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Research Paper

Green Materialism: Bridging Eco-Tourism and Consumer Values for Sustainable Living

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the influence of materialism on eco-destination image, environmental concern, environmental knowledge, and time perspective in Uttarakhand taking 591 sample size for the study. People who visited at least one tourist places were chosen to be participant in the study. The study employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) for analysis. Findings reveal significant positive relationships between materialism and each of the studied variables, suggesting that materialistic values may not be averse to environmental sustainability as traditionally believed. Instead, materialism can positively impact individuals' perceptions and behaviors towards eco-friendly practices and destinations. These results underscore the potential for leveraging materialistic tendencies to enhance environmental awareness, concern, and sustainable tourism.

Keywords: *Materialism, Eco-destination image, Environmental Knowledge, Environmental Concern, Time Perspective*

The intricate relationship between materialism and its multifaceted impacts on society, economy, and the environment positions it as a crucial subject for in-depth study. Materialism, characterized by an emphasis on the acquisition and significance of material possessions, is more than a mere indicator of personal wealth or economic activity; it encapsulates a complex value system that shapes individual identities, social norms, and global consumer behaviors (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). This system influences a wide array of societal dynamics, including lifestyle choices, social stratification, and even the psychological well-being of individuals. As such, the study of materialism extends

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beyond the realm of economics to touch on critical questions of psychology, sociology, and environmental science.

The necessity to conduct research on materialism stems from its paradoxical nature. On one hand, materialistic values drive economic growth, fuel innovation, and stimulate the global marketplace. On the other hand, these same values have been linked to negative outcomes, such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and a decline in individual happiness and life satisfaction (Kasser, 2002). The pursuit of material wealth often leads to overconsumption, which in turn contributes to the depletion of natural resources and exacerbates the environmental crisis. Furthermore, materialism can erode social bonds, as the pursuit of possessions might come at the cost of personal relationships and community engagement.

In light of these considerations, studying materialism is essential for several reasons. First, it allows for a deeper understanding of the psychological underpinnings and societal pressures that fuel materialistic desires, offering insights into how societies can foster more sustainable and fulfilling lifestyles. Second, research on materialism can inform policy and consumer education, guiding the development of strategies to mitigate the negative environmental and social impacts of excessive consumption. Third, such studies can contribute to the discourse on sustainable development, providing a nuanced view of how economic growth and environmental stewardship can coexist.

Given the pressing challenges of climate change, social inequality, and the search for meaning in modern societies, the study of materialism is not only relevant but necessary. It has the potential to uncover pathways towards a more sustainable, equitable, and contented world, making it a topic of paramount importance for researchers, policymakers, and the broader public alike.

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Materialism

Materialism, as a value system, emphasizes the significance of material possessions and their acquisition as central to an individual's life and well-being (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). This orientation towards material wealth and physical goods is often critiqued for fostering a culture of consumption that prioritizes objects over experiences and relationships. However, materialism's impact on behavior and attitudes extends beyond mere consumerism; it influences lifestyle choices, social interactions, and even personal identity. The pursuit of material goods is seen by some as a path to happiness and social status, although research suggests this may lead to diminished well-being and increased ecological footprint (Kasser, 2002). The debate around materialism also touches on its role in the global economy, driving production and consumption patterns that have significant environmental and social consequences. As such, understanding materialism's nuances is crucial for addressing contemporary issues related to sustainability, consumer behavior, and social welfare.

Eco-Destination Image

The relationship between materialism and the image of eco-destinations unfolds within the nuanced interplay of consumer values and perceptions of sustainability. Materialism, characterized by the prioritization of material wealth and possessions, influences the way individuals perceive and value eco-destinations. Those with high materialistic values may initially be less attracted to eco-destinations, as these places often emphasize conservation,

sustainability, and the minimization of environmental footprints over luxury and exclusivity (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). However, this dynamic is not static; the global trend towards sustainable living and responsible travel can shift perceptions, making eco-destinations appealing even to materialistically inclined individuals by associating them with unique and valuable experiences that also offer status recognition. Research in this area has been very limited, hence required more attention.

