

## TOURISM REVIVAL THROUGH CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP IN SWAT, DIR & CHITRAL TRIANGLE

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### Abstract

*Travel and tourism has been one of the worst-hit industries and the most hard-hit tourism destinations included Sawat, Dir, Chitral triangle of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) where militancy has not only dissuaded the tourists from touring the area rather destroyed the infrastructure as well. Pakistan had no option but to revive back the local economy through travel and tourism. Besides the rebuilding of infrastructure the revival of the tourism called for revival of psycho-social confidence in public to resume tourism without any fear or constraint. The research investigates the role of customer relationship management in reviving and promoting tourism in the triangle in post terrorism milieu. The research population includes all types of tourists visiting triangle area and registered with tour operators, hotels or district administration. A questionnaire was administered which recorded a total of 241 responses from inbound and outbound tourists. The theoretical framework proposed in the current study was tested using structural equation modelling. The results revealed that relationship management, service quality, interaction management, employee behaviour, hotel image, hotel brand, product price and ambience factor are found as significant predictors of tourism revival in the triangle.*

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## **Keywords**

Customer relationship, tourism revival, service quality, hotel image and branding, ambience factors

## **Introduction**

Tourism, one of the oldest human activity, is defined as a “socio-cultural and economic phenomenon that entails movement of people to counties, places, for personal or business or professional reason, away from their routine living environment” (Chheang, 2013). Over the year tourism has a tremendous growth and globalization has turned the industry in to in a trillion dollar business world over. The tourism industry holds rich economic dividends for the people of under developing world in term of job creation, poverty alleviation, and economic development. (Baloch, 2015) Owing to multi-dimensional industry, the tourism, is considered to be having multiplier effects across the economies without involving large scale investments and passes on the benefits down the ladder. Being a language of peace, it flourishes in the areas where peace prevails and dwindling peace deters the tourists psychologically.

Pakistan in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in particular are gifted with the all kinds of tourism destinations; Nature Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Cultural or Religious Tourism, Dark Tourism, Historic Tourism; Sports & Safari Tourism, Medical Tourism; Business Tourism and even Education Tourism and so on. Pakistan’s Islamic culture is enriched with the traditions and touches of ancient civilizations including numerous sacred places and shrines for Sikhs, Hindues and Budhists (Baloch, 2007).

Pakistan’s geographical landscape is divers in nature and ranges from four seasoned fascinating scenic beauty spots, snow caped mountains to untapped beaches, to the wide stretches of desserts to long belts of undulating plateau. The rich tourism potential, could not be taped because of bad law and order situation, chronic energy crisis, corruption, red tape, and lack of political will etc. The tourism in Pakistan that was thriving over the years in Dir, Swat and Chitral was worst-hit, in later part of the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with gross declined in national and international arrivals and tourism receipts. The

growing unrest and instability tremendously impacted the tourism industry which had once been once a favourite destination of foreign tourists. The tourism in Sawat, Dir, Chitral triangle experienced an absolute lock down of its all related industry almost for a decade which was regarded as main stay of the local economy and source of living in the area.

The militancy and campaign against terrorism has not only dissuaded the tourists from touring the area rather destroyed the infrastructure as well thereby leaving back the tourism business redundant and non-functional. Pakistan had no option but to flesh out the hardened militants and turn the area suitable for the revival of local economy through travel and tourism. The revival of the tourism in the triangle demanded two pronged revival strategy i.e. rebuilding the related infrastructure on one hand and reviving the psycho-social confidence of public to resume tourism without fear or constraint (Qamar & Baloch, 2017). The research paper aims to investigate role of customer relationship management in reviving tourism in Sawat, Dir Chitral triangle-rich in socio-religious, sight-seeing; and sports and cultural tourists' destinations with a view to chalk out an appropriate response.

### **Review of Literature**

Peter Drucker once said that the resolve of a business is to generate customers and maturity of a business is measured from maintaining satisfaction level of existing customers and adding on new ones (Drucker, 2007; Maciariello, 2009). Boosting to reviving any business customers are regarded as the primary source to be involved with their increased degree of satisfaction and relationship. Customer relationship management (CRM) is a technique to cope communication between the business and its existing and prospective customers with the underlying aim of evolving and retaining profitable customer relationships (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). CSR is only sturdiest weapon, if properly used by the manager, can guarantee that customers become and remain loyal. (Anderson & Carol, 2002). CRM uses data analysis about customers' perceptions about the company associations with its customers with special focus on attracting and maintaining

its customers for maximizing its growth. Foregoing in view this study aims to examine the role of customer relationship management in reviving tourism sector in the terrorism affected areas of Swat, Dir, and Chitral.

