

Linking Visitors' Push Motivation to Emotional Involvement and their Satisfaction towards Sustainable Farm Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how visitors' push motivations—novelty and prestige, Relaxation, and relationship enhancement—influence emotional involvement and overall Satisfaction within the context of sustainable farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala. Primary data were collected from 385 visitors across five selected sustainable farm tourism sites using a structured questionnaire. The proposed research model was tested using PLS-SEM approach in Smart PLS 4.0. The findings indicate that all push motivations significantly and positively affect emotional involvement, with relationship enhancement exerting the strongest influence, followed by novelty and prestige and Relaxation. Emotional involvement was found to have a substantial positive effect on visitor satisfaction. In addition, push motivations directly influence Satisfaction, with relationship enhancement and Relaxation emerging as key predictors, while novelty and prestige show a comparatively weaker yet significant effect. Mediation analysis confirms that emotional involvement partially mediates the relationship between push motivations and Satisfaction. The study highlights the importance of emotionally engaging, socially interactive, and relaxing farm tourism experiences in enhancing visitor satisfaction and promoting sustainable rural tourism development.

KEYWORDS

Push Motivation, Satisfaction, Emotional Involvement, Farm Tourism, Sustainability, Visitors.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

In recent years, farm tourism has developed into a distinct category of rural tourism, offering visitors genuine, experience-driven interactions while also contributing to rural development and economic diversification (Flanigan et al., 2014). Farm tourism fosters meaningful connections among visitors, agriculture, and rural communities by enabling tourists to contribute in farm-based activities such as farm walk, organic farming, fruit picking, and traditional food preparation (Kastenholz et al., 1999). Through leisure and educational offerings—including farm tours, pick-your-own produce programmes, and farm-to-table experiences—agritourism not only enhances farmers' income opportunities but also increases public awareness of agricultural practices and sustainability (Baby & Kim, 2024).

Despite its growing global relevance, farm tourism remains relatively underexplored in the Indian context, particularly in ecologically rich yet economically sensitive regions such as Wayanad, Kerala (Gulsia & Yadav, 2022). Farm tourism has the potential to revitalise rural economies by generating alternative livelihoods, promoting sustainable land use, and delivering distinctive visitor experiences rooted in local culture and nature (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015). With its fertile agricultural landscape, strong agrarian traditions, and proximity to major urban centres, Wayanad provides an ideal setting to examine how farm tourism can simultaneously fulfil visitors' experiential and emotional needs while fostering sustainable regional development (Punia, 1994; Munjal, 2019).

Tourism scholars commonly explain travel motivation as a combination of internal psychological drivers and external destination attributes that jointly influence travel decisions (Dann, 1977, 1981). Travel motivations—such as the pursuit of novelty & prestige, escape and relaxation from routine, and social connection—significantly influence travel decisions and shape how visitors engage with tourism experiences (Tsai et al., 2016). These intrinsic motivations are particularly relevant in farm tourism, where emotional engagement with nature, family, and rural lifestyles often defines the quality of visitor experience.

Prior studies have demonstrated that tourist motivations significantly influence emotional responses and Satisfaction (SAT), both of which are central to the overall evaluation of the tourism experience (Hsu et al., 2010). When visitors' motivations align with destination offerings, satisfaction levels are more likely to be enhanced (Uysal et al., 2009; Prayag et al., 2017). For instance, tourists motivated by cultural exploration tend to report higher Satisfaction when destinations successfully deliver culturally immersive experiences (Kim & Lee, 2018). Conversely, a mismatch between visitor motivations and destination attributes—such as adventure-seeking tourists encountering predominantly relaxation-oriented activities—may result in dissatisfaction (Gao & Kerstetter, 2018; Li & Kovacs, 2024).

Scholars continue to debate whether tourist satisfaction is primarily shaped by pre-travel motivations or by on-site experiences. While Gnoth (1997) and Pearce (2012) argue that motivation influences Satisfaction through expectation formation, others contend that the quality of actual experiences and services at the terminus plays a more decisive role (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Empirical evidence suggests that Satisfaction is often more strongly influenced by emotional and experiential evaluations formed during the visit than by initial travel intentions alone (Correia et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of emotional involvement—defined as the degree of personal relevance, interest, and affective engagement experienced during tourism activities—in shaping visitor satisfaction (Kyle et al., 2004).

The chosen farms in Wayanad, Kerala, closely adhere to the sustainable tourism principles established by UNWTO (UNWTO, 2019), emphasising environmental protection, social inclusion, and the promotion of long-term economic viability. Government planning document for Wayanad highlights the emphasis on ecologically sensitive land use, community-oriented development, and conservation-focused agriculture (Kerala Town Planning Development, 2018). The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) advocates for agricultural strategies that sustain equilibrium between productivity and environmental preservation (FAO, 2020). These farms utilise organic farming and permaculture methods that diminish synthetic inputs, enhance soil structure, and promote biological variety (Pretty, 2008). Cultural preservation is apparent, since many places uphold regional traditions—Hiliya Resort, for instance, showcases ancient Kerala architecture and offers visitors a culturally immersive experience (UNWTO, 2019). Economically, farms invigorate rural economies by offering diverse tourism services, including farm stays, guided tours, and farm-to-table dining (Barbieri, 2013). Dew Drops Farm Stay further promotes agricultural education pro-

grams, fostering job development and increasing public knowledge of sustainable farming among tourists and residents (Tew & Barbieri, 2012).

