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## **From Newness to Belonging: The Synergy of Novelty Seeking, Destination Brand Equity, and Existential Authenticity in Tourism**

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### **Abstract**

Tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit are pivotal determinants of a destination's long-term competitiveness, as satisfied tourists not only return but also act as powerful advocates through positive word-of-mouth. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of novelty seeking, destination brand equity, and existential authenticity on tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit. Data were collected from 346 tourists who were selected on purpose. Tourists were asked to provide their opinions about the key constructs of this study. Hypotheses were tested with the help of structural equation modeling. Results show that novelty seeking, destination brand equity, and existential authenticity positively affected tourist satisfaction. Moreover, the study confirms that satisfied tourists were more likely to revisit and recommend the selected destinations to others through positive word of mouth. The study has crucial policy recommendations that are presented at the end of the article.

### **Introduction**

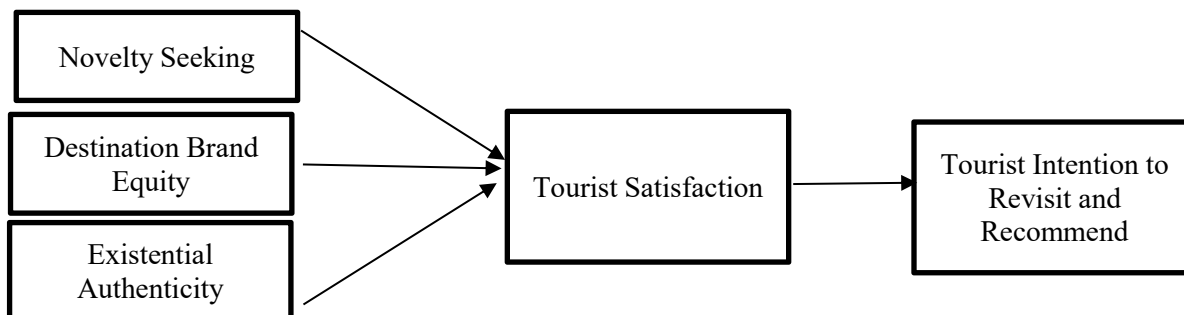
Tourism is defined as the travelling of people across different areas, cities, and regions for the purpose of pleasure or business (Parsons et al., 2018). Tourism is one of the fastest growing businesses in the world. It creates employment opportunities for the local people and help in building economy of a country. Pakistan is also investing in tourism industry from the last two decades. Tourism is growing at a rapid pace in Pakistan due to better infrastructure and people's willingness to travel and enjoy beautiful destinations. The Northern areas of Pakistan are full of beautiful rivers, snowy mountains, social fabric, affordability, lush green plateaus, and thick forests (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022; Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018). Mansehra is one of the most visited places in Pakistan. Every year, millions of tourists visit Naran, Kaghan, and Balakot (Arshad, Iqbal, & Shahbaz, 2018). These areas are accessible quite easily. They have mountains, rivers, water falls, forests, lakes, snow, and scenic beauty. The stunning natural beauty of these areas make them the most attracted places in Pakistan. However, there is a large scale construction that has disturbed the natural beauty of these areas. There are numerous hotels and motels constructed in last ten years and the commercialization activities have overtaken at a very alarming speed. That is why it is important to understand tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit in these areas.

The current literature has identified a number of factors that affect tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit and recommend. Some of these determinants are perceived behavioral control, tourist norms, price, destination image, brand loyalty, government infrastructure, sustainable practices, eco-tourism, cultural activities, social fabrics, sustainability related factors, smart tourism technologies, ease of access, and local support (Jebbouri et al., 2022; Libre, Manalo, & Laksito,



2022; Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022; Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, & Prayag, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023; Syakier & Hanafiah, 2022; Thipsingh et al., 2022; Torabi et al., 2022; Zulvianti, Aimon, & Abror, 2022). However, what is still not known is the impact of novelty seeking, destination brand equity, and existential authenticity on tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit. This study examines the effect of novelty seeking, destination brand equity, and existential authenticity on tourist satisfaction. Moreover, the effect of tourist satisfaction on intention to revisit and recommend is also investigated in this study.