According to Anderson & Carol (2002) CSR is an “all-inclusive approach for generating, sustaining and intensifying its relationships with its clientele” (p.2). This implies that CRM is not only the domain of sales and marketing but also a way of doing business that encompasses all areas and concentrates upon the development of a customer focused culture. This culture is dedicated in appealing, captivating, and fascinating and retaining customers by generating and sustaining competitiveness (Anderson & Carol, 2002). It is the proven dictum that no business can prosper without its clientele and if a business don't have customers than it's not a business but a hobby (Peppers & Rogers, 2016). In short CRM is about a business managing it's promising connectively with its existing and prospective customers more efficiently, driving down costs on one hand and augmenting the viability of product and service offerings on the other.

CRM envisions a system that, “adjusts certain parts of the business technique, culture, structure and data innovation with client connections to the advantage and benefit of the tourism development”. (Zablah, 2004). Research piloted in banks of Malaysia on collaboration of their executives and the travel industry restoration finds that *there exists positive connection between communication of the board and tourism revival* (May-Chiun & Peter, 2014)). Moreover, Brown & Gulycz (2006) and Long, et.al, (2013) found interaction management as a significant predictor of tourism revival. Similarly another research study conducted in fast moving consumer goods on relationship improvement and the travel industry recovery revealed that *there exists positive relationship advancement and tourism revival* (Brown and Gulycz, 2002). Brown and Gulycz (2006); and Long, et.al, (2013) suggest that the relationship development is a significant predictor of tourism revival.

Relationships, networks and interaction institute the staple of marketing of any business; and “relationships” as a new device for customers control as companies have changed their focus from sales profit to relationship. (Gummesson, 2017; Peppers & Rogers, 2016). Businesses keep striving to increase customers value with the underlying objective of increasing overall customers base by attracting, maintaining and retaining growing one customer, and then growing to another and another through interactive relationships (Peppers & Rogers, 2016). The literature suggests that CRM facilitates tourism related business in delivering services with satisfaction to the customers and these customers include internal as well as external customers. CRM enables different entities of tourism industry to serve their customers on customized basis with reduced cost of production by plummeting intermediaries, constantly observing customers’ needs and wants.

The literature review exercise conducted for this research study involving customer relationship and tourism related industries helped to identify following features associated with the overall CRM theoretical framework:

**a. Quality Service and Tourism Revival**

Service quality means delivering a service with a value that conforms or surpasses to the client's expected value. Timely and reliable assessment of the service quality provided is most relied tool of assessing customer satisfaction, identify problem (if any) and take measures for improvement. The contemporary determination of quality is through an evaluation of perceived anticipations of a service with demonstrated performance i.e.  $SQ=P-E$  (Meister, 1990). The widely accepted and intensively used service quality determinants (SURVQUAL) is suggested by Parasuraman *et al* (1985) with its five measures. The service quality dimensions include; tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, customization, and empathy. Research measuring Chinese hotels service quality and tourism revival described significantly direct relationship between the both (Brown and Gulycz, 2006). Some of the other researches conforming the positive and direct relationship of service quality with

customers contentment leading to tourism revival and worth citing are:

| Year       | Findings   | Source   |
|------------|--|--|
| 2008       | Service quality of sports tourism enhances tourism growth and intentions to return for events  | Shonk,& Chelladurai, (2008).                     |
| 2008, 2018 | Perceived quality of rural tourism influences tourists’ fulfilment, in turn, stimulates tourist’s intent to revisit the destination or event itself. | Kumra, (2008) Gholipour& Einolahzadeh (2018)     |
| 2014       | Perceived service quality and patient satisfaction positively influences the medical tourism   | Cham, et.al. (2014)                              |
| 2017       | CRM practices and tourism satisfaction   | Abbas & Hafeez (2017)                            |
| 2019 2020  | Tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination image and destination marketing  | Chenini & Touaiti (2018) Abd Razaka et.a. (2020) |

**b. Employee behaviour and Tourism revival**

Employees behaviour here denotes to all acts, actions (covert or overt) by employees, of any industry in tourism value chain, undertaken with responsiveness, reliability and empathy in delivery of service for development of tourism or satisfaction of tourists. Research study conducted on employee behaviour and tourism revival stated existence of positive association between worker behaviour and tourism revival (Lindgreen et al., 2006). Gee et al. (2008) also retreated that employee behaviour is a significant predictor of tourism revival. Tourism Consumer behaviour is also influenced by situational influences such as time, physical and social setting, and individual’s state of mind (Spangenberg & Theron 2005; Fratu, 2011). Chen et.al (2011) stresses that tourist behavioural intents with regard to quality of service provided and customer satisfaction is directly dependent upon ethical behaviour which has the central

role in ensuring consistency and sustainability in delivery of service quality chain in any industry.