In the context of Indian farm tourism, particularly in regions such as Wayanad, the relationship among push motivations, emotional involvement, and visitor satisfaction remains insufficiently examined. Although previous research has extensively explored push–pull motivations across various tourism settings (Dann, 1981; Uysal et al., 2009; Hsu et al., 2010), limited empirical attention has been given to understanding how push motivations influence emotional involvement and Satisfaction in sustainable farm tourism destinations (Prayag et al., 2017; Hosany et al., 2020). Moreover, the mediating role of emotional involvement in linking push motivations to visitor satisfaction has not been adequately investigated in the context of Farm tourism, especially in Wayanad, Kerala.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines the influence of push motivations—namely novelty, Relaxation, and enhancing relationships—on visitors' emotional involvement and Satisfaction in sustainable farm tourism settings in Wayanad, Kerala. Specifically, the study aims to (i) assess the impact of push motivations on visitor satisfaction, (ii) evaluate the influence of push motivations on emotional involvement, and (iii) examine the mediating role of emotional involvement in the relationship between push motivations and visitor satisfaction.

This study offers three key contributions. First, it extends push–pull motivation theory by empirically demonstrating how push motivations shape emotional involvement during on-site experiences rather than merely influencing travel decisions. Second, it establishes emotional involvement as a partial mediator between push motivations and Satisfaction, enriching experience-based tourism theory. Third, by focusing on sustainable farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala, this research provides context-specific evidence from an underexplored developing-country setting, thereby broadening the geographical and conceptual scope of farm tourism literature.

2. Review of Literature and Development of Hypothesis

2.1 Push-Pull Theory

Push motivations in farm tourism are primarily driven by tourists' desire for relaxation, learning, and escape from routine experiences. Multiple studies provide evidence for these motivations. Valencia et al. (2022) revealed that while pull motives are stronger, push motivations still play a significant role in destination choice. Interestingly, motivations vary by context (Crompton, 1979; Kim et al., 2003). The study noted that for foreign tourists, eco-friendliness is a key push motivation, while domestic tourists are more driven by mental refreshment and recreation (George & Babu, 2020). Further, confirmed the importance of understanding these nuanced motivational factors for tailoring tourism experiences.

2.2 Emotional Involvement (INVO)

Emotional involvement in farm tourism represents a multidimensional experience that influences both tourists and hosts. Prior research suggests that farm tourism interactions often involve emotional labor and meaningful exchanges between farmers and visitors (Grolleau et al., 2023). For tourists, engagement with rural landscapes and farm environments evokes strong emotional responses, transforming tourism from a transactional activity into an immersive experience (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). Emotional involvement is particularly pronounced when visitors actively participate in farm activities, fostering deeper connections and personal fulfillment.

2.3 Satisfaction (SAT)

Visitor satisfaction in farm tourism is influenced by multiple factors, including service quality, pricing, natural resources, and experiential attributes (Kline et al., 2016; Wang & Hao, 2023). Previous studies report high satisfaction levels among farm tourists, particularly in Relation to authentic farm experiences, safety, and scenic environments (Loureiro, 2014; Su et al., 2020). However, Satisfaction is context-specific and

shaped by visitors' intrinsic motivations and environmental behavior (Baby & Kim, 2024), highlighting the need for holistic and experience-oriented farm tourism offerings.

2.4 Hypothesis Development

2.4.1 Push Motivation (PMOV) and Emotional Involvement (INVO)

One definition of motivation is "the combination of intrinsic factors that motivate an individual to engage in a certain behaviour or set of activities" (Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1983). Motivation has also been conceptualized as psychological and biological needs and desires. Why people travel and what they seek to experience is a tough issue to investigate through a tourism paradigm because it is fundamentally related to humanity and human nature. The characteristics and occurrences linked to motivation have been studied from a variety of academic perspectives. As per (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Gnoth, 1997), motivation can be described as both internal and external motives, as well as emotional and cognitive causes. Wants, feelings, and innate drives are all examples of internal motivators.

H1. Push Motivation (PMOV) has a positive and significant relationship with INVO.

H1 (a). Novelty and Prestige (NOVP) have a positive and significant relationship with INVO.

H1 (b). Enhancing Relation (ENHR) has a positive and significant relationship with INVO.

H1 (c). Relaxation (RELAX) has a positive and significant relationship with INVO.

2.4.2 Emotional Involvement and Satisfaction (SAT)

Examining visitor SAT from the perspective of visitors to museums and tourist locations, Xu et al. (2019) investigated the part that both positive and negative emotions play. While negative emotions would limit enjoyment, Absalon et al. (2022) proposed a conceptual framework implying good emotions during the travelling process. At last, it was found that visitors' emotional reactions influence their level of pleasure (Ma et al., 2018). Moreover, the INVO is favourably linked with visitor SAT (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Prayag et al. (2013) also showed that tourists are more satisfied the more positive emotional connection they experience. Accordingly, it was hypothesised that:

H2. INVO has a positive and significant relationship with visitor SAT.