This research study has three objectives. First, the effect of novelty seeking on tourist satisfaction is investigated. Second, the effect of destination brand equity and existential authenticity on tourist satisfaction was tested. Third, the impact of tourist satisfaction on tourist intention to revisit and recommend was examined. The research model is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: The Research Model**

## Hypotheses Development

Novelty seeking is a behavior that is based on seeking new and novel things for the purpose of travelling. Tourists seek novelty so that they can get unique experience each time they travel to the similar destination. These novelties range from experience that one can get from travelling and learning about new culture, place, thing, social event, or any such thing. It is important for tourism industry to provide new and unique experiences to tourists (Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022). For example, introducing new hiking trails, having social events, encouraging cultural exchange through homestay tourism, introducing new places that have been untapped, going for adventure, eco-tourism, and making tourists to interact with local community can all be unique experience for tourists. Novelty seeking motivates tourists to visit again and again with some purpose. According to theory of novelty, individuals look for activities and stimulus that can help them to get stimulation. Unfamiliar experiences that one gets through travelling and visiting certain places is a source of stimulation. Travelling to new places or travelling to same places but with different and varying perspective can stimulate tourists and provide them with unique experiences that are different from normal life experiences. Travelling to a place where there is nothing new would not stimulate experiences to a new level. That is why when stimulation gets to an optimal level, the satisfaction of tourist start to deteriorate.

The effect of novelty seeking on tourist satisfaction is expected to be positive. Novelty seeking is a behavior that is based on seeking new and novel things for



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the purpose of travelling. Tourists seek novelty so that they can get unique experience each time they travel to the similar destination (Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023). Going in hilly areas such as Naran and Kaghan would always offer something new and unique to tourists. That is why they prefer to revisit because the satisfaction level in each visit is more and more. There are new treks to explore, novel adventures to try, and new plateaus to witness. Each year, there are new hotels added to the destination and there are untapped villages to explore. These novelties range from experience that one can get from travelling and learning about new culture, place, thing, social event, or any such thing. It is important for tourism industry to provide new and unique experiences to tourists. For example, introducing new hiking trails, having social events, encouraging cultural exchange through homestay tourism, introducing new places that have been untapped, going for adventure, eco-tourism, and making tourists to interact with local community can all be unique experience for tourists. Novelty seeking motivates tourists to visit again and again with some purpose.

According to theory of novelty, individuals look for activities and stimulus that can help them to get stimulation. Unfamiliar experiences that one gets through travelling and visiting certain places is a source of stimulation (Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023). Travelling to new places or travelling to same places but with different and varying perspective can stimulate tourists and provide them with unique experiences that are different from normal life experiences. Travelling to a place where there is nothing new would not stimulate experiences to a new level. That is why when stimulation gets to an optimal level, the satisfaction of tourist start to deteriorate.

Novelty-seeking theory offers a robust theoretical basis for understanding destination choice behaviour, illustrating that consumers may switch products or explore new options even when satisfied with their initial purchase. Novelty itself has been found to generate satisfaction (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Cheng & Lu, 2013; Jang & Feng, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). In support of this, most respondents in one study indicated that if a destination closely resembles their home country, they see little motivation to visit it. Empirical evidence further suggests that novelty influences both satisfaction and destination loyalty, highlighting its role in the formation of tourist satisfaction (Assaker, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2011; Cheng & Lu, 2013). Interestingly, novelty seeking has been shown to positively affect travel experience satisfaction in smart tourism contexts (Jang & Feng, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021), yet it appears to have no significant impact in meeting, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions tourism. In contrast, young tourism enterprises engaged in ecotourism demonstrate a strong emphasis on novelty seeking, with visitors reporting higher levels of satisfaction as a result. Therefore,

***H1: Novelty seeking positively impacts tourist satisfaction.***

Destination brand equity refers to the tangible and intangible assessment of a destination by tourists. There are two ways in which researchers have assessed brand equity. The first assessment is based on financial metrics and only tangible assets are made part of the assessment process. The second brand equity dimension is customer perspective and this is most commonly used by marketers (Gartner, 2014; Kladou & Kehagias, 2014; Im et al., 2012). The reason to use customer perspective is that it is actually the customers that would assess the