**c. Hotel Image and Hotel Brand**

Hotel service is the one of the critical intermediary in tourism industry who has direct influence upon the tourist satisfaction, tourist loyalty and their return to destination. Physical location, name and image of the hotel augmented with the responsiveness and the reliability of hotel staff in provision of service to the client influences tourist decision to repeat his/ her tourism experience or otherwise (Hussain, et.al. 2011). Few of the following research studies have confirmed that hotel image has director relationship with the customers’ satisfaction and tourism revival and growth.

| year          | Findings  | Source  |
|---------------|---|---|
| 2015          | Service quality and customer satisfaction are predictors of hotel and restaurants industry.                       | Ali ,2015;<br>Rashid et.al, 2015                                      |
| 2017,<br>2018 | Service quality enhances customer satisfaction and hotel image and in turn growth in hotel business in Pakistan   | Shah et.al, 2017<br>Shah et.al. 2018 a<br>Shah & Baloch,<br>2018b     |
| 2019          | Hotel image as a component of Service quality enhances customer satisfaction and in turn growth in hotel business | Jiajia, M., &<br>Bock ,2019<br>Naghizadeh ,<br>2019<br>Shamsudin,2019 |

**d. Price and Tourism revival**

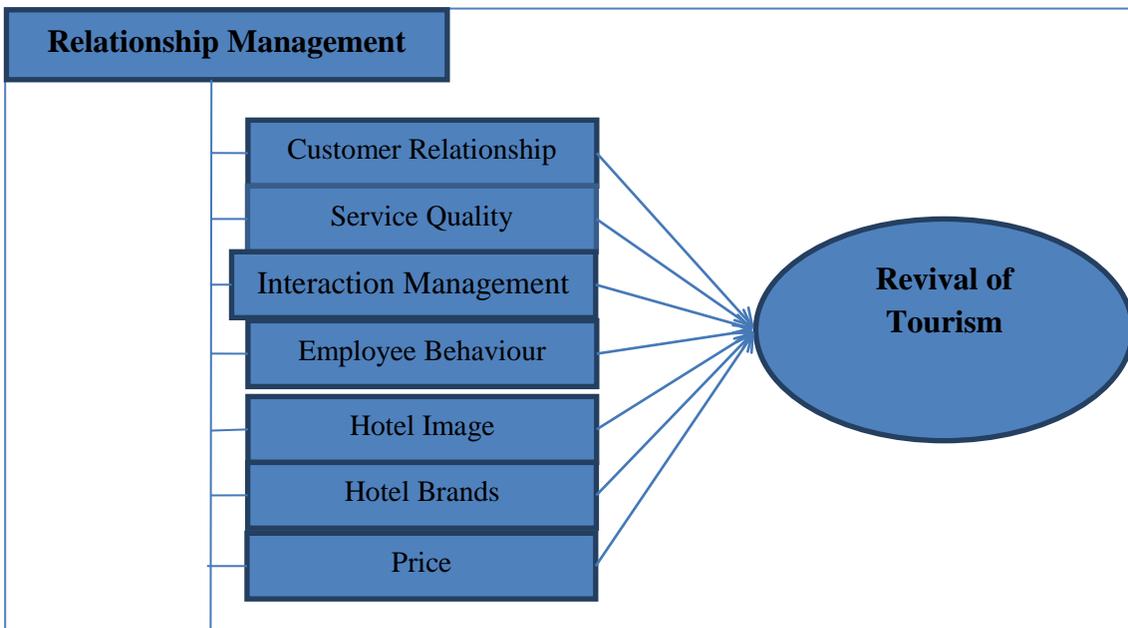
Fornell (1994) argues that consumer satisfaction and loyalty for repeat buying decision is obtained by

giving them a most ideal price because shoppers look at the costs and the product.