2.4.3 Push motivation (PMOT) and Satisfaction (SAT)

Studies have shown that internal motives such as Relaxation, novelty, social interaction, and prestige positively influence travel decisions and overall Satisfaction by fulfilling tourists' psychological and experiential needs (Mohammad & Som, 2010; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Said & Maryono, 2018). When pleasure and personal fulfilment are primary travel drivers, push motivations encourage tourists to engage more deeply with agricultural tourism activities, leading to more favorable evaluations of their experiences (Correia et al., 2015). Push motivations have been found to significantly affect travel choices and experiential outcomes across diverse tourism contexts, ultimately enhancing visitor satisfaction when these internal needs are met (Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). Thus, push motivation (PMOT) is a key antecedent of visitor satisfaction in farm tourism settings. Said and Maryono (2018) also investigated motivation as a push element for visiting a tourism farm and found that it has quite a positive impact on visitor satisfaction. With pleasure, the most sought-after experience pushes incentive drives prospective guests towards a tourism experience in a particular agricultural tourism (Correia et al., 2015). Moreover, Tsai and Sakulsinlapakorn (2016) contend that push incentive affects the travel choices of visitors, therefore fulfilling their own needs for agricultural tourism. Thus, the following Theory emerged:

H3. PMOT has a positive and significant relationship with visitor SAT.

H3 (a). NOVP has a positive and significant relationship with visitor SAT.

H3 (b). ENHR has a positive and significant relationship with visitor SAT.

H3 (c). RELAX has a positive and significant relationship with visitor SAT.

2.4.4 Emotional Involvement (INVO) as a mediator

INVO (Yao, 2013) emphasised the mediating function of tourists' emotional engagement with the place in establishing the relationship between their motivation and SAT. The poll assessed visitor satisfaction through emotional and cognitive factors. The emotional engagement of tourists is referred to as their emotive dimension, whereas the characteristics of the place are considered their cognitive dimension. These two types of attributes served as mediators to assess visitor SAT (Yao, 2013). Affective measurement has emerged as a significant study area related to post-consumption satisfaction evaluation, influenced by the aforementioned elements (Prayag et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2019; Hosany et al., 2020). It was postulated that:

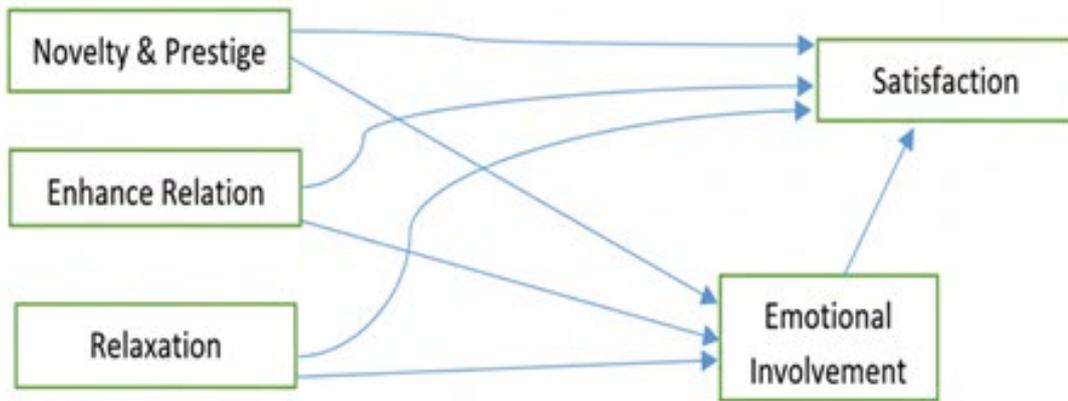
- H4.** INVO mediates the relationship between PMOV and SAT.
- H4 (a).** INVO mediates the relationship between NOVP and SAT.
- H4 (b).** INVO mediates the relationship between ENHR and SAT.
- H4 (c).** INVO mediates the relationship between RELAX and SAT.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Motivation is a core concept in psychology and behavioural sciences that explains why individuals engage in particular activities to achieve specific goals. In tourism research, motivation is commonly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions (Bianchi et al., 2025). Intrinsic motivation stems from internal needs like enjoyment, curiosity, and personal fulfilment, whereas extrinsic motivation is motivated by external rewards, recognition, or social status (Decrop & Snelders, 2004). In the context of farm tourism, visitors are often motivated by experiential factors such as novelty and prestige, relationship enhancement, and Relaxation, which together shape their overall travel experience.

Building on motivation theory, involvement plays a critical role in translating tourists' motivations into meaningful experiences. Involvement reflects the degree of personal relevance and emotional attachment individuals feel toward an activity or destination (Bryan, 1977). Tourism experiences that align with visitors' intrinsic motivations tend to generate higher emotional involvement, particularly when tourists actively participate in farm-based activities. Emotional involvement (INVO), therefore, acts as a key psychological mechanism linking motivation to post-consumption outcomes such as Satisfaction. Prior research emphasizes the importance of emotions in shaping consumer satisfaction. Studies by Jeong and Lee (2006) and Westbrook (1987) suggest that both cognitive evaluations and emotional responses influence consumption experiences. Oliver (2006) further proposed that Satisfaction results from a combination of cognitive judgments and affective reactions. In hedonic consumption contexts such as tourism, emotional responses often play a more dominant role than cognitive assessments (Kempf, 1999). Farm tourism, characterized by sensory stimulation, Relaxation, and experiential enjoyment, aligns strongly with hedonic consumption, making emotional involvement particularly influential in shaping visitor satisfaction.

