

## HOW CAN COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM HELP PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOURISM SECTOR?

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**Citation:** Durrah, O., El-Maghraby, L., Elbaz, A.M., Hisam, M.W., & Alkhalaif, T. (2026). How can community-based tourism help promote sustainable development in the tourism sector? *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 64(1), 50–59. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.64105-1655>

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**Abstract:** The emphasis on Sustainable Development (SD) in Oman has gained momentum in recent years as the nation seeks to diversify its economy and reduce its heavy reliance on oil revenues, in line with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. Within this framework, tourism—particularly community-based tourism (CBT) — has been identified as a promising sector that can contribute to sustainable economic, social, and environmental outcomes. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of community-based tourism factors on Sustainable Development, investigate the consequences of community-based tourism on local communities. To achieve these objectives, preliminary data were collected through structured online questionnaires distributed to a diverse group of 402 respondents, comprising local community members, representatives from the tourism sector, and tourists in the Dhofar region of Oman. The data were analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the support of WarpPLS software, allowing for the testing of hypothesized relationships between the CBT factors and sustainable development outcomes. The findings indicate that the three factors of community-based tourism (i.e. Economic Factor, Social Factor, and Environmental Factor) have significantly affect Sustainable Development (SD). This research makes a meaningful contribution by being among the first empirical studies in Oman to examine the interplay between CBT and sustainable development through a quantitative modeling approach. The insights generated can inform policymakers, tourism practitioners, and local communities in enhancing awareness of the advantages and challenges associated with CBT, as well as guiding the practical application of sustainable tourism strategies within Oman and other contexts pursuing similar development goals.

**Keywords:** community-based tourism, sustainable development, tourism sector, Oman

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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of community-based tourism (CBT) has grown in recent years, it plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism development (Durrah et al., 2025; Sapkota et al., 2024; Zamzami et al., 2025).

CBT is crucial for sustainable tourism development due to the massive social impact it is likely to have. CBT empowers the local people in the planning and implementing of tourist activities, and therefore participants have an input in the tourism sector (Dobre et al., 2025). In community-based tourism (CBT), residents of the area being visited take an active role in the industry's ideation, creation, and administration (Lo & Janta, 2020). CBT promotes economic growth for local communities and encourages cultural exchange and tolerance between visitors and residents. CBT often entails small-scale, locally owned and operated tourist enterprises, such as homestays, community-run tours, and cultural activities.

These activities are intended to promote the local community's culture, traditions, and natural resources, while also delivering economic benefits (Zielinski et al., 2020). A significant characteristic of CBT is its emphasis on local control and ownership. Based on Amoako et al. (2022), communities play an active part in selecting which tourism activities occur, and they frequently receive a substantial amount of the economic advantages provided by these activities.

This can assist to ensure that tourism's advantages are dispersed more equally, and it can also help to lessen tourism's negative effects on local communities. Overall, Fiorello & Bo (2012) viewed CBT as a means of promoting sustainable and ethical tourist practices and offering economic opportunities for local people. It is an emerging trend in the tourist industry and has the ability to promote the growth of rural and isolated communities around the globe.

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CBT centers tourist development around the local community in terms of resource management, benefit sharing, and policymaking. It strives to uplift communities, protect cultural assets, and advance sustainable growth. To elevate community members' well-being, CBT entails their active participation in the development, carrying out, and running tourism-related events (Oukil, 2016). CBT puts the goals and well-being of the local community first, as opposed to conventional tourist tactics, which commonly put the interests of outside stakeholders and profit production first. Recognizing the role of communities as not just hosts but also important players in influencing and reaping the tourism benefits. Locals actively participate in policymaking, choose the nature and scope of tourist-related activities, and oversee the related resources in community-based tourism. Through active participation, communities are able to maintain a sense of control and ownership over their natural and cultural resources (Abdul-Ghani, 2006).

In past decades Oman laid out the groundwork to be a thorough knowledge-based economy and to condense its dependency on oil proceeds, including increasing tourist influxes into the country, a parallel change taken by other GCC states. However, it was not before the mid-1990s that the Sultanate of Oman emerged as a new touristic center in the European markets. By utilizing its distinctive "oriental" identity, the Sultanate was able to establish a distinctive brand for itself as a largely undiscovered tourist destination in the Orient that combined comfort and luxury, urban life and solitude, a diversity of landscapes, and cultural attractions (Kukreti et al., 2022; Al-Muharrami, 2019).