| Year                   | Findings  | Source  |
|------------------------|---|---|
| 2008                   | Low cost tourism has positively influenced in length of stay of tourists  | Martinez.et.al. 2008  |
| 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017 | Low cost air travel has significantly contributed in tourism growth in Spain, destination spending and other less famous destinations | Rey, et.al., 2011; Olipra, 2012<br>Eugenio, et.al, 2016<br>Tsui, 2017 |
| 2019                   | The cost effectiveness in witching cost influences tourism decisions.   | Zhang, et.al. 2019  |

### Theoretical Framework

The review of literature exercise related to CRM helped to identify the predictors of tourism revival and led to derivation of theoretical framework as follow:



### Research Methodology

The research is quantitative in approach and correlational in its nature. The research population included 608 inbound and outbound tourists visiting the triangle during summer 2019 and documented with tourist operators, hotels and with administrators in SWAT, Dir and Chitral. The research opted for sample based research and 241 tourists were calculated as sample size of the research by applying formulae (Yamane, 1967). The data was collected via self-administered but adopted questionnaires. Out of 241 questionnaires administered 238 were retrieved back, and five out of those were ineligible or incomplete thereby leaving for analyses only 233 questionnaires. The data collected was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) because of the reason that the study examines the relationship between multiple latent constructs, rather than confirming a particular theory (Hair et al., 2014).

### Data Analysis

Table: 2- Demographic Description

| <b>Gender</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Male           | 176              | 75.5           |
| Female         | 57               | 24.5           |
| Total          | 233              | 100.0          |
| <b>Age</b>     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| 18-36 years    | 124              | 53.2           |
| 36-50 years    | 41               | 17.6           |
| 50 and above   | 68               | 29.2           |
| Total          | 233              | 100.0          |
| <b>Tourist</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
| Out-Bound      | 47               | 20.2           |
| In-Bound       | 186              | 79.8           |
| Total          | 233              | 100.0          |

### Measurement Model

The two-step process as proposed by Hair et al. (2014) was adopted to carry out the analysis of the current study. During the first

step of CFA, the convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite reliability were evaluated.

Table 3 Results of the Convergent validity

| Constructs             | Indicators | Loading | CR   | AVE  |
|------------------------|------------|---------|------|------|
| Customer Relationship  | CR1        | .812    | .896 | .847 |
|                        | CR2        | .825    |      |      |
|                        | CR3        | .863    |      |      |
| Service Quality        | SQ1        | .897    | .857 | .874 |
|                        | SQ2        | .857    |      |      |
|                        | SQ3        | .812    |      |      |
| Interaction Management | IM1        | .879    | .958 | .798 |
|                        | IM2        | .974    |      |      |
|                        | IM3        | .891    |      |      |
| Employee Behaviour     | EB1        | .912    | .812 | .947 |
|                        | EB2        | .875    |      |      |
|                        | EB3        | .798    |      |      |
| Hotel Image            | HI1        | .955    | .914 | .698 |
|                        | HI2        | .836    |      |      |
|                        | HI3        | .786    |      |      |
| Hotel Brand            | HB1        | .938    | .854 | .758 |
|                        | HB2        | .973    |      |      |
|                        | HB3        | .847    |      |      |
| Price                  | P1         | .927    | .918 | .845 |
|                        | P2         | .786    |      |      |
|                        | P3         | .863    |      |      |
| Tourism Revival        | TR1        | .798    | .795 | .814 |
|                        | TR2        | .869    |      |      |
|                        | TR3        | .986    |      |      |
|                        | TR4        | .921    |      |      |
|                        | TR5        | .856    |      |      |

Note: Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances);  
 Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error Variances)}

Table 4 Results of Discriminant Validity

|                         | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Relationship Management | 0.847 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Service Quality         | 0.151 | 0.874 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Interaction Management  | 0.008 | 0.005 | 0.798 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Employee Behaviour      | 0.513 | 0.555 | 0.001 | 0.947 |       |       |       |       |       |
| Hotel Image             | 0.781 | 0.507 | 0.004 | 0.856 | 0.698 |       |       |       |       |
| Hotel Brand             | 0.805 | 0.464 | 0.001 | 0.806 | 0.895 | 0.758 |       |       |       |
| Price Revival           | 0.083 | 0.953 | 0.000 | 0.448 | 0.402 | 0.362 | 0.845 |       |       |
| Tourism                 | 0.268 | 0.872 | 0.024 | 0.564 | 0.576 | 0.605 | 0.846 | 0.381 | 0.814 |