Environmental Concern

The interplay between materialism and environmental concern offers intriguing insights into consumer behavior and sustainability. Materialism, with its focus on accumulation and the importance of material goods (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018), often contrasts sharply with environmental concern, which prioritizes the health of the planet and sustainable living practices. Individuals deeply embedded in materialistic values may find it challenging to prioritize environmental concerns due to the perceived conflict between accumulating goods and adopting a more sustainable lifestyle. However, as environmental awareness grows globally, even those with materialistic inclinations are beginning to recognize the importance of environmental stewardship. This recognition can lead to a fascinating dynamic where materialistic values and environmental concern intersect. For instance, the increasing popularity of "green" products and sustainable brands among all consumer segments, including materialistic individuals, suggests that it is possible to reconcile these seemingly opposing values (Suki and Suki, 2015). This emerging trend underscores a shift towards a more nuanced understanding of materialism, where individuals can express concern for the environment while still engaging with the consumer culture, albeit in a more conscious and responsible manner.

Environmental Knowledge

The relationship between materialism and environmental knowledge presents a unique intersection of values and awareness that shapes individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. Materialism, defined by the value placed on acquiring and possessing material goods, might seem at odds with the principles of environmental sustainability (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). However, the depth of an individual's environmental knowledge can significantly influence this dynamic. As environmental knowledge increases, highlighting the impact of consumer choices on the natural world, individuals, regardless of their materialistic tendencies, may begin to adopt more sustainable practices (Fryxell and Lo, 2003). This shift suggests that environmental knowledge has the potential to bridge the gap between materialistic values and environmental responsibility. For instance, a materialistic individual well-informed about environmental issues might choose products that are both luxurious and sustainable, reflecting a nuanced approach to consumerism where luxury and sustainability coexist (Cheung and Fok, 2014; Dhir et al., 2021). Studies are limited in this area to prove the relationship.

Time Perspective

The interrelation between materialism and time perspective reveals how individuals' temporal orientations influence the material values they hold and their consumption behaviors. Materialism, the importance placed on acquiring material possessions as a central life goal, can be profoundly affected by whether an individual is past, present, or future-oriented (Taufique et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). For instance, a present-oriented time perspective, which focuses on immediate gratification and enjoyment, may align closely with materialistic values, promoting impulsive buying and a higher emphasis on acquiring goods for immediate pleasure (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999; Milfont et al., 2012). Conversely,

a future-oriented perspective, with its emphasis on planning, long-term goals, and delayed gratification, might lead to more calculated and potentially less materialistic consumption patterns, as individuals with this orientation may prioritize savings and investments over immediate acquisitions (Onwezen et al., 2016). This dynamic suggests that an understanding of time perspective can offer valuable insights into the motivations behind materialistic behaviors and highlight pathways for encouraging more sustainable consumption habits among individuals with different temporal orientations. More research are required to explain the relationship between the variables.

Research Questions

The research question for the present study is whether materialism have any significant effect on environmental concern, eco-destination image, environmental knowledge and time perspective among the people of Uttarakhand state.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Model of The Study