The Oman tourism development strategy was recently approved by the tourism ministry, with the main goals being to leverage true partnerships with the local community and relevant entities and to gather suggestions, complaints, and feedback from locals, visitors, and all businesses operating in this sector for the purpose of continuous improvement.

The "partnership" goal runs concurrently with other "complementary" goals that can maintain collaboration, such as: developing knowledge-generating research in tourism development and applying it to various tourism-related activities on the ground; recognizing, analysing, and assessing the natural and cultural vocabulary and tourism components to be used in the tourism product industry of all kinds; and incorporating the idea of sustainability (Ministry of Tourism in Oman, 2023). From this, it is clear that the government is incorporating the key components of CBT into its overall strategy in an effort to boost the Omani economy and provide more employment possibilities for its citizens. In fact, the aforementioned goals are part of the ministry's vision, which aims to bring in 11 million domestic and international tourists yearly by 2040 (Ministry of Tourism in Oman, 2023; Oman Vision 2040; 2023). Consequently, this strengthened the government's obvious strategic goal of guiding Oman's CBT ship into safe harbour. With a strong strategic framework and guidance, it will also advance the nation toward its goals for human and economic growth. Dhofar has a distinct strategic location in the Sultanate of Oman.

It benefits from the khareef season and has a relatively mild environment throughout the year, making it an ideal tourist location. There is a steady influx of tourists throughout the year, but khareef season is distinct. Despite the development of many tourist sites and resorts, they are insufficient, and the local community is hesitant to launch a tourist project in many of the viable locations. Awareness and training in community-based tourism are solutions to the aforementioned challenge.

A variety of activities, including homestays, eco-tours, and cultural tours, can be included in community-based tourism projects. Visitors can engage with local people and gain knowledge about Oman, particularly Dhofar's rich cultural heritage and traditions, through these programs, which offer real and enriching experiences. Furthermore, it can boost local economies by generating additional revenue streams and jobs for the community (Busaidi & Tiwari, 2019).

Research from academic institutions and contextual studies is necessary because this field is currently understudied. Prior tourist studies have usually overlooked community-based tourism as a special focus (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Instead, the majority of study has concentrated on large-scale, commercial types of tourism. As a result, there is a lack of awareness and comprehension regarding the particular qualities and challenges of community-based tourism. In recent years, as community-based tourism has received a significant amount of attention, there has been a growing awareness of the significance of understanding this industry and its effects on local communities. As a result, there has been a growing amount of study on community-based tourism in recent years, and it is probable that this trend will continue in the future. However, there is still a considerable work to be done in order to properly understand community-based tourism and encourage its development. Furthermore, there is still a shortage of research in this area. This study empirically evaluates Sustainable Development impacts of CBT in Dhofar Oman because no similar assessment currently exists. The research targets an evaluation of CBT initiatives by understanding their response to economic elements as well as social conditions and environmental elements. The case of Dhofar provides the perfect research context because it holds abundant cultural history alongside enthusiastic tourism market expansion centred on natural attractions as well as cultural destinations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

One of the most crucial issues facing the global tourism industry is sustainable tourism. As tourists become more conscious of pro-social, pro-environmental, and conservation issues, sustainability is frequently seen as a competitive advantage in travel destinations. One significant form of sustainable tourism is community-based tourism, even though there is still a lack of information regarding community-based tourism, there are a number of studies that have looked at this sustainable type of travel and its features (Elbaz, 2013; Lee & Jan, 2019). The foundation of community-based tourism, according to Mayaka et al. (2019) is the growth of the community via tourism, whose benefits go beyond economic development. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a sustainable tourism approach focused on engaging and empowering local communities in planning, managing, and benefiting from tourism activities. The CBT model emphasizes community control over tourism development, local employment, cultural preservation, and environmentally responsible practices. The goal is to ensure that tourism brings long-term benefits to local residents rather than merely benefiting outside investors or agencies (Abreu et al., 2024). Tourism activities that are properly planned, run, managed, or coordinated at the community

level are what define community-based tourism (CBT), which fits in perfectly with the idea of sustainable local development. With an emphasis on promoting sustainable livelihoods and preserving traditional natural, sociocultural, and heritage resources, these initiatives are aimed at promoting community well-being (Okazaki, 2008; Garzon & Toloza, 2022). CBT also shows up as a tourism model that promotes social ties, unity, and a shared sense of society life.

