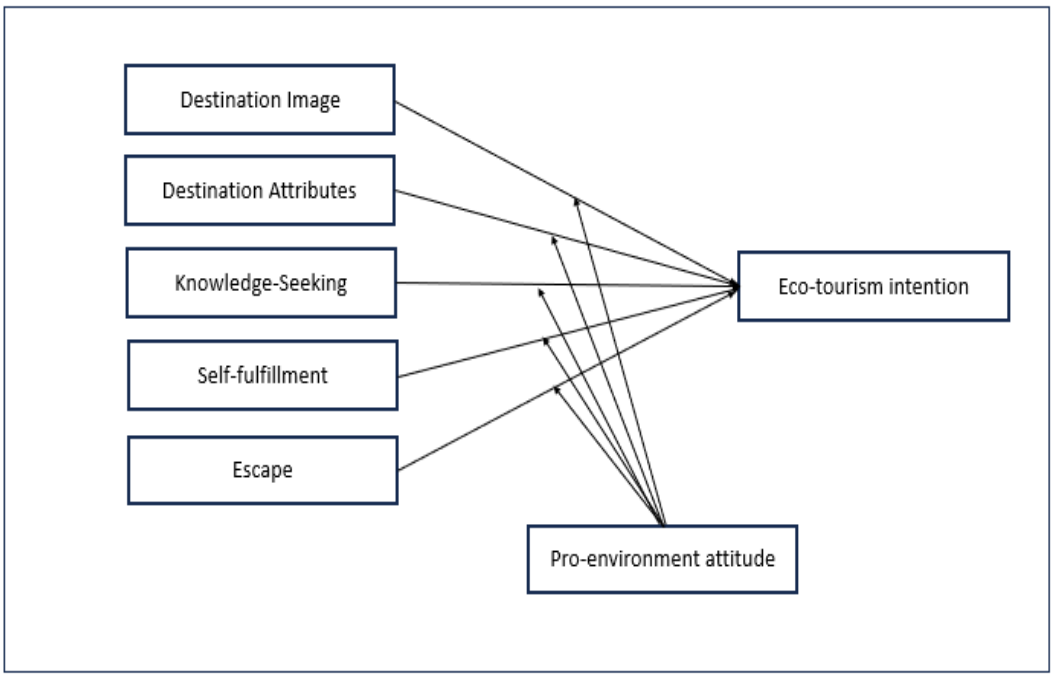
According to earlier studies, those who travel for self-fulfilment reasons are more likely to do so (Nakonechnykh et al., 2021). According to these studies, the desire to travel to a place is the consequence of an internal process, like self-fulfilment, which ultimately results in behavioural action. Therefore, the desire for personal growth—encompassing interests, skills, self-confidence, and a sense of accomplishment—can drive individuals to select eco-destinations(C.-K. Lee et al., 2021). Simultaneously, another stream of research highlights the role of knowledge-seeking in shaping eco-tourism intentions. Scholars suggest that individuals driven by intellectual curiosity and a desire for experiential learning are more likely to engage in eco-tourism, as such experiences provide opportunities for acquiring new knowledge about nature, sustainability, and local cultures (Kim et al., 2018). When destinations offer rich educational experiences aligned with travelers' cognitive pursuits, individuals are more inclined to choose eco-tourism over conventional travel options (Chi & Pham, 2024). Consequently, it can be inferred that individuals motivated by knowledge-seeking tendencies will exhibit stronger intentions to visit destinations that facilitate learning and environmental awareness. In light of the above, The following hypothesis is put forth:

H4. Pro-environment attitude positively moderates the relationship between the individuals' Self-fulfillment motive and ecotourism intention.

According to existing research, people travel to escape from their everyday world or to satisfy a need(Carvache-Franco et al., 2024). M. Li & Cai, (2012) demonstrate a connection amongThe driving factors of travel motivation, including Knowledge seeking, a sense of belonging, and the desire to escape, as well as tourists' intentions in various travel scenarios. In their renowned study on ecotourism and travel motivation, Sastre& Phakdee-Auksorn, (2017)claim that escape motives have a significant influence on travellers' decisions to visit eco-destinations. Additionally, Baloglu & Mangaloglu, (2001)show that the escape purpose and destination image are important factors that influence travel intention based on data from Turkish visitors. Integrating the findings from these studies, we propose that individuals seeking to break free from their routine lifestyles and who are exposed to an image of a naturally pristine destination are more likely to elect such destinations for travel. From this perspective, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H5. Pro-environment attitude positively moderates the relationship between the individuals' escape motive and their ecotourism intention.

Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework for this study.



(Source: Author's Compilation)

3. Methodology

3.1 Geographical scope

Himachal Pradesh, often hailed as the "Land of the Gods," stands as a premier eco-tourism destination in India, offering an unparalleled blend of natural splendour, cultural heritage, and sustainable practices. Nestled in the majestic Himalayas, the state is a treasure trove of diverse ecosystems, ranging from lush green valleys and alpine meadows to dense forests and snow-capped peaks. The Great Himalayan National Parkexemplifies Himachal's commitment to preserving its unique biodiversity, providing sanctuary to several endangered species and serving as a beacon for conservation-driven tourism (UNESCO, 2023).

What sets Himachal Pradesh apart is its ability to harmonize tourism with sustainability. Home to picturesque hill stations like Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, and Dalhousie, the state attracts millions of eco-conscious travelers seeking rejuvenation amidst pristine landscapes. In 2023, the state witnessed a 6% increase in tourist arrivals, with 1.60 crore visitors, including 62,806

foreigners, up from 1.51 crore in 2022, reflecting its growing appeal among eco-conscious travelers. Unlike conventional tourism hotspots, Himachal offers immersive experiences such as trekking through unspoiled trails, engaging with indigenous communities, and participating in eco-friendly practices like organic farming and nature conservation.

Himachal Pradesh's unique positioning as an eco-tourism leader stems from its proactive policies, community-driven conservation efforts, and focus on preserving its cultural and natural heritage. Its commitment to green energy, such as hydropower initiatives and sustainable farming practices, further reinforces its status as a top destination for environmentally conscious travellers. Understanding the dynamics that draw tourists to Himachal's pristine havens provides invaluable insights into how eco-tourism can thrive without compromising the fragile balance of nature. For other mountainous regions worldwide, Himachal Pradesh serves as a shining example of how to embrace tourism as a force for good—offering a blueprint for sustainable growth while celebrating the wonders of nature.

3.2 Measurement

This study employs established measurement scales that have been developed and validated in prior empirical research. In particular, three items are used to measure self-fulfilment and four ones to measure knowledge-seeking. Five items are used to evaluate the destination image, and three items are utilised for capturing the escape.S. Lee et al., (2014) are the source of all of these things. Three elements are used to measure destination attribute modified fromEusébio & Vieira, (2013). The four items are used to measure intention to visit eco-destinations were modified from (Choi & Johnson, 2019; Hultman et al., 2015). According to (Fu & Wang, (2021), three criteriaare used to measure pro-environmental attitude. Table 2 contains a list of the measuring elements. Every item in this research is assessed on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree."

Two rounds of pre-tests were carried out before the survey was distributed to ensure that the questions were understandable and readable. In the first round, the questionnaire was completed by 14 experts, all of them were academics with experience in tourism and hospitality management. The questions were reworded for clarity in response to their input. The questionnaire was pre-tested in a second round with 45 domestic tourists from Himachal Pradesh. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the trustworthiness of the pilot test data. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each construct ranges from 0.70 to 0.85, indicating the high reliability of each assessment question.

Confirmatory component analysis (CFA) and common method bias were also used to validate the measurement model. This study uses the methodology described by Podsakoff et al., (2003) to examine the possible problem of common method bias.

3.3 Sampling and data collection

Digital nomads who work while travelling made up the study's sample. Both domestic and international visitors who had been to Himachal Pradesh's ecotourism destinations and were at least 20 years old made up the target group. A convenience sample technique was employed to collect data. The data were gathered from four popular eco-tourism sites in India—Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, and Dalhousie—during a designated survey period in December 2024. The research sample comprises 435 valid responses, with the demographic details summarized in Table 1. Data collection was conducted at various eco-tourist destination sites, following the guidance of Hair, (2009). Surveys were administered at key eco-tourism hubs in Shimla and Manali, which serve as primary gateways to numerous eco-tourism attractions in the region. For example, there are several eco-tourism sites near Shimla, such as Chail Wildlife Sanctuary and Tattapani Hot Springs , and in Manali, popular sites include Solang Valley and Rohtang Pass . Similarly, in Dharamshala and

Dalhousie, visitors can access sites like Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary and Khajjiar Lake. Given the proximity of these eco-tourism sites to the cities, there was a high likelihood of recruiting participants who had previously visited eco-tourism destinations before the pandemic.