Tourism experiences are largely pleasure-oriented and designed to evoke positive emotions, fantasy, and enjoyment (Babin et al., 1994; Holbrook, 2006). Holidays are widely recognized as emotionally rich experiences that promote Relaxation, happiness, and psychological well-being (Goossens, 2000; Gretzel et al., 2006; Williams, 2006). Getting emotionally immersed in a trip increases the likelihood that visitors will have a positive image of their experience and report higher levels of SAT. This study builds on previous research by suggesting a model wherein factors like prestige and novelty, the strength of interpersonal connections, and the ability to relax are the driving forces behind tourist happiness. The role of emotional engagement is to mediate the connection between motivating variables and SAT, therefore strengthening the link. You can see the suggested connections in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Survey's Data

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design to examine tourists' perceptions and SAT with sustainable farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala. Primary data were collected from visitors who had actively participated in farm-based activities at five major sustainable farm sites: BlackHole Farms & Retreats (Periya), Hiliya Resort (Sulthan Bathery), Agronest Farm & Resort (Cheeral), Dew Drops Farm Stay (near Kalpetta), and Syam Farms Villa (Wayanad). These farms were selected based on their engagement in organic farming, biodiversity conservation, cultural preservation, and community interaction, consistent with UNWTO and FAO sustainable tourism principles (Table 1). A non-probability sampling approach was adopted, combining convenience sampling to access visitors readily available at the farms, and purposive sampling to ensure inclusion of respondents with genuine farm tourism experiences. Data collection was conducted over a five-month period (August–December 2024). A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed via on-site intercept surveys, and 385 usable responses were retained after excluding incomplete surveys, yielding an effective response rate of 70%. The data were collected from five farm tourism destinations in Wayanad, Kerala, with the number of respondents varying across sites depending on visitor availability during the survey period. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in accordance with standard ethical research guidelines. Data for this study were obtained directly from farm tourism visitors through a structured questionnaire administered during on-site visits.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire comprised 18 measurement items adapted from previously validated scales in sustainable tourism and visitor behavior literature, with contextual modifications for the Wayanad farm tourism setting. To improve the quality and reliability of the responses, they were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree (Reichel et al., 2000). Multiple components made up the questionnaire. The first section collected respondents' demographic and screening information using five closed-ended items, which are efficient to administer and require minimal interviewer involvement (William et al., 2013). Sections two through five measured the key constructs of this study, with measurement items adapted. Push motivation was assessed through the dimensions of enhancing relationships, measured using four items (Mohammad, 2010; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Sastre & Phakdee, 2017), novelty and prestige, measured using three items (Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Mohammad & Som, 2010; Baniya & Paudel, 2016), and Relaxation, measured using four items (Kim, 2006; Baniya & Pau-

del, 2016). Emotional involvement was measured using four items adapted from Yao (2013), and Biswas et al. (2021). Visitor satisfaction was assessed using a three-item scale adapted from prior studies (Yao, 2013; Aliman et al., 2014).

Before the main survey, a pilot study with 100 respondents was conducted to assess the clarity and reliability of the assessment items. Following the findings of the pilot research, two items (SAT4 and NOVP4) were removed due to poor performance. The final data was collected using an e-questionnaire generated with Google Forms and administered during site visits to the selected farm tourism. Minor adjustments have been made to improve content authenticity. The data was analysed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 3.0, allowing for a full examination of both the measurement model, which includes reliability and validity, and the structural model, which addresses the hypothesised correlations. The reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity was verified using the HTMT ratio (Hair et al., 2019). The structural model assessed the hypothesised correlations, providing significant insights into how sustainable agricultural methods affect tourist experiences and satisfaction. To ensure that respondents understood the finalised questionnaire, it was delivered in English, Hindi, and Malayalam.

Table 1. Farm Tourism in Wayanad, Kerala

S.No.	Farm Name	Location	Sustainable Farm Activities
1	BlackHole Farms & Retreats	Periya, Wayanad	Organic farming, permaculture walks, cycling, fishing, eco-trekking
2	Hiliya Resort	Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad	Organic spice and fruit farming, traditional Kerala architecture, farm walks
3	Agronest Farm & Resort	Cheeral, Wayanad	Paddy cultivation, rural immersion, nature trails, bird watching
4	Dew Drops Farm Stay	Near Kalpetta, Wayanad	Organic farm activities, agri-education, nature interaction programs
5	Syam Farms Villa	Wayanad	Herbal and fruit gardens, organic living education, nature-based wellness

Source: Compiled by the authors from farm websites, 2024

4. Results

4.1 Respondents Profile

Table 1 shows the 385 respondents' demographics. Visitors were 42% male and 58% female. The bulk of respondents were 27–38 years old (37%), followed by 39–49 (27%). Most visitors traveled with friends (36%), while 25% traveled with colleagues and 24% with family members. In terms of occupation, professionals constituted the largest group (35%), followed by self-employed respondents (25%) and students (24%).

Table 2. Respondents' Profile

	Variables	Visitors'	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	385	162	42
	Female		223	58
Age	16 – 26	385	57	15
	27 – 38		144	37
	39 – 49		103	27
	50 – 60		53	14
	61 and above		28	7
Travel with whom	Alone	385	58	15
	with family		93	24
	Friends		137	36
	with colleagues		97	25
Occupation	Students	385	93	24
	Salaried		56	14
	Self employed		95	25
	Professional		135	35
	Any other		6	2