CBT places a strong emphasis on preserving and advancing regional cultural assets. It acknowledges that a community's distinct cultural traditions, customs, and practices play a crucial role in defining its uniqueness and drawing in tourists. Communities can tell their tales, exhibit their cultural history, and interact with tourists on a cultural level through CBT. A further fundamental tenet of CBT is sustainability. It seeks to augment the constructive effects of tourism while diminishing its unfavourable effects. CBT promotes impartial sharing of financial gains, conservation of the environment, and responsible resource management (Sharma, 2014). A number of advantageous effects can result from community-based tourism by actively involving and empowering local communities. These include reducing poverty, increasing capacity, protecting cultural assets, fostering social cohesion and community pride, and diversifying the economy. CBT is dynamic and ever-changing, and it differs depending on the location and community. It can take many different forms, including guided tours by members of the community, homestays, lodges owned by the community, exhibitions of local crafts and culture, and interactive events that let guests interact with the locals (Mubeen et al., 2017).

Many studies have pointed out that there are five key elements of community tourism, which are: (1) Community Involvement and Ownership: Communities actively participate in decision-making processes and often hold ownership stakes in tourism projects. This can include community-owned lodges, cultural centers, and cooperative tour organizations. Involving locals ensures that tourism development aligns with community values and needs (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). (2) Economic Benefits to Local Communities: CBT aims to provide direct economic benefits to the community through local employment, revenue-sharing, and the use of locally sourced products and services. This prevents economic leakage, where profits from tourism are lost to external entities, and maximizes the economic impact on the community itself (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). (3) Cultural Preservation and Awareness: CBT encourages cultural exchange and respects local traditions, often involving cultural education for visitors. Traditional practices, crafts, and celebrations are preserved and shared with tourists in a respectful way, which not only fosters understanding but can strengthen local cultural pride (Zapata et al., 2011). (4) Environmental Sustainability: CBT initiatives typically integrate environmental protection measures, such as waste management, conservation of natural resources, and eco-friendly infrastructure. CBT promotes responsible tourism practices and seeks to minimize environmental impact, which is essential for long-term tourism sustainability (Dodds et al., 2010). (5) Education and Capacity Building: To support sustainable growth, CBT often includes training programs for community members in hospitality, management, language skills, and conservation. Education ensures that communities have the skills necessary to manage tourism enterprises independently (Jamal & Getz, 1999).

The advantages of CBT - economic development, social enfranchisement, and ecological efficiency - are accepted (Elbaz et al., 2023; Khizar et al., 2023). Scholars still debate, nevertheless, their combined influence on the growth of sustainable tourism (Okpa et al., 2025). CBT improves the policy in sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, also, it promotes unity, pride, and participation in the community decision-making process (Ghosh et al., 2025; Zielinski et al., 2020). It is posited that those communities with positive attitudes towards tourism and emotional attachment towards the environment will support sustainable measures such as conservation, waste management, and resource conservation (Sukran et al., 2025; Sholeha & Sumarmi, 2025; Seidualin et al., 2025; Hassan et al., 2024; Rashwan et al., 2024; Ziari & Mosleh, 2025). Scheyvens (1999) listed several advantages of community tourism such as: (1) Empowerment and Autonomy: CBT fosters empowerment by allowing communities to guide the development of tourism in ways that align with their priorities. (2) Economic Diversification: By creating new income sources, CBT can enhance economic resilience in rural or marginalized areas, reducing reliance on traditional industries. (3) Environmental and Cultural Conservation: CBT supports the preservation of local resources and traditions by attaching economic value to them, which encourages conservation. Despite its benefits, CBT faces challenges, such as limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, dependency on external funding, and the potential for conflicts over management or revenue distribution. Ensuring a balance between visitor needs and community welfare is essential for successful CBT projects (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CBT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

Since both Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Sustainable Development (SD) aim to minimize the negative effects of tourism while optimizing its positive effects on the environment and local communities, they are inextricably intertwined (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). CBT focuses on tourism projects that are controlled, owned, or greatly impacted by local communities. It places a strong emphasis on cultural preservation, community involvement, and fair benefit distribution. In order to preserve control over their resources and cultural identity, the aim is to enable communities to use tourism as a tool for social and economic advancement (Sapkota et al., 2024). By balancing the economic, environmental, and social development of tourism, SD aims to preserve its longevity and minimal impact on future generations. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism considers the needs of travellers, the travel industry, and host communities while protecting ecosystems and cultural heritage (UNWTO, 2019).