Note: Off diagonals values are AVE and other values are squared inter-constructs correlations

Table 5 Cross factor loading of items on different constructs

|     | CR           | SQ           | IM           | EB           | HI           | HB           | P     | AF    | TR    |
|-----|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| CR1 | <b>0.812</b> | 0.254        | 0.587        | 0.104        | 0.287        | 0.209        | 0.241 | 0.109 | 0.255 |
| CR2 | <b>0.825</b> | 0.356        | 0.241        | 0.132        | 0.281        | 0.208        | 0.154 | 0.269 | 0.41  |
| CR3 | <b>0.863</b> | 0.141        | 0.215        | 0.201        | 0.205        | 0.307        | 0.564 | 0.289 | 0.205 |
| SQ1 | 0.421        | <b>0.897</b> | 0.154        | 0.204        | 0.145        | 0.223        | 0.391 | 0.287 | 0.209 |
| SQ2 | 0.024        | <b>0.857</b> | 0.354        | 0.307        | 0.191        | 0.264        | 0.131 | 0.281 | 0.208 |
| SQ3 | 0.541        | <b>0.812</b> | 0.542        | 0.401        | 0.281        | 0.124        | 0.365 | 0.351 | 0.281 |
| IM1 | 0.325        | 0.584        | <b>0.879</b> | 0.205        | 0.254        | 0.205        | 0.564 | 0.124 | 0.254 |
| IM2 | 0.254        | 0.652        | <b>0.974</b> | 0.212        | 0.452        | 0.472        | 0.214 | 0.154 | 0.452 |
| IM3 | 0.212        | 0.412        | <b>0.891</b> | 0.241        | 0.471        | 0.214        | 0.124 | 0.154 | 0.471 |
| EB1 | 0.147        | 0.245        | 0.214        | <b>0.912</b> | 0.214        | 0.124        | 0.201 | 0.398 | 0.471 |
| EB2 | 0.154        | 0.254        | 0.254        | <b>0.875</b> | 0.124        | 0.124        | 0.412 | 0.198 | 0.474 |
| EB3 | 0.154        | 0.124        | 0.365        | <b>0.798</b> | 0.124        | 0.358        | 0.281 | 0.496 | 0.351 |
| HI1 | 0.281        | 0.587        | 0.285        | 0.147        | <b>0.955</b> | 0.296        | 0.254 | 0.254 | 0.205 |
| HI2 | 0.254        | 0.365        | 0.247        | 0.407        | <b>0.836</b> | 0.205        | 0.452 | 0.154 | 0.124 |
| HI3 | 0.452        | 0.326        | 0.365        | 0.105        | <b>0.786</b> | 0.196        | 0.471 | 0.154 | 0.365 |
| HB1 | 0.471        | 0.525        | 0.564        | 0.471        | 0.365        | <b>0.938</b> | 0.205 | 0.307 | 0.564 |
| HB2 | 0.374        | 0.378        | 0.214        | 0.21         | 0.564        | <b>0.973</b> | 0.124 | 0.403 | 0.214 |
| HB3 | 0.145        | 0.512        | 0.124        | 0.302        | 0.214        | <b>0.847</b> | 0.351 | 0.208 | 0.124 |

|     |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |       |              |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| P1  | 0.247 | 0.247 | 0.124 | 0.502 | 0.124 | 0.154 | <b>0.927</b> | 0.398 | 0.471        |
| P2  | 0.247 | 0.265 | 0.215 | 0.402 | 0.351 | 0.154 | <b>0.786</b> | 0.198 | 0.474        |
| P3  | 0.145 | 0.578 | 0.542 | 0.241 | 0.398 | 0.471 | <b>0.863</b> | 0.312 | 0.214        |
| TR1 | 0.287 | 0.541 | 0.472 | 0.435 | 0.124 | 0.205 | 0.281        | 0.154 | <b>0.798</b> |
| TR2 | 0.369 | 0.524 | 0.354 | 0.124 | 0.124 | 0.421 | 0.254        | 0.154 | <b>0.869</b> |
| TR3 | 0.247 | 0.471 | 0.145 | 0.109 | 0.247 | 0.178 | 0.452        | 0.374 | <b>0.986</b> |
| TR4 | 0.574 | 0.254 | 0.381 | 0.274 | 0.398 | 0.471 | 0.471        | 0.124 | <b>0.921</b> |
| TR5 | 0.412 | 0.123 | 0.547 | 0.201 | 0.198 | 0.474 | 0.278        | 0.351 | <b>0.856</b> |

Note: CR = Customer Relationship, SQ = Service Quality, IM = Interaction Management, EB = Employee Behaviour, HI = Hotel Image, HB = Hotel Brand, P = Price, and TR = Tourism Revival.