The conceptual model of the study is given below: -

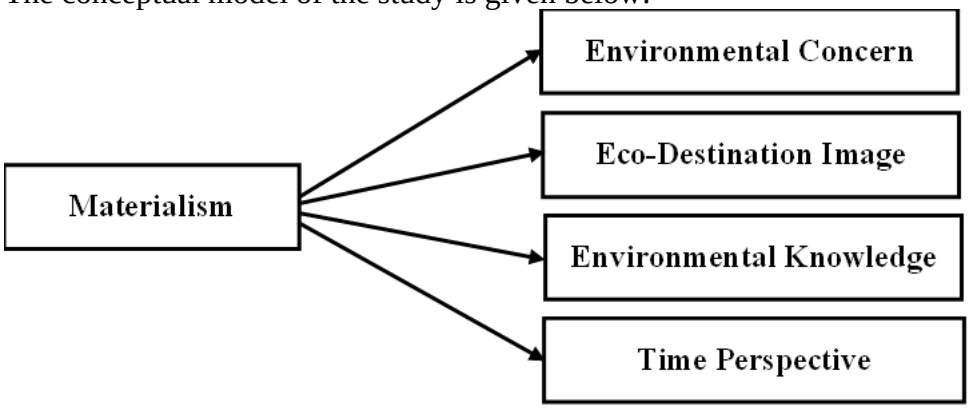

Figure 1. Conceptual model

Hypotheses

Based on the research questions and conceptual model, the following hypotheses can be formulated: -

- H1. Materialism would significantly affect environmental concern.
- H2. Materialism would significantly affect eco-destination image.
- H3. Materialism would significantly affect environmental knowledge.
- H4. Materialism would significantly affect time perspective.

Sampling and data collection

The primary data were collected using simple random sampling technique. People of Uttarakhand state who have visited at least one tourist destination are included as participant in the study. Also, respondents must be above 18 years of age to be the respondent in the study. Authors collected 745 responses from participants, out of which 591 responses were correctly filled and were finalized for the study. The demographic profile of the respondents can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Demography	Groups	Frequency	Percent
Age	Below 20	123	21.2
	21-30	225	38.4
	31-40	118	22.1
	41-50	73	11.4
	Above 50	52	6.9
Gender	Male	263	44.6
	Female	326	55.1
	Transgender	2	0.4
Family Monthly Income (in Rs.)	Below Rs. 15000	125	21.5
	Rs. 15001-30000	151	24.5
	Rs. 30001-50000	118	19.9
	Above Rs. 50000	197	34.1
Are you employed?	Yes	256	42.3
	No	335	57.7
Your Occupation	Govt. Job	123	19.1
	Private Job	143	22.7
	Self-employed	73	11.2
	Farming	29	2.8
	Student	223	44.2
Locale	Rural	227	36.7
	Urban	364	63.3
Types of Tourism Motivation	Dark Tourism	72	9.7
	Adventure Tourism	245	43.1
	Pilgrimage Tourism	209	37.1
	Others	65	10.1
Total Sample Size = 591			

Research Instrument

Selecting the appropriate tool is crucial for accurately gathering data from participants. The process of developing, selecting, and validating a research scale is meticulous and leads to the creation of standard tools deemed suitable for data collection. This study adhered to this rigorous process, adopting constructs from previous research. The measurement items, once developed, were reviewed by four subject matter experts to ensure scrutiny and content validity. Following positive feedback from these experts, a pilot study with 50 participants was conducted to evaluate the content's adequacy and the participants' ability to respond effectively. The pilot study confirmed the content's suitability, leading to the finalization of the questionnaire. It included four items on environmental concern sourced from Han et al. (2010) and Chiu et al. (2014a), five items on eco-destination image from Chiu et al. (2014b) and Sharma and Nayak (2018), three items on environmental knowledge from Kumar et al. (2017), five items on time perspective from Lu et al. (2016) and Doran et al. (2017), and five items on materialism from Richins (2004).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Scale Validation

In this study, scale validation was conducted using Partial Least Squares Confirmatory Factor Analysis (PLS-CFA) via Smart PLS 4 (trial version), employing a structural equation modeling technique that utilizes a component-based approach for parameter estimation. The

validation process unfolded in two main stages: evaluating reliability and assessing validity, which included both convergent and discriminant validity. According to the results displayed in Table 3, where item loading was presented, the t statistics for all items exceeded the threshold of 1.96, indicating significance. This suggests that each item made a meaningful contribution to its respective construct. Further, factor analysis revealed that the factor loadings for the items were greater than 0.5 (Hulland, 1999; Truong & McColl, 2011), thereby confirming the significant loading values of the items and their substantial roles in the development of their corresponding constructs.