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brand value and their opinions matter the most in designing brands. Brand value is more accurately assessed through financial models but in tourism management, it is important to ascertain the value of tourists in deciding what values the most in choosing a destination. It also provides a better insight into tourists' attitudes, values, actions, and behaviors. Tourists assess destination brand equity on the basis of five key dimensions (Chi et al., 2020; Dedeoğlu et al., 2019; Ghafari, Ranjbarian, & Fathi, 2017; Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015). First, brand knowledge is the knowledge that a tourist has about the destination. This knowledge includes a know-how of the place, the travel time, the attractions to visit, dos and don'ts of the destination, things to take care of, the social fabric of the local people living there, and the amount of money needed to travel to the destination. Destination brand equity is the overall value that tourists assign to the destination on the basis of tangible and intangible assets. These assets should continuously be improved so that tourists assign more and more value to a destination each time they visit it. Destination brand awareness is the second dimension of brand equity (Ghafari, Ranjbarian, & Fathi, 2017; Kashif, Samsi, & Sarifuddin, 2015).

Tourists assign value to the destination on the basis of the awareness that they have about intangible benefits associated with visiting the place. These benefits range from social interactions, unique experience, the natural beauty, the prospect of adventure tourism, sustainability practices in place, the concern for the nature, and taking care of tourists' needs and desires (Chekalina, Fuchs, & Lexhagen, 2018; Ekinci et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2022; Lim & Weaver, 2014). Brand image is the third dimension that refers to the combination of measurable and abstract mechanism associated with the brand. If the destination is practicing conservation, recycling, waste management system, and green tourism, the image gets better in the eyes of tourists. Moreover, if the local people are hospitable, friendly, and humble, the destination image is raised.

Fourth, perceived quality is another dimension on which brand value assessment is made. It is the overall quality perceptions of tourists about a destination (Ekinci et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2022; Lim & Weaver, 2014). It is comparison of attributes, benefits, and superiority of a destination with other destinations. If the destination offers more psychological, tangible, and emotional benefits, it is usually recommended by tourists to others through positive word of mouth. The last dimension of destination brand equity is brand loyalty. It refers to the emotional attachment that one develops with a destination. It is a combination of attitudinal and behavioral attachment with the brand. If the destination is close to the heart and one finds peace of mind and tranquility in it, it refers to attitudinal attributes of the destination. In the same vein, if the behavior of a tourist is to revisit the destination and recommend it to others, it is behavioral attachment with the destination. Destination brand equity is the value that one derives from the destination and the value is translated in form of tourist satisfaction. Therefore,

***H2: Destination brand equity positively affects tourist satisfaction.***

Existential authenticity refers to the sense of being true and genuine to oneself (Kirillova, Lehto, & Cai, 2017). In tourism context, it refers to tourists' sense of how they feel about a place regardless of the cultural or environmental aspects of the destination. If a tourist is experiencing a genuine and deeper connection with oneself, and if the heart is pleased by visiting a place, the authenticity of the place



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in terms of culture, society, environment, and infrastructure becomes irrelevant. Instead of conforming to external expectations, tourists want to find peace of mind and soul by visiting a particular destination (Ning, 2017; Rickly-Boyd, 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Existential authenticity originates from the existential philosophy which describes the importance of being true to oneself instead of caring about others. The authenticity is related to inner feelings and if one finds pleasure, serenity, calmness, and joy in a destination, the objective authenticity of the destination does not matter (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). For instance, if a destination is over-crowded, it is not taking care of the environment, the people are not hospitable, there is a general mistrust in society, the cultural integration is minimum, or the place is not taken care of in terms of facilities, the objective authenticity would be low and such destinations might be socially unacceptable. However, existential authenticity suggests that despite all these problems and inauthentic means, an individual decides to visit the place just because it is close to his/her heart, values, norms, and beliefs. For instance, visiting the majestically scenic areas of Naran and Kaghan might make tourists to feel self-discovery, self-expression, relaxation, and emotional liberation instead of looking at the cultural, commercial, and environmental aspects of these areas. There is a positive relationship between existential authenticity and tourist satisfaction. Existential authenticity is about how well a tourist feels about himself/herself during the stay. While tourist satisfaction is more about service quality, awareness of the destination, the services and attractions experienced at the destination, and overall facilities, existential authenticity is related to the feeling and emotional attachment that one finds by visiting the place (Fu, 2019; Kirillova, 2019; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). Tourist satisfaction is not just about the functional value of the destination. There is emotional, psychological, and identity related dimension to it. If a destination offers peace of mind and it is emotionally comforting, then functional value might not be as important. It provides deep psychological meaningfulness to the tourist. Existential authenticity is above social and altruistic values (Fu, 2019). It is more inner driven and emotional value derived from it surpasses other values.