**Structural Model:**

The outcomes of the structural model are described as follow:

- a. The first hypothesis investigates the relationship between interaction management and tourism revival. Results of the structural model confirm this hypothesis as the standardised beta weights is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.314$  at a significant level of  $P < 0.001$ ).
- b. Similarly, H2, H3, and H4 which hypothesised customer relationship, service quality, and employee behaviour with tourism revival in the triangle respectively. The outcomes of the structural model illustrates that customer relationship ( $\beta = 0.215$  at a  $P < 0.01$ ), service quality ( $\beta = 0.193$  at a  $P < .001$ ), and employee behaviour ( $\beta = 0.247$  at a  $P < .01$ ) are positively and significantly affecting tourism revival, thus supporting H2, H3, and H4.
- c. Furthermore, hotel image and hotel brand are both positively related to tourism revival ( $\beta = 0.374$ ,  $P < .01$  and  $\beta = 0.178$ ,  $P < .05$  respectively). Therefore, the structural model support both H5 and H6.
- d. Lastly, H7 hypothesised that price of the hotel rooms plays a positive role in reviving tourism in the area. The results confirmed this positive relationship with standardised beta

weight of 0.316 at significance level of  $P < .01$  for price of hotel room (H7).

| Propositions | Relationship | Beta Wgts | Std Error | t-value  | Result   |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| H-1          | IM → TR      | 0.314     | 0.089     | 4.325*** | Accepted |
| H-2          | CR → TR      | 0.215     | 0.098     | 3.303**  | Accepted |
| H-3          | SQ → TR      | 0.193     | 0.099     | 5.247*** | Accepted |
| H-4          | EB → TR      | 0.247     | 0.079     | 3.154**  | Accepted |
| H-5          | HI → TR      | 0.374     | 0.098     | 2.827**  | Accepted |
| H-6          | HB → TR      | 0.178     | 0.079     | 1.984*   | Accepted |
| H-7          | P → TR       | 0.316     | 0.088     | 2.186**  | Accepted |

## Discussion

The research was aimed at to find out the effect of CRM on tourism revival in district SWAT, Dir and Chitral triangle of KP of Pakistan. The results of correlations amid CRM i.e. (relationship management, service quality, interaction management, employee behaviour, hotel image, hotel brand, price ambience factor) with tourism revival revealed substantial affirmative relationship. Multiple linear regression model was broken down to check the impact of CRM on revival of tourism. The coefficient demonstrates noteworthy measure of variety in the travel industry restoration and relationship the executives has critical beneficial outcome on the travel industry recovery.

CRM as a predictor of tourism revival is supported from the results of past researches such as Anderson & Carol, (2002); Peppers & Rogers, (2016) and Buttle & Maklan, (2019). Interaction relationship management is found having direct relationship upon tourism revival which also conforms to the past literature ((Gummesson, 2017; Peppers & Rogers, 2016). Service quality of tourism related industry such as; tour operators, transport and travel, hotels, restaurants, tourism destinations etc is found to have strong relationship tourism revival and growth. The results of this are supported from the past research such as; Kumra, (2008); Shonk,& Chelladurai, (2008); Abbas & Hafeez (2017); Gholipour& Einolahzadeh (2018); and Chenini & Touaiti (2019).

Employee behaviour has significant relationship with revival and growth of tourism as service quality and its all of the dimensions with higher degree are needed for customer satisfaction that in turn contributes in tourism growth. The results are supported with the past researches that advocated for the positive, highly responsive and willing behaviour from employees of tourism industry ((Lindgreen et al., 2006; Gee et al. 2008; Fratu, 2011; Chen et.al, 2011). Similarly the findings related to hotel image and hotel brand having positive relationship with tourism revival are also supported by Darden, et.al. (1983); Ali, (2015); Rashid et.al, (2015); Shah & Baloch, (2018b); Naghizadeh, (2019) and Shamsudin,(2019).