Item Loading

The results presented in Table 2 detail the item loading values for various constructs. Items with loading values less than 0.5 were removed from the analysis, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019).

Reliability Measures

Internal consistency, which assesses whether items within a test uniformly measure the same concept, can be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally, 1978). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha values for each construct were found to exceed the 0.7 threshold, indicating good internal consistency and reliability. Specifically, Table 2 shows Cronbach's alpha values as follows: environmental concern at 0.776, eco-destination image at 0.779, environmental knowledge at 0.785, materialism at 0.707, and time perspective at 0.744.

Additionally, reliability was assessed using the Rho A coefficient, where a value of 0.7 or higher is deemed to reflect adequate reliability. According to Table 2, Rho A values were reported as: 0.795 for environmental concern, 0.780 for eco-destination image, 0.787 for environmental knowledge, 0.707 for materialism, and 0.746 for time perspective. These findings confirm the reliability of the constructs used in the study, ensuring the data's integrity.

Validity Measures

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity assesses the agreement among multiple items measuring the same concept, reflecting their coherence in capturing the intended construct (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982; Barclay et al., 1995). A composite reliability (CR) value of 0.7 or above is indicative of the internal consistency and reliability of the measures within the study (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010). As shown in Table 3, the CR values for the constructs are as follows: environmental concern at 0.869, eco-destination image at 0.826, environmental knowledge at 0.874, materialism at 0.771, and time perspective at 0.839, all of which denote a high level of CR for the scale.

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is crucial for determining a scale's convergent validity, representing the proportion of variance that a construct captures from its indicators. An AVE value of 0.5 or greater is considered satisfactory evidence of convergent validity (Hu et al., 2004; Henseler et al., 2009). According to Table 2, the AVE values for the constructs are: environmental concern at 0.689, eco-destination image at 0.704, environmental knowledge at 0.699, materialism at 0.628, and time perspective at 0.566, indicating that the constructs demonstrate strong convergent validity.

Table 2. Measurement Results

Variables	Item Code	Item Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Rho A	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Environmental Concern	EC1	0.768	0.776	0.795	0.869	0.689
	EC2	0.868				
	EC3	0.852				
Eco-Destination Image	EDI3	0.830	0.779	0.780	0.826	0.704
	EDI4	0.847				
Environmental Knowledge	EK1	0.814	0.785	0.787	0.874	0.699
	EK2	0.859				
	EK3	0.835				
Materialism	MAT3	0.801	0.707	0.707	0.771	0.628
	MAT4	0.784				
Time Perspective	TP1	0.724	0.744	0.746	0.839	0.566
	TP2	0.802				
	TP3	0.751				
	TP5	0.730				

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is critical for ensuring that constructs within a study are distinct and unrelated to each other. This validity is established when there is a low correlation between the measurements of a given construct and those of other constructs within the study, indicating that each construct is unique and captures different phenomena (Cheung and Lee, 2010; Hair et al., 2010). Essentially, it confirms that the measures are true representations of the constructs they are intended to measure (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Within the context of Partial Least Squares (PLS) measurement, discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the squared correlations between constructs with the variance extracted for each construct, ensuring that constructs share less variance with each other than with their own indicators (Komiak et al., 2004; Henseler and Chin, 2010). As detailed in Table 3, the discriminant validity values for the constructs are as follows: environmental concern at 0.830, eco-destination image at 0.839, environmental knowledge at 0.836, materialism at 0.792, and time perspective at 0.752. These values exceed the correlations between constructs, indicating a satisfactory level of discriminant validity and affirming the integrity of the measurement model (Henseler and Chin, 2010).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variables	Environment Concern	Eco-Destination Image	Environmental Knowledge	Materialism	Time Perspective
Environmental Concern	**0.830**				
Eco-Destination Image	0.452	**0.839**			
Environmental Knowledge	0.479	0.417	**0.836**		
Materialism	0.247	0.267	0.132	**0.792**	
Time Perspective	0.370	0.414	0.414	0.383	**0.752**