CBT enables communities to actively participate in tourism planning and decision-making, which is an important part of SD. According to Goodwin & Santilli (2009), both strategies promote local authority over tourism-related resources and decision-making to foster a sense of pride and ensure that tourism aligns with local priorities and values. Promoting equitable distribution of tourism-related revenue is one way that CBT directly supports local livelihoods. The SD principle

of reducing inequality and ensuring a fair distribution of economic gains is consistent with this (Scheyvens, 1999). Sustainable activities like ecotourism are regularly incorporated into CBT through community involvement in environmental conservation. According to Weaver (2001), this directly supports SD's environmental aims, which are to minimize resource extraction and environmental damage. One of the main components of SD is the preservation of regional customs, dialects, and heritage, which is encouraged by CBT. The goal of sustainable tourism is to prevent commodification while preserving and promoting cultural variety (Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

To guarantee long-term advantages and sustainable practices, both CBT and SD place a strong emphasis on cooperation amongst stakeholders, including local communities, governments, and commercial sector players (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Long-term community and environmental advantages from tourism growth are guaranteed by CBT. For future generations, this strengthens SD's will to strike a balance between development and conservation (Saarinen, 2006). Although CBT advances the objectives of SD, issues including excessive tourism, a lack of knowledge about tourism management, and reliance on outside finance might make both strategies less effective. Aligning CBT with the larger objectives of SD requires strong governance, capacity-building, and community education (Afenyo-Agbe, & Mensah, 2022). To expand further, the link between Community-Based Tourism (CBT) and Sustainable Development (SD) is based on shared ideals and reciprocal benefits, but there are challenges in its implementation. CBT is a practical way to achieve SD. Both highlight the triple bottom line of sustainability. (1) Economic sustainability: Ensuring that tourism supports local communities financially without causing dependency. (2) Environmental sustainability: Keeping ecosystems healthy and reducing the carbon imprint of tourism activities. (3) Social and cultural sustainability include preserving local customs, decreasing inequality, and promoting social harmony (Ashley & Roe, 1998).

At the local level, CBT gives locals the ability to control and profit from tourism. This backs up SD's need for inclusive growth that lessens dependency on centralized travel agencies. Teaching locals and visitors about sustainability is a key component of both CBT and SD. Visitors gain an appreciation for regional customs and natural resources, and local communities gain management, hospitality, and environmental stewardship skills. (Blackstock, 2005).

Both CBT and SD goals are supported by international initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). These frameworks emphasize how crucial tourism is to reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. One of the best methods to accomplish the goals of SD is through cognitive behavioral therapy. CBT promotes a sustainable tourism paradigm by placing a high priority on fair benefits, local participation, and cultural and environmental (UNWTO, 2015). Based on what has been discussed above, the conceptual framework of our study demonstrates that the factors of CBT on Sustainable Development can be significant (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elbaz, 2013; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Perdue et al., 1990). As a result, we have the following hypotheses:

- H1.** Economic factor positively impacts sustainable development in the tourism sector.
- H2.** Social factor positively impacts sustainable development in the tourism sector.
- H3.** Environmental factor positively impacts sustainable development in the tourism sector.

## OMANI TOURISM CONTEXT

Oman has unique features that make it an ideal location for community tourism, which relies on engaging locals in tourism activities to enhance economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes. The most important of these features are (Khalif, 2021; Peterson & Crystal, 2018):

1. Cultural and historical heritage: Oman has a long history spanning thousands of years, with rich archaeological and heritage sites, such as castles, forts and traditional markets. Many Omani sites have been listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, such as Bahla Fort and the Aflaj of Oman, which enhances the appeal of community tourism. In addition to folk arts and traditional crafts such as pottery and weaving, they provide an authentic tourist experience for visitors.