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations being offered are not restricted to “Swat, Dir and Chitral triangle”, and may also be equally applicable in other parts of the country too. Tourism if positively promoted and grown than it serves as a mechanism to generate employment, increase foreign reserve and alleviate poverty to a substantial extent.

- a. Investment in Hotel Industry: Quality and accessibility of hotel industry holds central position in promoting tourism and increase tourists arrival in and around tourists destinations. With the positive culmination of War against Terror the hotel industry in Pakistan is witnessing substantial increase in hotel competency and investment in the sector. There is a need to attract national and international investors to fill the existing deficiency in hotel sector in rising demand-especially in peak season. Availability of quality hotels service at affordable price not only makes the visit enjoyable but also turns the tourist behaviour in to long term relationship with the tourist destination as well as the service providers. For this following is suggested:
  - ii. Government shall introduce hotels investment and development policy having incentives for the investors investing in environmental friendly and affordable hotel business around tourism destinations such as Dir, Swat, Chitral and alike. The policy should be investor friendly with focus on one window operation.

- iii. Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the International Hotel Association should arrange conferences on various tourism sites, welcoming general populace, tour operators, hoteliers aiming at promoting the tourism site as well as attracting various investors in hotels and other related businesses.
- iv. The hoteliers made bound to have expertise of handling and communicating foreign tourists, respecting other religions, and capacity to provide intercontinental as well as cuisine for the South & South Asian nations as well as Europeans and tourists from Arabian Peninsula.
- v. Hotels may be advised to link with the network of international and regional hotels of the same levels for exchange of tourism business and facilitation of their customers networks.
- vi. Hotel management at all levels must ensure that each member of their customer service team is equipped with the right skills for managing and satisfying customers' needs. No matter how elegant is the hotel and how great is the product or how artistic is the staff, one thing that customer is most likely to recollect is the interactive behavior which they experienced with your company. Each member of service team should be endowed with; work ethics, empathy, adaptability, and better communication skills.
- vii. Hotels serving various tourists destinations should be made responsible for developing their standard operating procedures to ensure customization of tourists and treating them like people having personnel needs and wants, therefore hotels should:
  - ✓ Work to build customers trust by increasing transparency, reliability and responsiveness.
  - ✓ Focus Less on the sale and more on provision of value.

- ✓ Introduce loyalty / membership card for long term connectivity and send greeting cards on special occasions for special touch.
  - ✓ Keep lines of communication with customers open through free toll numbers, round the clock websites and electronic mails etc.
  - ✓ Seek customers' feedback and opinions with the aim of improve service quality, customers' satisfaction through customers surprise and delight.
  - ✓ Don't overlook existing customers in marketing for new ones.
  - ✓ Setup communication channels including social media for your old customers and offer special incentives for repeat customers to fasten their loyalty bondage and long term customer relationship.
- b. The underlying tourism destination management should be to ensure sustainability of tourism, avoiding overutilization of resources beyond the capacity of the site. Influx of foreign tourists, alien to the local cultures and values, is likely to degrade the socio- cultural environment. Therefore, Ministry of Tourism is ought to develop Code of Ethics for eco-tourism in Pakistan in confirmatory to our socio-cultural values and law of the land. The code must ensure to protect spiritual aspirations and ethno-religious sentiments of the tourists visiting religious destinations, particularly identified with Sikhism, and Buddhism.
- c. The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the network of national and international tourism related agencies shall arrange conferences, seminars and road show in tourism loving nations especially in South Asian and South East Asian countries. These conferences and road shows would pay rich dividends in educating and informing people of those countries about the Buddhists and Sikhism religious sites of historic in nature, spiritually and religiously sacred. These road shows and awareness sessions would positively project soft image of

Pakistan and true colours and taste of its ever cherishing hospitality. The commercial and cultural attaché posted in various embassies of Pakistan may be made responsible for projecting Pakistan tourism potential in their respective communities and nations. For this there is a need for an intensive campaign of preparing and printing of banners, pamphlets and brushers with detailed features of all kinds of tourism destinations, relevant tours operators, visa guidance and other promotional and awareness material.