Destination attributes do not usually make tourists having existential authenticity satisfied. They think of themselves as individual entities that are mentally relaxed by visiting the destination. This is especially true in places close to the nature (Kirillova, 2019; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). In Naran and Kaghan, tourists enjoy the rural lifestyle, the natural beauty, serenity of the place, the peacefulness and calmness of the mountains, the majestic beauty of natural springs, lakes, and rivers, the wildlife of forests, the pollution free atmosphere, and the lush green adventurous treks. These incentives are close to an individual tourist's identity, value, belief, and norms. It is because of these attributes that tourists might compromise on the service quality, food, and other facilities of hotels. They might also not consider road condition and infrastructure facilities as important as the closeness to the nature that they experience. The areas surrounding Naran and Kaghan provide tourists having existential authenticity as a means to personal fulfilment. They feel more relaxed and it also helps them in their self-discoveries. Going again and again to these areas is for emotional renewal that is hard to achieve in areas where they originally come from. They also get inter-personal authenticity by fostering genuine connections with companions, locals, and culture, enhancing the social pleasure of the trip



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(Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). They interact with local villagers, share meals with them, and observe their cultures to get existential identity. Existential authenticity enhances feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and self-actualization, which are crucial to tourist satisfaction. Therefore,

**H3:** *Existential authenticity positively impacts tourist satisfaction.*

Satisfaction is a central construct in consumer behavior research, directly influencing loyalty and repurchase intention. This relationship yields positive outcomes, as customer satisfaction generates substantial benefits for the industry (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). In business contexts, cultivating long-term relationships with customers is essential; brand loyalty encourages repeat patronage and continued consumption. Loyalty, as noted by Ning (2017), is related to repurchase behavior and considers the antecedents of actual behavior. Customer satisfaction plays a decisive role in shaping future behaviors and attitudes toward specific products or services. Within tourism research, scholars have extensively examined the link between destination attributes, tourist satisfaction, and revisit intentions (Libre, Manalo, & Laksito, 2022; Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022; Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, & Prayag, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). Empirical findings suggest that favorable destination qualities enhance both satisfaction and the likelihood of returning (Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022; Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, & Prayag, 2023), while tourism satisfaction further drives tourists' behavioral intentions to revisit and recommend destinations to others.

The inclination of tourists to return to a previously visited destination is referred to as revisit intention (Libre, Manalo, & Laksito, 2022; Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023). Emotions and cognitions derived from prior travel experiences constitute important determinants of subsequent tourism intentions (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022). Tourists' perceptions of a destination exert substantial influence on their future decision-making processes (Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, & Prayag, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). A favorable perception of destination brands is instrumental in enhancing tourists' purchasing behavior, thereby underscoring the role of brand equity in shaping tourism intentions. Empirical evidence indicates that destination brand equity has a direct and significant impact on revisit intention. For example, Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, and Prayag (2023), in a study demonstrated that destination brand equity and brand personality significantly affect willingness to revisit a city. Likewise, Rehman et al. (2023), investigating foreign tourists found a positive relationship between destination brand equity and travel intentions. Similarly, Lim, Jasim, and Das (2023) reported that both brand equity and offline experiences directly enhance the revisit intentions of tourists to five-star hotels in Bali. Consumers' willingness to pay is closely linked to their satisfaction levels. Sunny Hu et al. (2010) found that willingness to revisit is strongly associated with hotel loyalty. Even in cases where hotel prices have increased, satisfied customers are often willing to pay a premium for the services they value. Therefore,

**H4:** *Tourist satisfaction positively affects tourist intention to revisit and recommend.*



## Methods

### Measurements

All items and questions for key constructs were adopted from previous studies. These items were measured on a five point Likert scale. Novelty seeking was measured through a four-item scale developed by Assaker et al. (2011). A twelve item scale was used to measure destination brand equity adapted from Frias Jamilena et al. (2017). Existential authenticity was quantified with the help of six items from the study of Reisinger and Steiner (2006). A three item scale of Zhang et al. (2018) was used to measure tourist revisit intention. Tourist satisfaction was measured through three items developed by San Marti ´n et al. (2019).