2. Natural and climatic diversity: The Sultanate is characterized by diverse terrain that includes mountains (such as Jebel Shams and Jebel Akhdar), deserts (such as Wahiba Desert), and long coastlines on the Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf. These natural diversities provide opportunities for ecotourism, such as hiking, camping, bird watching, and diving. Agricultural areas such as Jebel Akhdar also give visitors the opportunity to relate with locals and be involved in the rural life.

3. Local community and ancient traditions: The hospitality and hospitality of Omanis are one of the attractions of community tourism. The continued practice of local communities of their traditions and customs enhances the tourist experience, such as participation in cultural events and traditional festivals. In addition, the role of Omani women in crafts and handicrafts contributes to the sustainability of tourism and supports productive families.

4. Infrastructure supporting community tourism: The Sultanate provides various tourism facilities, including eco-lodges, guest houses, and desert camps, which enhance the sustainable tourism experience. The presence of government initiatives to support rural tourism, such as promoting tourist villages, helps engage local communities. In addition, the presence of mountain trail development projects and environmental adventures encourage visitors to explore areas far from cities.

5. Supportive legislation and policies: The Omani government seeks to promote sustainable tourism through national strategies and plans such as "Oman Vision 2040", which focuses on economic diversification, lowering oil reliance, and providing job prospects for local communities by supporting tourism SMEs. The government also organizes training plans for communities to enrich their skills in managing tourism projects and providing services to visitors.

6. Festivals and cultural events: Holding annual festivals such as the Muscat Festival and the Salalah Tourism Festival contributes to introducing local culture and enhancing interactions. Heritage events such as camel races, traditional markets, and folk-art shows reflect the Omani cultural identity.

The Sultanate of Oman has distinct components for community tourism, as natural, cultural, and human factors combine to support this type of tourism. By promoting community tourism, sustainable development can be achieved, local communities can be empowered, and the country's cultural and natural heritage can be protected.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1. Sampling procedure and data collection

The sample frame comprises the relevant stakeholders in local community, representatives of tourism sector and tourists in Dhofar region of Oman. Employing a convenience sampling technique, the sample was collected through an online questionnaire survey distributed to stakeholders. This study used convenience sampling because of its practical benefits, notably in terms of accessibility, time efficiency, and resource restrictions. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the present study and the goal of gaining preliminary insights into the viewpoints of a certain community, convenience sampling was a cost-effective and expedient way to collect relevant data. The final survey yielded with 402 Reponses. The sample consisted of 50.7% of men and 49.3% of women. 48.8% of the sample were less than 30 years' old. 45.5% had a bachelor degree. and (56.7%) of respondents were unmarried.

### 2. Measures

This study adopts a validated instrument previously developed as follows: community-based tourism factors (i.e., economic factor {3 items}, social factor {3 items}, and environmental factor {5 items}), it was measured using a 11-item scale to assess the community-based tourism factors construct based on the framework established by Ko & Stewart (2002), while Sustainable tourism development, it was measured using a 3-item scale based on a scale based on the framework developed by Abou-Shouk et al. (2021). A Likert scale with five possible answers—from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)—was used to assess the responses.

## DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The proposed model is analysed using a two-step approach. The first step is to ensure that the instrument has adequate validity, and the second step is to examine the proposed hypothetical relationships using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The two-step approach is conducted using Warp-PLS.

### 1. Research Model and Techniques

The current study's goal is to ascertain how community-based tourism supports the growth of sustainable tourism. The study model has a dependent variable (Sustainable Development) with 3 items, and an independent variable (Community-Based Tourism) with three factors, economic factor (3) items, social factor 3 items, and environmental factor (5 items). WarpPLS software and the PLS-SEM technique, which consists of two models—an internal structural model to assess the strength of the presumed correlations between components and an external measurement model to quantify the validity and reliability of the measures—were used to analyze the data.

### 2. Measurement Model

In Table 1, the convergent validity and normality tests for the study's constructs are displayed. To verify that the data met the normality criteria, skewness and kurtosis tests were performed. The findings showed that the values fell within  $\pm 3$  (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). The findings presented in Table 1 indicated that the mean of Sustainable Development was high, the means of the Community-Based Tourism factors were low except economic factor which was high., and the standard deviation values were low. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR) were used to verify the measurement model's reliability (Alkhalfaf & Badewi, 2024). All values of  $\alpha$  were greater than the assumed threshold of 0.7 (George & Mallery, 2003). The CR values were higher than the 0.70 cut-off value (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015; Durrah et al. 2025). Convergent validity was investigated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to confirm the measurement model. According to Durrah et al. (2023), the AVE values of variables were more noticeable than the 0.5 cut-offs.