Source: Own Elaboration

4.2 Outer Model Assessment

The reliability and validity are estimated and analysed by measurement models (Table 3) (Hair Jr. et al., 2014). Composite reliability can be used to measure the internal consistencies of variables, whereas outward loading can be used to assess the reliability of elements. Variable relationship is not an abnormality provided its reliability and validity have been proved (Peter & Churchill, 1986). The results were obtained in the scope of PLS-SEM analysis of the measurement model conducted on Smart PLS 3.0 (Hair Jr. et al., 2014). The current study clarified the structure and demonstrated the correlation of factors based on earlier studies. The model fit was assessed using standardized model fit indices provided by SmartPLS. The SRMR value for both the saturated and estimated models was 0.072, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating an acceptable model fit. The discrepancy measures d_{ULS} (1.419) and d_G (0.818) were within acceptable limits, suggesting a reasonable correspondence between the empirical and model-implied correlation matrices. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) value of 0.785 indicates a moderate model fit, which is acceptable in exploratory and prediction-oriented PLS-SEM studies. Hair et al. (2019): $NFI > 0.70$ acceptable for exploratory PLS-SEM. Overall, the model demonstrates an adequate goodness-of-fit, supporting its suitability for hypothesis testing. These findings offer convergent validity in the analysis of the measurement model. The figures indicated that construct elements appeared to have a high relationship with valid convergent validity in that their loading, AVE, Alpha, and CR values were more than 0.70. Table 1.2 indicates the results of testing the validity, reliability, and factor loading of the items of the PLS measurement model, respectively. As stated by Baby and Kim (2024), the internal consistency level must be no less than 0.70 as required by Cronbach's alpha. Based on Cronbach's alpha, there was a value of Alpha and CR above 0.70 for the selected variables. Fornell and Larcker (1981) discovered that the discriminant validity, reliability, and convergent validity average variance extracted (AVE) figures were above 0.50. Hair Jr. et al. (2014) stated that all the metrics presented in (Figure 3) possessed appropriate levels of Cronbach alpha, CR, and AVE, indicating 0.6, 0.7, and 0.5, respectively.

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity of Lower Order Constructs

Variables	Items	Outer loadings	VIF	Cronbach's alpha	RHO_A	Composite reliability	AVE
Enhancing Relation	ENHR1	0.906	2.972	0.884	0.893	0.92	0.743
	ENHR2	0.882	2.515				
	ENHR3	0.829	2.184				
	ENHR4	0.826	2.045				
Novelty & Prestige	NOVP1	0.861	1.736	0.75	0.768	0.856	0.665
	NOVP2	0.828	1.447				
	NOVP3	0.755	1.477				
Relaxation	RELAX1	0.715	1.543	0.742	0.781	0.829	0.548
	RELAX2	0.721	1.581				
	RELAX3	0.762	1.8				
	RELAX4	0.762	1.159				
Involvement (Emotional involvement)	INVO1	0.876	2.571	0.882	0.883	0.919	0.739
	INVO2	0.887	2.599				
	INVO3	0.814	1.82				
	INVO4	0.859	2.366				
Satisfaction	SAT1	0.832	1.587	0.823	0.824	0.895	0.739
	SAT2	0.867	2.127				
	SAT3	0.88	2.182				

Source: Own Elaboration

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was produced as to the oppositional connection of the latent variable and the square root of the average. Determine if the average variance is discriminantly valid; it should be 0.50 or higher. To prove discriminant validity, the square root of the mean should be bigger than the latent variables (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). According to these results, the assessment model has convergent validity. With loading, AVE, Alpha, and CR all above 0.70, the statistic showed high nexus and genuine convergent validity. You may find these numbers in Table 1.3. The HTMT will be 1, which means there is no discriminant validity, if the null hypothesis is rejected (Sarstedt et al., 2014). After confirming the validity and reliability of all the variables, structural route analysis was carried out. Given the necessity of structural route analysis, we proceeded in this manner. Results on the HTMT that were less than 1 demonstrated the discriminant validity. To ensure the model has external coherence, we have utilised Table 4 to compare latent variables in order to verify discriminant validity in this research investigation n. The following AVEs were so acquired: 0.743 for Enhancing Relation, 0.665 for Novelty & Prestige, 0.548 for Relaxation, 0.739 for Emotional Involvement, and 0.739 for Satisfaction. Table 4 shows that discriminant validity is demonstrated by the square root of AVE being larger than the latent variable correlation.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Variables	Emotional Involvement (INVO)	Enhancing Relation (ENR)	Novelty & Prestige (NOVP)	Relaxation (REL)	Satisfaction (SAT)
Emotional Involvement (INVO)	0.859				
Enhancing Relation (ENR)	0.817	0.862			
Novelty & Prestige (NOVP)	0.788	0.765	0.816		
Relaxation (REL)	0.708	0.609	0.644	0.740	
Satisfaction (SAT)	0.838	0.793	0.756	0.707	0.860