### Participants and Procedure

Data for the current study was collected from tourists visiting Naran, Kaghan, and Balakot. This is a quantitative study and surveys were used to collect data. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data. The researcher went to Naran, Kaghan, and Balakot and stayed there for three months from 15 May 2023 to 15 August 2023. In these three months, the researcher went to tourists and asked them if they were visiting these areas for more than two times. In total 377 tourists were identified who were having at least their third visit to these areas. Out of 377 respondents, 346 completed the questionnaire. They recorded their opinions on a five point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 61% of tourists were males, 37% had visited these areas for four times, 64% were married, and 52% had a monthly income of more than 250,000 Pakistani Rupees.

### Analysis and Results

To validate five key constructs (novelty seeking, destination brand equity, existential authenticity, tourist satisfaction, and tourist intention to revisit and recommend), the research model was estimated with a confirmatory factor analysis. Table 1 shows reliabilities, composite reliabilities, standard factor loadings, and average variance extract. The test result of adaptability for five-factor model were  $\chi^2 = 485.29$ ,  $df = 311$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.56$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.061$ ,  $GFI = 0.97$ ,  $NFI = 0.97$ ,  $NNFI = 0.98$ , and  $CFI = 0.97$ .

**Table 1: Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Items		Standardized factor loading	Composite reliability	Average variance extract	$\alpha$
<b>Novelty Seeking (NS)</b>			0.82	0.68	0.83
	NS1	0.82			
	NS2	0.74			
	NS3	0.85			
	NS4	0.77			
<b>Existential Authenticity (EA)</b>			0.85	0.61	0.86
	EA1	0.74			
	EA2	0.77			
	EA3	0.74			



EA4	0.91			
EA5	0.77			
EA6	0.69			
<b>Destination Brand Equity (DBE)</b>		0.86	0.58	0.87
DBE1	0.82			
DBE2	0.78			
DBE3	0.63			
DBE4	0.76			
DBE5	0.84			
DBE6	0.83			
DBE7	0.75			
DBE8	0.79			
DBE9	0.85			
DBE10	0.69			
DBE11	0.76			
DBE12	0.72			
<b>Tourist Satisfaction (TS)</b>		0.89	0.65	0.91
TS1	0.84			
TS2	0.86			
TS3	0.92			
<b>Tourist Intention to Revisit and Recommend (TIR)</b>		0.81	0.62	0.83
TIR1	0.72			
TIR2	0.77			
TIR3	0.73			

Table 2 presents the results of the standardized regression weight and t-values which indicates the coefficient of effect between variables. According to the results from the regression paths of the hypothesis development, novelty seeking is positively affecting tourist satisfaction ( $t = 4.182$ ,  $b = 0.318$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1; destination brand equity has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction ( $t = 3.836$ ,  $b = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2; and existential authenticity is positively influencing tourist satisfaction ( $t = 7.381$ ,  $b = 0.394$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ), supporting H3. Tourist satisfaction has a positive effect on tourist intention to revisit and recommend ( $t = 9.299$ ,  $b = 0.536$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4.

**Table 2: Structural Estimates**

Hypothesis	Standard estimate	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: novelty seeking → tourist satisfaction	0.318	4.182	<0.001	Supported
H2: destination brand equity → tourist satisfaction	0.268	3.836	<0.001	Supported
H3: existential authenticity → tourist satisfaction	0.394	7.381	<0.005	Supported
H4: tourist satisfaction → tourist	0.536	9.299	<0.001	Supported



## Discussion

This research study has four findings to report. First, the effect of novelty seeking on tourist satisfaction is positive and significant. Tourists seek novelty so that they can get unique experience each time they travel to the similar destination. These novelties range from experience that one can get from travelling and learning about new culture, place, thing, social event, or any such thing. It is important for tourism industry to provide new and unique experiences to tourists (Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023; Ramesh & Jaunky, 2021; Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022). For example, introducing new hiking trails, having social events, encouraging cultural exchange through homestay tourism, introducing new places that have been untapped, going for adventure, eco-tourism, and making tourists to interact with local community can all be unique experience for tourists. Novelty seeking motivates tourists to visit again and again with some purpose. According to theory of novelty, individuals look for activities and stimulus that can help them to get stimulation. Unfamiliar experiences that one gets through travelling and visiting certain places is a source of stimulation.