Table 1. Assessment of Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	VIF	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
ECO	ECO <sub>1</sub>	0.803	1.144	0.758	0.861	0.675
	ECO <sub>2</sub>	0.865				
	ECO <sub>3</sub>	0.793				
SOC	SOC <sub>1</sub>	0.975	3.721	0.975	0.984	0.952
	SOC <sub>2</sub>	0.978				
	SOC <sub>3</sub>	0.975				
ENV	ENV <sub>1</sub>	0.945	3.792	0.973	0.979	0.902
	ENV <sub>2</sub>	0.947				
	ENV <sub>3</sub>	0.953				
	ENV <sub>4</sub>	0.952				
	ENV <sub>5</sub>	0.951				
SD	SD <sub>1</sub>	0.868	1.154	0.863	0.916	0.785
	SD <sub>2</sub>	0.903				
	SD <sub>3</sub>	0.887				

On the other hand, the outer loadings of all indicators are greater than the allowed threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2006). The internal variance inflation factor (VIF) values for each set of predictors (exogenous constructs) in the structural model were analyzed to make sure there is no multicollinearity among the constructs.

Table 1 illustrates that the structural model's collinearity problem is not very serious because the VIF values of the exogenous constructs fall below the cutoff point of 5 (Durrah et al., 2024a; Hair et al., 2013).

### 3. Discriminant Validity

Using the Fornell & Cha (1994) criterion, the discriminant validity of each construct has been assessed. The discriminant validity of the constructs was demonstrated by Table 2, which shows that the square root of AVE for each latent variable (in brackets) was greater than its greatest correlation with the other latent variables (Durrah et al., 2024b).

Table 2. Normality Test and Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

Construct	Mean	St.D.	Skew.	Kurt.
ECO	4.164	0.787	-0.771	0.117
SOC	2.828	1.432	-0.131	-1.585
ENV	2.743	1.392	-0.045	-1.490
SD	4.193	0.858	-1.003	0.360

To further illustrate its discriminant validity, the study used the (HTMT) ratio. The findings in Table 3 imply that the validity of the measurement model is adequate as the HTMT values were less than 0.85, as suggested by Durrah et al. (2024c) and Römer et al. (2021).

Table 3. Correlations among Latent Variables with the Square Root of AVEs

	ECO	SOC	ENV	SD
ECO	<b>(0.821)</b>			
SOC	-0.119	<b>(0.976)</b>		
ENV	-0.146	0.922	<b>(0.950)</b>	
SD	0.342	-0.156	-0.176	<b>(0.886)</b>

### 4. Hypothesis Testing

To assess the study hypotheses, structural equation modelling (SEM) was carried out using WarpPLS software, as indicated in Figure 1 and Table 4. The results indicate that all factors of Community-Based Tourism (i.e., economic factor, social factor, and environmental factor) have a significant influence on Sustainable Development (SD). Consequently, (H1, H2, and H3) are supported by the results.

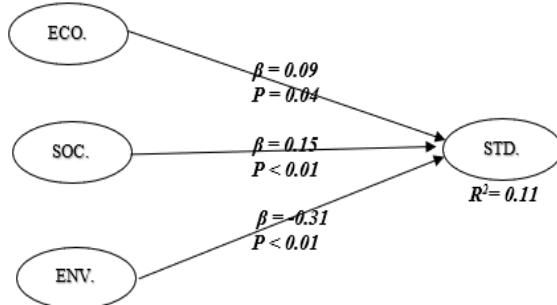


Figure 1. Measurement Model

Using the f2 values provided by WarpPLS, the study calculated the effect magnitude for each path coefficient. A path coefficient can indicate a small effect ( $>=0.02$ ), medium effect ( $>=0.15$ ), or high effect ( $>= 0.35$ ) based on the effect sizes. Effects smaller than 0.02 are practically too little to be considered (Kock, 2019). The exogenous factors in Table 4 have f2 values that range from small to medium size. Table 4 also illustrates how the predictive validity of the study model's endogenous variables was evaluated using the Stone-Geisser Q-squared coefficient.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing

H	Paths	( $\beta$ )	P	( $f^2$ )	Result
H1	ECO → SD	0.09	0.04	0.031	Supported
H2	SOC → SD	0.15	< 0.01	0.066	Supported
H3	ENV → SD	-0.31	< 0.01	0.149	Supported
Q-squared coefficients		R-squared coefficients		Goodness of Fit (GoF)	
0.200		0.114		0.307	

According to Fornell & Cha (1994), a study model is considered predictive if its Q-squared coefficient is higher than zero. Our study model satisfies this requirement because its coefficient was higher than zero (0.272).