In a courteous manner, prospective participants were questioned about their experiences at eco-tourist destinations. Individuals who gave a positive response were asked to participate in the survey. They were presented with the goal of the research, which was to create plans for safeguarding natural areas from the effects of overtourism. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data, and six research assistants with training distributed them. One of the authors kept a close eye on the procedure and provided supervision.

Eligible participants in all four locations received 600 questionnaires in total. Participants were free to submit incomplete questionnaires and stop responding at any moment. in accordance with Chi and Han's (2020, p. 367) invalid data removal strategy, which was used in this study to guarantee data validity. The response rate was 72.5%, with 435 legitimate surveys completed, 112 valid replies from Shimla, 121 from Manali, 101 from Dharamshala, and 101 from Dalhousie. With a suitable 95% CI and ±0.05 sampling error, this response rate guarantees statistical validity.

3.4 Data analysis method

The hierarchical regression analysis technique developed by Baron & Kenny, (1986) was used to evaluate moderating effects to put the hypotheses to the test. In addition to ensuing the guidance provided by Kenny & Judd, (1984) for calculating multiple indicators. Five reasons for travelling and pro-environmental sentiments were added to the regression model in the first step. The second step involved concurrently adding the interaction variables to the model

Table 1: Sample Profile

Demographic		*Percentofsample(%age)*
Gender	Male	48.0
	Female	52.0
Age	20-29	32.3
	30–39	29.2
	40–49	29.4
	Above50	9.10
location	Shimla	42.3
	Manala	44.6
	Dharamshala	10.4
	Dalhousie	2.70
Nationality	India	33.7
	Foreigner	66.3
Average per year spending(USD)	Below1000	22.1
	1000–2000	26.5
	2000–3000	19.8
	3000–4000	15.6
	Above4000	16.0

4. Results

4.1 Research sample profile

There were 435 responses that are valid in the research sample., with the demographic details presented in Table 1. Male participants make up 48% of the research sample, while female

participants make up 52%. 32.2% of participants are younger between the ages of 20 and 29, 58.6% are between the ages of 30 and 49, and 9.1% are over 50.Based on nationality, 33.7% of the respondents were Indian, while 66.3% were foreign nationals.Based on the location of eco-tourism, 42.3% of the tourists were in Shimla, 44.6% in Manali, 10.4% in Dharamshala, and 2.7% in Dalhousie.

4.2 Measurement model

Table 2 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The fit indices, all exceeding the recommended 0.90 threshold, demonstrate the model's good fit. Specifically, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) are 0.933, 0.925, and 0.932 respectively, collectively indicating the model's adequate fit. The measurement model also shows suitable chi-square and RMSEA values, with a chi-square/df ratio of 2.184 and an RMSEA of 0.052, aligning with the guidelines set by F. Hair Jr et al., (2014). Table 2 also reveals that the composite reliability estimates for each construct meet the required standards: destination image (0.854), eco-tourism intention (0.871), self-fulfillment (0.851), knowledge-seeking (0.790), destination image (0.858), escape (0.755), and destination attributes (0.798). As suggested by Fornell & Larcker, (1981), Table 2 establishes convergent validity, with the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct surpassing the 0.5 threshold. Moreover, Table 4 confirms the discriminant validity of the research constructs, showing that the squared AVE for each construct exceeds the corresponding correlation coefficients between paired constructs. In conclusion, the findings in Tables 2 and 3 confirm the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Table 2: The reliability and convergent validity

Constructs/variables	*Standard loadings*	*Mean*	*Cronbach's alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*
Pro-environmental attitude			*0.823*	0.823	0.55
Are you prepared to pay more for environmental protection?	0.874	3.98			
Do you want to pay more taxes to safeguard the environment?	0.675	3.89			
Are you prepared to sacrifice your quality of life in order to preserve the environment?	0.625	3.93			
Self-fulfillment			0.855	0.851	0.61
pursue my own interests	0.721	3.36			
Develop my abilities and skills	0.803	3.65			
Increase your self-assurance	0.823	3.39			
Knowledge-seeking			0.798	0.790	0.57
Discover novel locations	0.737	3.76			
Learn about various cultures	0.674	3.86			
Discover various ways of	0.723	4.21			