Source: Own Elaboration

4.4 Structural Equation Model

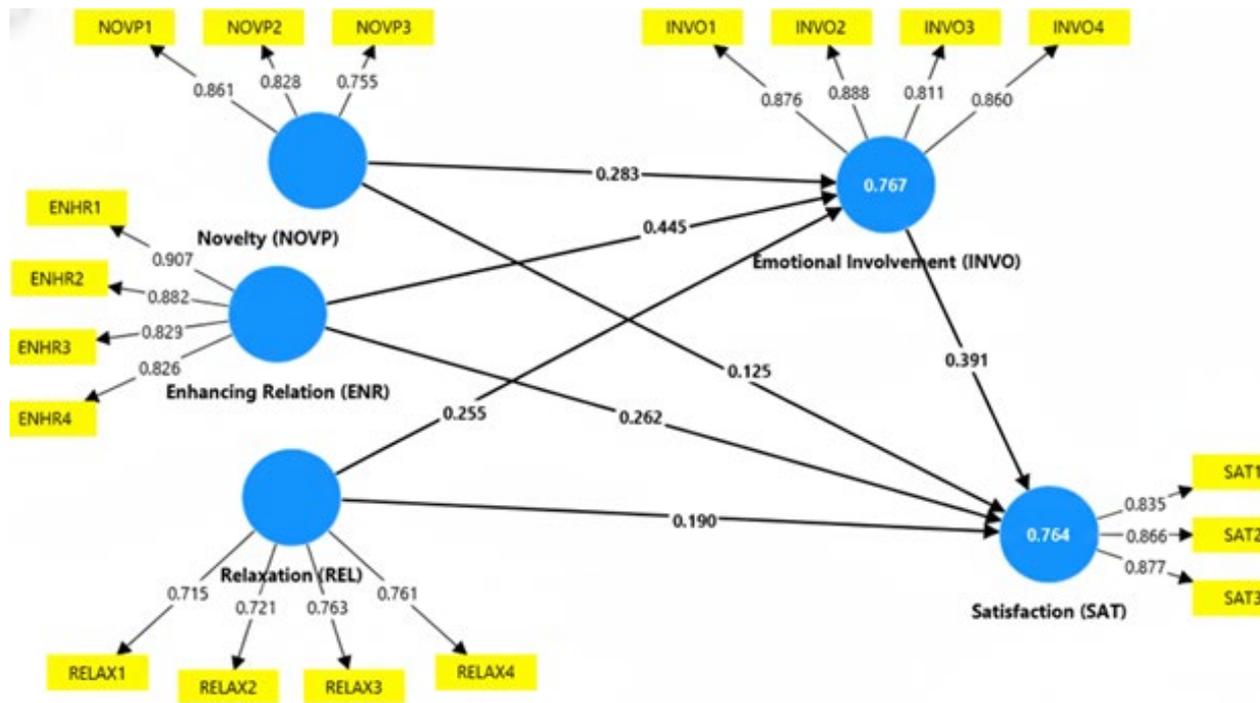
PLS-SEM bootstrapping found positive structural model route coefficients that support a hypothesis. (Table 5) & (Table 6) provide route correlations and hypothesis testing choices showing that PLS-SEM evaluations of customer behaviour predict psychological well-being. Researchers' hypothesis testing results (Hair et al., 2014), (Figure 2) structural model.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Result

H	Paths	Path coefficient	T statistics	P-value	Result
	Novelty & Prestige (NOVP) -> Emotional Involvement (INVO)	0.283	6.955	0	Support
H1	Enhancing Relation (ENHR) -> Emotional Involvement (INVO)	0.445	11.093	0	Support
	Relaxation (RELAX) -> Emotional Involvement (INVO)	0.256	7.318	0	Support
	Novelty & Prestige (NOVP) -> SAT	0.121	2.618	0.009	Support
H3	ENHR -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.434	8.473	0	Support
	Relaxation (RELAX) -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.293	6.944	0	Support
H2	Emotional Involvement (INVO) -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.399	5.398	0	Support
	ENHR -> Emotional Involvement (INVO) -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.177	5.265	0	Support
H4	Novelty & Prestige (NOVP) -> Emotional Involvement (INVO) -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.113	4.245	0	Support
	Relaxation (RELAX) -> Emotional Involvement (INVO) -> Satisfaction (SAT)	0.102	3.766	0	Support

Source: Own Elaboration

Figure 2. Measurement Model



Source: PLS-SEM Output

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Relationship between Push Motivation and Emotional Involvement. Hypothesis 1 examined the effect of PMOV → Enhancing Relation (ENHR), Novelty and Prestige (NOVP), and Relaxation (RELAX)—on Emotional Involvement (INVO). The results reveal that all three push motivation dimensions have a positive and statistically significant influence on INVO. Among them, ENHR exerts the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.445, t = 11.093, p < 0.001$), followed by Novelty & Prestige (NOVP) ($\beta = 0.283, t = 6.955, p < 0.001$) and Relaxation (RELAX) ($\beta = 0.256, t = 7.318, p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that relationship enhancement shows a dominant role in shaping tourists’ emotional engagement, while novelty-seeking and Relaxation also significantly contribute. Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is supported (Table 5). Hypothesis 2 (H2): Relationship between INVO and SAT. Hypothesis 2 tested the impact of Emotional Involvement (INVO) on Satisfaction (SAT). The analysis demonstrates a strong and significant positive relationship between INVO and SAT ($\beta = 0.399, t = 5.398, p < 0.001$). This result confirms that emotionally involved tourists tend to report higher levels of SAT. Hence, Hypothesis H2 is supported (Table 5). Hypothesis 3 (H3): Relationship between PMOT and SAT: Examined the direct effect of PMOV factors on SAT. The analysis demonstrates that Enhancing Relation (ENHR) has the strongest direct influence on Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.434, t = 8.473, p < 0.001$), followed by Relaxation (RELAX) ($\beta = 0.293, t = 6.944, p < 0.001$). Novelty & Prestige (NOVP) also shows a positive but comparatively weaker effect on Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.121, t = 2.618, p = 0.009$). All paths are statistically significant, suggesting that social interaction and Relaxation are the primary drivers of Satisfaction, while Novelty and Prestige have a secondary but meaningful role. Thus, Hypothesis H3 is supported (Table 5). Hypothesis 4 (H4): Mediating Effect of INVO: Hypothesis 4 assessed the mediating role of INVO in the relationship between PMOV and SAT. The mediation analysis reveals significant indirect effects for all constructs. The strongest indirect effect is observed for Enhancing Relation (ENHR → INVO → SAT) ($\beta = 0.177, t = 5.265, p < 0.001$). This is followed by Novelty and Prestige (NOVP → INVO → SAT) ($\beta = 0.113, t = 4.245, p < 0.001$) and Relaxation (RELAX → INVO → SAT) ($\beta = 0.102, t = 3.766, p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that INOV significantly mediates the relationship between PMOV and SAT. Accordingly, Hypothesis H4 is accepted (Table 5).