Additionally, the goodness of fit is greater than 0.36 (GoF = 0.427). Thus, the model can be used to assess model viability (Durrah & Kahwaji, 2023). Also, the R-squared coefficient was 0.268, indicating a satisfactory level of interpretive ability (Alkhalfaf et al., 2025; Hammami et al., 2022).

## DISCUSSION

This study sought to determine how CBT factors affect the SD, how CBT affects local communities, including how benefits are distributed and any potential drawbacks. Our findings confirmed Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, showing a positive effect for all factors of CBT (i.e., ECO, SOC, and ENV) on SD. As for hypothesis 1, it is true that economic considerations can have a significant beneficial influence on the growth of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism depends on the provision of jobs and revenue for local communities, which is frequently the result of economic investment in the tourism industry. Communities are more motivated to preserve and safeguard their natural resources and cultural legacy when they reap economic benefits. UNWTO (2019) notes that tourism can contribute up to 10% of global GDP and significantly impact local economies by creating jobs directly related to tourism services like hotels, restaurants, and tour operations. Economic factors contribute to sustainable tourism by generating funds that can be reinvested into conservation efforts (Eagles & McCool, 2002), and improving infrastructure, and generating employment opportunities. Long-term sustainability necessitates equitable benefit distribution and robust environmental protections (Elgin & Elveren, 2024).

In reference to hypothesis 2, social aspects are essential for promoting the growth of sustainable tourism by promoting community engagement, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing the overall visitor experience. This can reduce conflicts between tourists and locals and create a shared vision for sustainable tourism (Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Social factors such as the pride of preserving cultural heritage encourage locals to maintain and showcase their traditions. This helps in safeguarding cultural identities while also enriching the tourist experience (Timothy, 2011).

Socially inclusive tourism practices, such as promoting gender equality and providing opportunities for marginalized communities, contribute to social cohesion. This, in turn, supports sustainable tourism by fostering inclusive development and minimizing social disparities (Scheyvens, 1999). Regarding hypothesis 3, environmental factors can significantly positively impact sustainable tourism by enhancing visitor experience, preserving natural resources, and promoting eco-friendly practices that sustain destinations long-term. Sustainable tourism relies on the protection of natural environments, which includes the preservation of ecosystems, biodiversity, and landscapes. Protected areas and national parks, for example, serve as major tourist attractions while simultaneously promoting conservation efforts. Effective management of these resources supports biodiversity, which enhances the appeal of a destination (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

The preservation of natural areas can result in economic benefits, as they draw tourists and generate revenue that can be reinvested in local infrastructure and conservation efforts. These sustainable economic practices ensure that local communities gain financial benefits from tourism without degrading the environment (Buckley, 2012).

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical perspectives on CBT highlight its significant role in sustainable development, community empowerment, and the management of tourism in a responsible manner. These frameworks assist practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in developing effective, locally driven tourism initiatives. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is grounded in various theoretical frameworks that elucidate its role in empowerment, sustainable development, and tourism management. These theoretical implications enable scholars and decision-makers to understand how CBT contributes to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Local communities are at the core of tourism management, development, and operation under the CBT model. This approach not only prioritizes environmental and cultural conservation but also enhances local livelihoods, making it a powerful tool for fostering Sustainable Development. CBT provides a sustainable alternative to conventional tourism, placing emphasis on community benefits, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation. CBT creates an inclusive model that aligns well with the SDGs and fosters long-term positive impacts.