- d. Establishment of Religious Tourism Board: Sikhs and Buddhists Tourism Boards should be immediately established at national level. The board should work to market their respective tourism sites in Pakistan, create network infrastructure spread over in the target population for the purpose of information and awareness, coordination and facilitation for their travel, transit, and site visits as well as hospitalities. These Boards shall workout with the respective district and provincial government to ease out the visa process and exchange financial facilities. Pakistan is reportedly one of the few countries whose visa policy and security clearance procedures are complex to the degree of highest level of difficulty. Though recently Pakistan has soften up the visa procedures and introduced e-visa facility for the citizens of many countries but still lot more is to be done. The research suggests that visa and related administrative processes shall be made tourist friendly to their maximum and e-visa facility be extended to the tourists of maximum countries especially from South Asian and South East Asian region. All banks and Currency exchangers on tourism destination should be adequately equipped to exchange foreign currency with the local so as to ease out tourists in their local spending. Ministry of tourism shall also coordinate with airlines and local transport companies to increase free load of tourists
- e. Khyber School of Tourism be establish under the administrative control of Ministry of tourism with the aim of promoting and extending tourism education in the province and help to develop and market all types of tourism destinations ranging from scenic beauty to religious-cultural tourism, historic tourism, adventure and support tourism in the province. The School of tourism in coordination with the Ministry of

tourism may create an infrastructure and capacity to research, identify and monitor development of various destinations, information centres, tourists' operators and hotel restaurants and room service quality.

- f. Militancy and aftershocks of war against terror has damaged the local infra-structure including; hotels, bridges, culverts, rest areas and stay points. It's beyond the public sector capacity to reconstruct and revitalize the infra-structure to its operational cycle in near future. Therefore, private sector has to come forward and undertake this gigantic task of revival through public-private partnership along every step of the tourism value chain. Living and livelihood of the local populace of the triangle is substantially dependent upon tourism and its revival would generate employment and alleviate poverty- extremism in the area. Therefore, all efforts shall be made to promote tourism of the triangle in target communities, host them with the best form of hospitality and satisfy them to the level that their repeat buying behaviour is pronounced to the highest level. Administration of three districts of the triangle shall be made responsible for improvement of the infra-structure in shortest possible time with the optimum use of all possible available resources. A look over the three Districts of the Triangle's Annual Budgets reveals that there exists paucity of financial resources to invest meaningful sum for the improvement of tourism in this area therefore Provincial as well as Federal government shall pool up resources to facilitate local administration in this regard. Keeping in view the prevailing grey areas, following is suggested for immediate action at appropriate level:

- i. Construction work on all-weather Lowri Pass tunnel shall be immediately completed along with three lanes express way connecting Timmergrah and Chitral Town. Similarly Swat motorway be extended from Batkhela to Swat and to Malam jabba and Kalam in subsequent phase.
- ii. Constructions of new hotels of quality standards, development of new camping sites for the tourists.

- iii. Water games and adventure tourism be planned alongside the Panjkora River, Sawat River, Chitral River and Trichmir tracking areas.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan is gifted with mammoth tourism prospective which is yet to be explored and tapped. There is no denying the fact that revival of this industry would change the socio-economic face of the triangle and uplift the poverty ridden communities. The diversity of tourism destinations spread across depth and breadth of the KP are very rich in their substance and all inclusive to satisfy visiting tourists with variety of their needs. So far most of the tourism in the area has been seasonal tourism destined for scenic beauty spots proliferated in the area. Despite having substantial market opportunities amongst Buddhists, nature explorers and history lovers, religious, cultural and heritage tourism in the area is yet to be promoted. The research recommends Pakistan in general and KP in particular to re-orientate its tourism strategy and plan to target Buddhists and Sikhs from South and South East Asia. If Pakistan is able to renovate the religious sites of Buddhists and Sikhs than a meaningful flow of international arrivals with substantial receipts is most likely and the triangle would be turned in to religious and cultural tourism market. An all-encompassing strategy communicating tourism promotion to the right audience with tourists' friendly administrative procedures and infrastructure is call of the day. There is need to revisit all policy and procedures relating to tourism with the underlying assumption that Pakistan is strategically positioned in the Blue Ocean<sup>1</sup> of tourism market with unparalleled dividends. If

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<sup>1</sup>. **Blue Ocean** is a slang term used by Kim and Mauborgne in their best seller book "Blue Ocean strategy" and refers to an

incredible India and Malaysia truly Asia can become brand name to create soft images than why can't "Amazing Pakistan" project the soft image of tourists' friendly Pakistan? Though the 'Amazing Pakistan' and 'Emerging Pakistan' drives are moving with adequate speed but there is need for augmenting promotional deals'. Pakistan must not step up its resolve to fetch its due share of tourism by demonstrating Amazing Pakistan.

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