living					
Discover new things.	0.678	3.56			
Destination image			*0.854*	*0.854*	*0.53*
A landscape that is inherently lovely	0.654	2.83			
An alluring location	0.793	3.24			
An untouched area's appearance	0.772	2.83			
A glimpse of a clean environment	0.690	2.92			
The allure of natural wonders	0.778	2.95			
Escape			*0.753*	*0.755*	*0.69*
Reduce the strain of life	0.799	3.56			
Desire to lessen the sense of isolation	0.735	3.40			
Escape away from life's routine	0.745	3.44			
Destination attributes			*0.749*	*0.798*	*0.53*
Signpost/ease in finding locations	0.743	3.66			
Historic and cultural landmarks	0.739	3.29			
Landscapes and additional natural features	0.675	3.35			
Intention to visit ecotourism destination			*0.871*	*0.886*	*0.59*
In the near future, travel to a naturally stunning place.	0.832	3.85			
In the near future, visit a place that has not been disturbed.	0.867	3.86			
Take into consideration an ecotourism trip soon.	0.774	3.58			
Take a trip focused on ecotourism soon.	0.777	3.89			
Note(s):AVE5averagevarianceextracted(>0.5),compositereliability>0.5.Chi-square/df52.184, CFI50.933,TLI50.925,IFI50.932andRMSEA50.052					

4.3 Hierarchical regression analyses

The first phase of the hierarchical regression analysis, as displayed in Table 4's Model 1, reveals that four out of five travel motivations exhibit significant positive relationships with ecotourism intention. These include knowledge-seeking, self-fulfillment, destination attributes, and escape. Notably, destination image motive does not demonstrate a significant correlation. Furthermore, the analysis uncovers a robust positive association between pro-environmental attitudes and the intention to engage in ecotourism.

Table 3: Discriminant validity

Constructs	*Pro-env attitude*	*Knowledge seeking*	*Self-fulfillment*	*Destination image*	*Destination attributes*	*Escape*	*Eco-tourism Intension*
Pro-env attitude	*0.744*						
Knowledge-seeking	0.543	*0.749*					
Self-fulfillment	0.621	0.715	*0.783*				
Destination image	0.503	0.689	0.752	*0.736*			
Destination attributes	0.357	0.574	0.575	0.656	*0.729*		
Escape	0.368	0.362	0.441	0.537	0.547	*0.782*	
Eco tourism Intention	0.442	0.450	0.467	0.478	0.532	0.443	*0.813*
Note(s): Italic numbers= squared average variance extracted (Squared AVE)							

Table 4: Results of hierarchical regression analysis

Relationship with ecotourism intention	*β*	*Sig*	*t*	*β*	*Sig*	*t*	
Destination image	0.078	0.065	1.849	0.081	0.075	1.975	
Destination attributes	0.168	***	5.251	0.189	***	4.464	
Knowledge-seeking	0.256	***	5.668	0.235	***	4.132	
Self-fulfillment	0.187	***	3.497	0.176	**	3.699	
Escape	0.222	***	4.274	0.154	***	3.982	
Pro-environmental attitude X destination image				0.109	0.101	1.645	H1:Notaccepted
Pro-environmental attitude X destination attributes				0.142	**	2.148	H2:Accepted
Pro-environmental attitude X knowledge-seeking				0.182	**	2.157	H3:Accepted
Pro-environmental attitudeX self-fulfillment				0.146	*	1.784	H4:Accepted
Pro-environmental attitude X escape				0.153	**	2.576	H5:Accepted
Note(s): ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, VIF<2 in all cases, β5standardised β, F-value is the mean square regression divided by the mean square residual							

The results of the second-stage analysis, presented in Table 4 (Model 2), evaluate the interaction effects between each dimension of travel motives and pro-environmental attitudes when considered simultaneously. The significant and positive interaction effects observed between Pro-environmental attitude and the remaining travel motives—excluding destination image—underscore the critical role of these interactions in promoting ecotourism.

Apart from demonstrating the importance of these interaction terms, hierarchical regression analysis can be employed to assess the interaction effects. This is achieved by examining the

change in the R-square value from the initial main effects model (first stage) to the model incorporating interaction effects (second stage). Table 4 reveals that the inclusion of interaction terms between pro-environmental attitudes and each of the five travel motives results in an increase in the R-square value, accompanied by a statistically significant F-value (63.949).

The research outcomes reveal that pro-environmental attitudes shows a significant role in amplifying the connections between ecotourism intention and four key travel motivators: knowledge seeking, self-fulfillment, destination attributes, and the desire to escape. This enhancement occurs independently of the existing relationship between destination image and ecotourism intention. Consequently, all proposed hypotheses find support, with H1 being the sole exception.