Second, the effect of destination brand equity on tourist satisfaction was positive and significant. Tourists assign value to the destination on the basis of the awareness that they have about intangible benefits associated with visiting the place. These benefits range from social interactions, unique experience, the natural beauty, the prospect of adventure tourism, sustainability practices in place, the concern for the nature, and taking care of tourists' needs and desires (Chekalina, Fuchs, & Lexhagen, 2018; Ekinci et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2022; Lim & Weaver, 2014). Brand image is the combination of measurable and abstract mechanism associated with the brand. If the destination is practicing conservation, recycling, waste management system, and green tourism, the image gets better in the eyes of tourists. Moreover, if the local people are hospitable, friendly, and humble, the destination image is raised. Perceived quality is another dimension on which brand value assessment is made. It is the overall quality perceptions of tourists about a destination (Ekinci et al., 2023; Kumail et al., 2022; Lim & Weaver, 2014). It is comparison of attributes, benefits, and superiority of a destination with other destinations. If the destination offers more psychological, tangible, and emotional benefits, it is usually recommended by tourists to others through positive word of mouth. The last dimension of destination brand equity is brand loyalty. It refers to the emotional attachment that one develops with a destination. It is a combination of attitudinal and behavioral attachment with the brand. If the destination is close to the heart and one finds peace of mind and tranquility in it, it refers to attitudinal attributes of the destination. In the same vein, if the behavior of a tourist is to revisit the destination and recommend it to others, it is behavioral attachment with the destination.

Third, existential authenticity enhances tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is not just about the functional value of the destination. There is emotional, psychological, and identity related dimension to it. If a destination offers peace of mind and it is emotionally comforting, then functional value might not be as important. It provides deep psychological meaningfulness to the



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tourist. Existential authenticity is above social and altruistic values (Fu, 2019). It is more inner driven and emotional value derived from it surpasses other values. Destination attributes do not usually make tourists having existential authenticity satisfied. They think of themselves as individual entities that are mentally relaxed by visiting the destination. This is especially true in places close to the nature (Kirillova, 2019; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). Fourth, the impact of tourist satisfaction on tourist intention to revisit and recommend was confirmed. Emotions and cognitions derived from prior travel experiences constitute important determinants of subsequent tourism intentions (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023; Orden-Mejía & Huertas, 2022). Tourists' perceptions of a destination exert substantial influence on their future decision-making processes (Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, & Prayag, 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). A favorable perception of destination brands is instrumental in enhancing tourists' purchasing behavior, thereby underscoring the role of brand equity in shaping tourism intentions. Empirical evidence indicates that destination brand equity has a direct and significant impact on revisit intention. For example, Papadopoulou, Ribeiro, and Prayag (2023), in a study demonstrated that destination brand equity and brand personality significantly affect willingness to revisit a city. Likewise, Rehman et al. (2023), investigating foreign tourists found a positive relationship between destination brand equity and travel intentions.

### **Policy Recommendations**

This study offers policy level recommendations. It is important for policy makers to understand that there is a variety of tourists and each has different motives that motivate them to travel to the northern part of Pakistan. The policy makers should cater for needs and desires of tourists and should keep the areas as close to the nature as possible. There are tourists who visit these areas for their inner pleasure, peace, and satisfaction. They are not concerned about the modern day facilities but mostly prefer to explore the untapped areas. They want to interact with the local people and observe their culture. The authorities should arrange frequent local festivals and events where tourists find a chance to learn about the cultures of local villages and share and learn from their stories. The interaction between tourists and local people can be encouraged through homestay tourism as well. If tourists are provided a chance to stay with local families, enjoy local meals, and exchange cultural and social fabrics with each other, the authentic experience can be provided to tourists. Another recommendation is to facilitate destination brand equity by raising awareness about cultures and untapped areas, treks, plateaus, and forests of these areas. Tourists want unique experience and that can be provided if the government makes arrangement for alternative sources of enjoyment. Tourists would always recommend if provided with genuine and real experience. Local people should also be educated to be friendly with tourists and share their stories so that tourists learn about new culture.

### **Conclusion**

This research study confirms that novelty seeking, destination brand equity and existential authenticity enhance tourist satisfaction in Naran, Kaghan, and Balakot regions of Pakistan. It also supports the hypothesis that when tourists are satisfied, they recommend these areas to others through positive word of mouth and they also are more likely to revisit again. The research study has



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important policy level recommendations suggesting that providing authentic experience to tourists is what the government should be looking at if tourism in these areas is to be promoted.

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