CBT allows communities to benefit directly from tourism revenue. By offering homestays, guiding services, cultural experiences, and selling handicrafts, locals can diversify their income sources and reduce reliance on traditional forms of income like agriculture (World Tourism Organization, 2017). CBT generates jobs within communities, which helps to reduce urban migration and retain local talent. The income generated can then be reinvested into community projects, furthering socio-economic development (Yanes et al., 2019). CBT often involves environmental conservation as communities seek to protect their natural resources, which are essential for attracting tourists. CBT initiatives often incorporate ecotourism practices like waste reduction, habitat preservation, and sustainable resource use (Scheyvens, 1999). Unlike large-scale tourism, CBT operates on a smaller scale, which reduces environmental stress. Community-led initiatives often enforce limits on visitor numbers, helping to prevent environmental degradation (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

CBT projects usually emphasize local cultural practices, language, arts, and traditions by integrating these into the tourist experience, communities can ensure that cultural heritage is preserved and passed down through generations (Ashley, 2006). CBT fosters mutual respect and understanding between tourists and locals, which can help to break down stereotypes and promote cultural appreciation (Salazar, 2012). CBT enables communities to have a say in tourism-related decisions, which is essential for sustainable development. Communities often form committees to manage tourism operations, giving them autonomy over resource allocation, planning, and visitor management (Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012). Through CBT, communities acquire valuable skills in areas like hospitality, marketing, language, and finance. These skills empower community members and improve their overall resilience and adaptability (Muganda et al., 2013). CBT often provides opportunities for women, youth, and indigenous populations to participate in the tourism

industry. This inclusivity promotes gender equity, reduces poverty, and contributes to social cohesion (Saarinen, 2006.). Large-scale tourism often results in economic leakages, where profits flow out of local communities. CBT minimizes leakages by prioritizing local ownership and operation of tourism facilities (Zapata et al., 2011).

### Recommendations

Promoting community tourism requires effective strategies to ensure maximum benefit from it in sustainable development in tourism industry. the following are a set of important recommendations: marketing and promoting community tourism by launching digital marketing campaigns via social media and global tourism platforms, organizing festivals and cultural events to attract tourists and introduce them to the local heritage, cooperating with international tourism companies to promote tourist destinations in Oman internationally, providing educational programs for local residents on how to provide tourism services and promote their heritage and culture, strengthen partnerships with universities and institutes to include specialized study programs in community tourism, supporting entrepreneurs and small projects in tourism by financing small tourism projects, such as guest houses, traditional restaurants, and handicrafts, providing tax exemptions and investment motivations to inspire local residents. launch initiatives to support women and youth in establishing community tourism projects, enhancing infrastructure and tourism services by developing rural tourism areas by improving transportation and communications, improving regulations to facilitate investment procedures and tourism licenses, achieving environmental sustainability by encouraging environmental and responsible tourism, enhancing local community participation by including local communities in developing tourism development plans, raising awareness among local residents about the value of tourism and its impact on the economy, and encouraging volunteer tourism that enhances cultural communication between residents and tourists.

### Limitations and Future Research

This study, like others, has numerous limitations. For starters, it is based on self-reported sentiments and impressions, which may bring bias into the findings. Second, the study used convenience sampling, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings. Future research could include probabilistic sample techniques, such as systematic or simple random sampling, to better reflect the population. Third, the study's methodology is quantitative. Future studies can think about using qualitative or mixed methods to examine the results in further detail. To get a more complex grasp of the subject, this could entail holding focus groups, interviews, or a mix of two or more data collection techniques, such surveys and interviews. Finally, the study's geographical limitation to the Sultanate of Oman opens up another avenue for future investigation. A cross-country or multi-group analysis could provide more in-depth insights and contribute to a more global knowledge of the links between the factors investigated in this study.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, O.D. and A.M.E.; methodology, O.D. and L.E.; software, T.A. and M.W.H.; validation, O.D. and A.M.E. and L.E.; formal analysis, O.D. and M.W.H.; investigation, L.E. and T.A and L.E.; data curation, O.D. and A.M.E.; writing - original draft preparation, A.M.E and O.D.; writing - review and editing, O.D. and L.E. and A.M.E. and T.A.; visualization, O.D. and A.M.E. and M.W.H.; supervision, O.D. and A.M.E.; project administration, O.D. and A.M.E. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** Not applicable.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study may be obtained on request from the corresponding author.

**Acknowledgements:** The research undertaken was made possible by the equal scientific involvement of all the authors concerned.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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