5. Discussion and theoretical contributions

The study's main conclusions show that the travel motivations—knowledge-seeking, self-fulfilment, destination attributes, and escape—have a greater effect on ecotourism intention when Pro-environmental attitude is taken into consideration. These findings imply that the demand for ecotourism rises when pro-environmental attitude coincides with travellers' internal push and external pull forces of motivation . These results are new since no previous study has examined how travel reasons and ecotourism intention relate to pro-environmental attitude. Notwithstanding their uniqueness, the findings are in line with two important fields of study: travel motivation and pro-environmental sentiments. In particular, the results imply that favourable perceptions of the place may draw people to ecotourism destinations who are motivated by self-fulfilment. This is in line with the findings of previous research that those who are driven by self-fulfilment are more inclined to travel(Su et al., 2020; Suhud et al., 2021). Similarly, it aligns with Pham and Nguyen (2020), who reported that pro-environmental attitudes significantly influence ecotourism intention.

The study also shows that when exposed to favourable pro-environmental attitude, people with information-seeking intentions are more inclined to select eco-tourism locations. This finding confirms Lee et al. (2014) noted the significant influence of knowledge-seeking on return intention, which is in line with Zhang et al., (2014) theory that exposure to a positive destination image stimulates tourists to explore nature.Furthermore, the study discovers that visually appealing ecotourism content can encourage individuals with escape-related motivations to return to eco-attractions in the future. This is in line with the findings of Suhud et al., (2021)who concluded that destination image is a significant factor of travel intention, and Adam et al., (2019), who discovered that the escape motive increases demand for ecotourism.

Additionally, the findings show that people who are motivated by destination attributes may be drawn to eco-tourism by good pro-environmental sentiments. This outcome is in line with previous studies' conclusions that destination attributes are important predictors of ecotourism intention(Eusébio & Vieira, 2013; Huang & Bu, 2022), and travel intention is significantly influenced by the perception of ecotourism sites (Pham et al., 2020).

The study concludes, however, that a favourable perception of ecotourism alone is insufficient to draw in socialization-driven individuals. This outcome supports the conclusion drawn by Lee et al. (2014) that there is little correlation between the desire to return and the motivation for destination attributes. Although the direct effects of pro-environmental attitude and eco-tourism purpose were not the main focus of this study, the direct associations discovered are consistent with earlier studies. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2014) found a strong correlation between ecotourism intention and travel motivation (knowledge-seeking, self-development, escape, and destination attributes). Among these motivations, knowledge-seeking had the greatest influence on ecotourism intention, while destination attributes had the least impact. Notably, escape motivation had a

stronger effect on ecotourism intention than destination attributes, likely due to the rise of rural tourism, which appeals to tourists seeking escapeChi & Pham, (2024).

Finally, the study found no significant relationship between destination image and ecotourism intention, which is consistent with Lee et al. (2014) but contradicts Adam et al. (2019). This inconsistency may be due to cultural differences, as the importance of natural settings for destination image may vary across cultures.

Two important theoretical contributions are made by this study. First, it emphasises how pro-environmental sentiments influence travel motivations and ecotourism intention in a way that increases demand for ecotourism. Second, the study addresses a knowledge gap in the area of communication strategies for promoting ecotourism, which has not gotten much attention in the literature on tourism marketing. It implies that in order to maximise positive effects, like a greater desire to visit or return to eco-destinations, effective communication tactics should adapt ecological images to the various travel motivations of various populations.

6. Management implications and research limitations

Policymakers and ecotourism marketers can both benefit from the study's managerial lessons. Policymakers should concentrate on developing and enforcing laws and regulations that protect the natural landscapes of tourist sites in order to guarantee sustainable development. Ecotourism marketers, on the other hand, should design marketing strategies that align pro-environmental attitude with the diverse needs of their target audience, which are driven by varying travel motivations. For tourists motivated by knowledge-seeking, marketing strategies should emphasize the perception of learning in ecotourism destinations. Marketers should draw attention to events and environmental education programs hosted at these locations in order to draw in self-fulfilling persons. For tourists seeking an escape from routine, marketers should promote images that reflect tranquil and mysterious environments. Lastly, to appeal to those motivated by destination attributes, marketing efforts should feature captivating pictures of the sports, competitions, and outdoor activities available at eco-destinations.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. Firstly, it mainly concentrates on the variables pertinent to the research objectives and ignores other factors that may have a significant impact on ecotourism intention, environmentally moral values, and the desire for adventure or nature experiences. These elements should be included as control variables in future studies to yield more thorough and reliable findings. Furthermore, only five aspects of travel motivation are examined in this study. To learn more about the behaviour of tourists, future research could examine a wider spectrum of travel motivating factors. The moderating impacts of other pull variables linked to ecotourism sites, like lodging, transportation, and logistical infrastructure, should be investigated in future studies.

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