Testing of Hypotheses

The present study applied structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the direct effect of materialism on eco-destination image, time perspective, environmental concern and knowledge among people of Uttarakhand. The analysis explained, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, that materialism is significantly connected with eco-destination image ($\beta = 0.270$, STDEV = 0.051, t = 5.349, $p < 0.001$), environmental concern ($\beta = 0.251$, STDEV = 0.050, t = 4.978, $p < 0.001$), environmental knowledge ($\beta = 0.134$, STDEV = 0.048, t = 2.789, $p < 0.01$), and time perspective ($\beta = 0.385$, STDEV = 0.045, t = 8.533, $p < 0.001$). Hence, it concluded that materialism plays a big role in destination image, time perspective, environmental knowledge and concern among people of Uttarakhand.

Table 4. SEM results

Tested Relationships	β value	STDEV	t-value	p value
Materialism --> Eco-Destination Image	0.270	0.051	5.349	0.000
Materialism --> Environmental Concern	0.251	0.050	4.978	0.000
Materialism --> Environmental Knowledge	0.134	0.048	2.789	0.005
Materialism --> Time Perspective	0.385	0.045	8.533	0.000

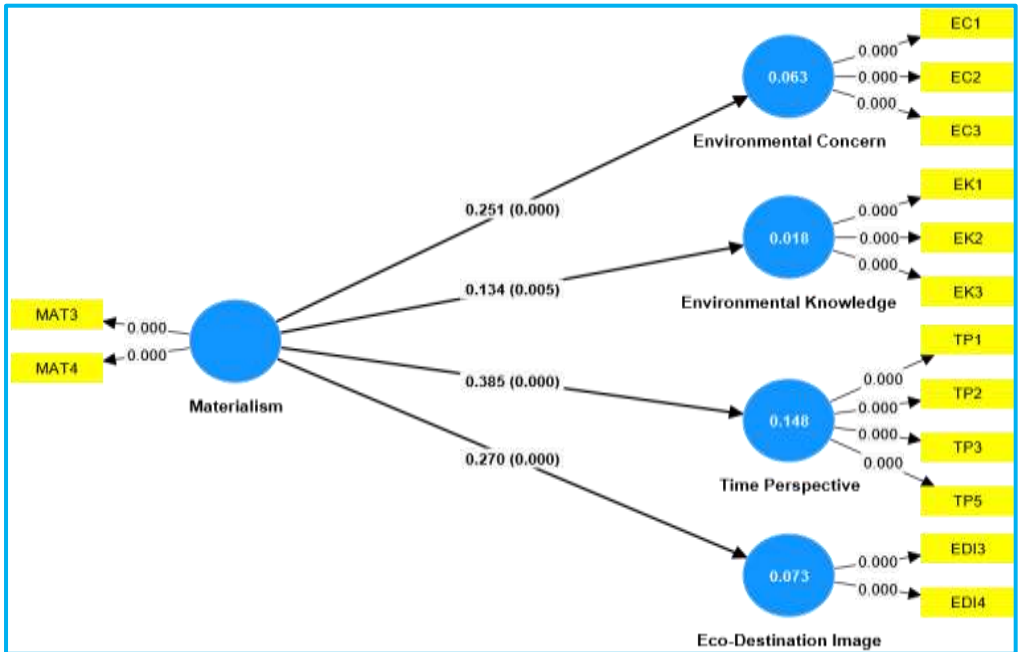

Figure 2. Predicted Relationship of Variables

DISCUSSION

The application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in the current study offers insightful revelations into the dynamics between materialism and several key variables: eco-destination image, time perspective, environmental concern, and environmental knowledge, within the context of Uttarakhand's populace. The analysis, as depicted in Table 4 and Figure 2, establishes materialism as a significant predictor across these variables, suggesting a multifaceted influence of materialistic values on environmental and temporal perspectives.