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how visitors' push motivations—novelty and prestige, relaxation, and relationship enhancement—influence emotional involvement and overall satisfaction in sustainable farm tourism, with emotional involvement acting as a mediating mechanism. The empirical findings strongly support the proposed conceptual framework and provide meaningful insights into the experiential dynamics of farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala.

First, the results confirm Hypothesis H1, demonstrating that all three push motivation dimensions have a significant and positive effect on emotional involvement. Among them, relationship enhancement emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that visitors' desire to strengthen social bonds with family, friends, and local communities plays a crucial role in shaping emotional engagement. This finding aligns with prior rural and farm tourism research, which emphasizes social interaction, shared activities, and host–guest relationships as central elements of emotionally rich tourism experiences (Kastenholz et al., 1999; Jepson & Sharpley, 2015). Farm tourism environments naturally facilitate interpersonal interaction through collective participation in farming activities, communal dining, and informal interactions with hosts, thereby deepening visitors' emotional attachment. Novelty and prestige also exert a significant influence on emotional involvement, supporting the argument that unique, authentic, and culturally distinctive experiences stimulate curiosity and emotional immersion. Exposure to organic farming practices, rural lifestyles, and traditional agricultural knowledge in Wayanad provides visitors with a sense of uniqueness and personal enrichment, consistent with hedonic consumption and experiential tourism theory (Holbrook, 2006). Similarly, the positive effect of relaxation highlights the restorative role of nature-based tourism, reinforcing findings from well-being and rural tourism literature that link tranquil environments with emotional rejuvenation (Goossens, 2000).

Second, the findings strongly support Hypothesis H2, confirming that emotional involvement has a significant positive effect on visitor satisfaction. This result indicates that satisfaction in farm tourism is not solely an outcome of functional service attributes but is largely shaped by visitors' emotional responses during on-site experiences. Emotionally engaged tourists are more likely to evaluate their experiences positively, supporting prior research that positions affective responses as a key determinant of satisfaction in tourism settings (Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Third, Hypothesis H3 is fully supported, as push motivations directly influence satisfaction. Relationship enhancement and relaxation show particularly strong effects, suggesting that social fulfilment and psychological escape are primary drivers of satisfaction in sustainable farm tourism. Novelty and prestige, while significant, exert a comparatively weaker effect, indicating that emotional and relational benefits outweigh symbolic motivations in this context. Finally, the mediation analysis supports Hypothesis H4, confirming that emotional involvement partially mediates the relationship between push motivations and satisfaction. This finding highlights emotional involvement as a critical psychological mechanism that translates internal motivations into positive evaluative outcomes, thereby extending experience-based tourism theory. Overall, the discussion underscores the central role of emotions in transforming farm tourism experiences into sources of satisfaction and well-being.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study offers meaningful theoretical contributions to tourism motivation and experience research by deepening the understanding of how internal motivations shape emotionally driven outcomes in sustainable farm tourism. Building on classic push–pull motivation theory (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979), the findings challenge the traditional view that push motivations operate only at the pre-travel decision stage. Instead, the results demonstrate that intrinsic motivations such as relaxation, novelty, and relationship enhancement continue to influence tourists during the on-site experience by shaping their emotional involvement and subsequent satisfaction. This advances existing theory by positioning motivation as a continuous and evolving process rather than a one-time trigger for travel intention. Further, this study strengthens experience-based tourism theory by empirically establishing emotional involvement as a key psychological mechanism linking motivation and satisfaction. While previous studies acknowledge emotions as outcomes of tourism experiences (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Hosany et al., 2020), limited empirical work has examined how emotions function as mediators within motivation–satisfaction relationships,

particularly in rural or farm tourism contexts. By demonstrating the partial mediating role of emotional involvement, this research responds directly to calls for greater integration of affective processes in tourism models (Prayag et al., 2017). Emotional involvement is therefore conceptualised not merely as an experiential by-product but as an active driver of satisfaction formation. Finally, the study enriches sustainable and rural tourism literature by offering evidence from an emerging farm tourism destination in India, a context that remains underrepresented in theory development. The prominence of social bonding and emotional connectedness supports relational tourism perspectives (Jepson & Sharpley, 2015) and suggests that sustainability value extends beyond environmental practices to include emotional and social fulfilment. Collectively, the study refines existing theoretical frameworks by integrating motivation, emotion, and satisfaction into a cohesive explanatory model.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings provide clear and actionable insights for destination management organisations (DMOs), farm tourism operators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen sustainable farm tourism development. Rather than promoting farm tourism solely as a rural or nature-based product, DMOs should reposition destinations as emotionally engaging and socially meaningful experiences. Since relationship enhancement strongly influences emotional involvement and satisfaction, marketing strategies should highlight shared activities such as family farming experiences, group participation, cultural storytelling, and host-guest interactions. Visual and narrative content used in destination branding should emphasise togetherness, authenticity, and emotional connection.

At the operational level, farm tourism providers should deliberately design experiences that encourage emotional participation. Hands-on farming, interactive workshops, guided farm walks, and community-led events can deepen visitors' emotional engagement. Operators should be trained to act as experience facilitators rather than passive service providers. DMOs can support this shift by offering training programmes focused on experiential design, visitor engagement, and emotional storytelling techniques. The strong role of relaxation also suggests the need for restorative tourism planning. DMOs should promote slow-tourism elements such as peaceful farm stays, nature-based wellness activities, flexible itineraries, and digital-detox spaces. Infrastructure development should prioritise calm, low-impact environments that support psychological well-being without undermining sustainability principles. From a policy perspective, emotional involvement and visitor satisfaction should be incorporated into destination performance evaluation frameworks. Beyond visitor numbers, DMOs should track experiential quality indicators, including emotional engagement and perceived well-being. Finally, destination marketing should move away from generic sustainability claims and instead communicate emotion-based value propositions, reinforcing farm tourism as a source of relaxation, connection, and personal fulfilment—key drivers of repeat visitation and long-term destination loyalty.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the relationships between visitors' push motivations, emotional involvement, and satisfaction within the context of sustainable farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala. By employing a PLS-SEM approach, the research provides robust empirical evidence that intrinsic motivations significantly shape visitors' emotional engagement and satisfaction with farm tourism experiences.

The findings demonstrate that push motivations—particularly relationship enhancement and relaxation—are critical determinants of both emotional involvement and satisfaction. Visitors who seek meaningful social interactions, family bonding, and stress relief are more likely to become emotionally engaged during farm tourism experiences and, in turn, report higher levels of satisfaction. While novelty and prestige also contribute positively, their comparatively weaker influence suggests that symbolic benefits are secondary to emotional and relational fulfilment in sustainable farm tourism settings. One of the key contributions of this study lies in establishing emotional involvement as a partial mediator between push motivations and satisfaction. This result confirms that visitor satisfaction is shaped not only by pre-travel motivations but also by the depth of emotional engagement formed during on-site experiences. Emotion-

al involvement thus acts as a bridge between internal motivations and post-consumption evaluations, reinforcing the importance of affective processes in tourism experience formation. From a theoretical perspective, the study extends push–pull motivation theory by demonstrating that push motivations continue to influence tourists beyond destination choice and actively shape experiential and emotional outcomes. By integrating emotional involvement into the motivation–satisfaction relationship, the study enriches experience-based tourism theory and contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing emotions as central to visitor behaviour. Furthermore, by focusing on sustainable farm tourism in an underexplored Indian context, the research broadens the geographical scope of farm tourism scholarship.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that farm tourism operators should prioritise emotionally engaging experiences that encourage social interaction, participation, and relaxation. Hands-on farming activities, family-oriented programmes, storytelling, and host–guest interaction can significantly enhance emotional involvement and satisfaction. Destination marketers should highlight the emotional, restorative, and relational benefits of farm tourism rather than focusing solely on novelty. Policymakers and tourism planners should support sustainable farm tourism through training, infrastructure development, and community-based initiatives that strengthen emotional connections between visitors, local communities, and the natural environment.

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The focus on a single destination and cross-sectional data limits generalisability. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs, compare multiple regions, or examine the role of digital engagement and technological interventions in enhancing emotional involvement. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of emotionally enriched experiences in achieving visitor satisfaction and long-term sustainability in farm tourism destinations.

6.1 Limitations of the Study and Future Directions

First, this study only looks at farm tourism in Wayanad, Kerala. This suggests that the findings may not be applicable to other regions with varying cultures, visitor preferences, or agricultural configurations. Visitors from other parts of the world may have different goals and experiences. Secondly, things that might affect visitor happiness, like weather, cultural factors, or economic variables, were not taken into account. Last but not least, the data was only taken at one point in time, so it doesn't take into account how visitors' goals or levels of satisfaction change over time.

Future research should look into comparison assessments with other rural destinations, as well as how digital interventions like virtual leisure farm experiences and augmented reality (AR) might increase tourists' emotional connections to farm tourism venues. Exploring the impact of digital engagement or comparing farm tourism motivation across different demographic groups.

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Table 1. Appendix

Variables	Items	Description	Indicator Loadings
Enhancing Relation	ENHR1	I am interested in interacting with new individuals during my visit.	(Baniya & Paude, 2016; Mohammad, 2010; Sastre & Phakdee, 2017).
	ENHR2	I enjoy sharing my farm tourism experiences with other after returning home.	
	ENHR3	I am interested in improving my interaction and communication with local people.	
	ENHR4	Visiting a farm allow me to spend quality time with my family.	
Novelty and Prestige	NOVP1	I like farm tourism destination that feel new and different.	(Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Mohammad & Som, 2010).
	NOVP2	I prefer visiting farm tourism places that impress my friends and family.	
	NOVP3	Visiting such places makes me feel proud and special.	
Relaxation	RELAX1	I visit farm tourism destinations to relax and feel refreshed.	(Kim, 2006; Baniya & Paudel, 2016).
	RELAX2	I visit farms to recover from physical and mental fatigue.	
	RELAX3	Visiting a farm helps me relive stress from work.	
	RELAX4	I come to farm tourism destinations to escape my daily routine.	
Emotional Involvement	INVO1	It is very special for me to visit farm.	(Biswas, 2021; Yao, 2013; Biswas et al., 2021).
	INVO2	I got pleasure from visiting the farm visit.	
	INVO3	I feel emotionally attached to the farm during my visit.	
	INVO4	Visiting a farm means a lot to me emotionally.	
Satisfaction	SAT1	Overall, I am satisfied with my farm tourism experience.	(Yao, 2013; Aliman et al., 2014).
	SAT2	I am satisfied with my decision to visit farm.	
	SAT3	This farm tourism experience met my expectations.	