Firstly, the significant positive relationship between materialism and eco-destination image ($\beta = 0.270$, $p < 0.001$) implies that individuals with higher materialistic inclinations tend to have a stronger positive image of eco-destinations. This could be interpreted as materialistic individuals valuing eco-destinations not just for their natural beauty but perhaps also for the

status or unique experiences these places offer, aligning eco-tourism with the aspirational aspects of materialism.

Secondly, the connection between materialism and environmental concern ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.001$) is particularly noteworthy. It suggests that, contrary to the traditional view of materialism as antithetical to environmentalism, individuals with materialistic values in Uttarakhand may also hold significant concerns for the environment. This could indicate a complex relationship where materialistic values coexist with a genuine concern for environmental sustainability, possibly reflecting a regional cultural characteristic or a broader shift in how materialism and environmentalism are perceived globally.

The link between materialism and environmental knowledge ($\beta = 0.134$, $p < 0.01$) further supports the idea that materialistic individuals are not disengaged from environmental issues. Instead, they may seek to inform themselves about the environment, possibly to reconcile their consumption habits with a desire to be seen as environmentally responsible or to make more informed choices about the products they consume and the destinations they visit.

Lastly, the strong positive effect of materialism on time perspective ($\beta = 0.385$, $p < 0.001$) is particularly illuminating. It suggests that materialistic values significantly influence how individuals perceive and value their time, perhaps prioritizing future goals and achievements, which are often associated with material success, over present or past considerations. This future-oriented time perspective could motivate materialistic individuals to invest in sustainable practices and eco-friendly tourism as part of a long-term strategy for maintaining their lifestyle and status.

Thus, the findings challenge the conventional dichotomy between materialism and environmentalism, instead revealing a nuanced interaction where materialistic values in Uttarakhand's population appear to be positively associated with eco-destination image, environmental concern, and knowledge, alongside a future-oriented time perspective. These insights suggest that materialism, rather than being an obstacle, could potentially be harnessed to promote environmental sustainability and eco-friendly behaviors, provided that these values are aligned with personal and societal goals.

Implications of the Study

The study's insights into the relationship between materialism and aspects such as eco-destination image, environmental concern, and knowledge in Uttarakhand carry significant implications for policymakers, marketers, and environmental advocates. First, for policymakers and environmental advocates, the findings suggest a strategic opportunity to frame environmental policies and campaigns in a manner that appeals to materialistic values. Highlighting the long-term benefits and prestige associated with eco-friendly practices could foster greater public engagement with environmental initiatives.

For the tourism industry, the positive association between materialism and the image of eco-destinations offers a new angle for marketing strategies. By emphasizing the exclusivity and luxury of eco-tourism, alongside its environmental benefits, marketers can appeal to materialistic consumers seeking status-enhancing experiences. This approach could widen the market for sustainable tourism by attracting those who might not have previously considered it.

Lastly, the link between materialism, environmental knowledge, and a future-oriented time perspective suggests that educational programs on sustainability could benefit from focusing on the long-term advantages of environmental stewardship. Emphasizing the impact of sustainable living on future generations and societal well-being could resonate with materialistic individuals, encouraging more sustainable lifestyle choices.

CONCLUSION

The present study unveils the complex interplay between materialism and variables like eco-destination image, environmental concern, environmental knowledge, and time perspective among the people of Uttarakhand. It reveals that materialistic values can positively influence perceptions and behaviors toward environmental sustainability. These insights challenge the traditional view of materialism as inherently opposed to environmentalism, suggesting instead that materialistic tendencies could be harnessed to promote eco-friendly practices and sustainable tourism. By aligning marketing strategies, educational programs, and policy frameworks with materialistic values, stakeholders can potentially foster a broader engagement with sustainability initiatives, bridging the gap between personal aspirations and environmental stewardship.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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