

WOMEN'S SENSE OF BELONGING: MODERATING ECONOMIC, SOCIOCULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Despite the tremendous development in the literature on sustainable tourism, the focus remains especially on government regulation and international cooperation. As will be seen, the present study is rare in adopting a bottom-up approach that focuses on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the communities. Therefore, this study aims to explore the positive impacts of community-based tourism, including economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors, on sustainable tourism development. Furthermore, it investigates the moderating role of women's sense of belonging in such relationships. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was adopted to analyze the survey results from 183 Omani women. The participants were selected via convenience sampling, therefore facilitating efficient data gathering over the course of the investigation. Convenience sampling was approved given the exploratory nature of the study and the need to gain understanding from a particular demographic group - Omani women - who significantly participate in community and tourism-related activities in Oman. Data gathering ran from January 21 to the end of February 2024. The authors and research assistants distributed the questionnaires to local markets, cultural institutions, university students and community gatherings, among other places, in order to get a diverse sample of Omani women. The study findings illustrate that economic and environmental variables significantly influence sustainable tourism development within the community-based tourism framework; however, sociocultural aspects show a lesser association. Interestingly, women's sense of belonging functions as a crucial moderating factor, amplifying the positive outcomes of economic and environmental factors on tourism sustainability. The results of the study considerably progress the theoretical knowledge of community-based tourism (CBT) by defining the complex connections between economic, social, and environmental components as well as the moderating function of a feeling of belonging (PS). This research delivers important practical uses to policymakers and tourist planners as well as community leaders in Oman who aim to develop community-based tourism. Environmental stewardship holds significant importance because its positive moderation effects strengthen the connection between ENV and STD, according to study findings.

Keywords: community-based tourism, sustainable tourism development, sense of belonging, economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts, PLS-SEM

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INTRODUCTION ALL CHANGES SHOULD BE MARKED IN RED

Community-based tourism (CBT) has become even more important for advancing sustainable tourist development (STD) (Zamzami et al., 2025; Sapkota et al., 2024) in the framework of the modern tendencies of the evolution of the post-industrial society, where economic growth, environmental protection, and social integration are major and sometimes contradictory goals. Emphasising the participation and management of the local stakeholders helps CBT not only to improve the quality of life of host communities but also to solve global issues such as the homogenisation of culture and environmental damage (Vu et al., 2020). 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). Moreover, community belonging is another unexplored element that can be the essential element improving the advantages of CBT for sustainable development. This paper seeks to explore these dynamics as a way of providing new insights into how CBT can be used to foster sustainable tourism.

Previous studies have mainly centred their discussions on the positive impacts of community-based tourism (Wani et al., 2024; Lee & Jan, 2019). The conducted studies also show that CBT programs result in the enhancement of household income and support enterprises and employment to contribute to local economic development (Mokabe et al., 2024). On the

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environmental management aspect, CBT improves the policy in sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, while on the social aspect, it promotes unity, pride, and participation in the community decision-making process (Ghosh et al., 2025; Zielinski et al., 2020). These papers effectively demonstrate the special benefits of CBT, but they can also obscure a fuller picture of the joint impact of these factors on the development of sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, the complicated nature of the role of the sense of belonging or community attachment as one of the moderators of these relationships has been given very little attention despite the general recognition of the importance of community participation. This is unfortunate, especially in literature where such knowledge is lacking to the extent that the potential to use the full capabilities of CBT in designing treatments and policies is restricted.

Furthermore, despite the tremendous development in the literature on sustainable tourism, the focus remains especially on government regulation and international cooperation. As will be seen, the present study is rare in adopting a bottom-up approach that focuses on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the communities. This is particularly important for research that includes psychological variables in the evaluation of CBT outcomes, including the sense of belonging (Kumar & Nayak, 2019). Thus, the current research does not consider how enacted characteristics of a community may help or hinder sustainable development projects. This research fills these gaps by examining the direct consequences of CBT's benefits: economic, social, and sustainable tourism development. More importantly, it explores how a community-level sense of belonging moderates these relationships. This dual focus brings several important benefits: First, it extends the theory by proposing a conceptual model that synthesises the multidimensional effects of CBT with the psychological concept of belongingness. Second, it addresses the empirical void by investigating these relationships in practice, using sound methods to provide practical recommendations. Last but not least, it provides policy insights and recommendations for policymakers, tourism developers, and community stakeholders by outlining factors for improving the effectiveness of CBT programs.

In order to achieve these objectives of the study, this research employs a conceptual model that is based on theoretical and empirical findings. By the same token, the present study proposes that various aspects can influence the development of sustainable tourism, namely economic, sociocultural, and environmental factors.

Moreover, it is assumed that belonging mediates these interactions, which, therefore, enhances the positive effect that CBT has on their outcomes for sustainability. To test these assumptions, the study uses complex statistical analysis that makes the results reliable and valid. In addition, it offers a broad understanding of how CBT could be enhanced in order to achieve sustained benefits in favour of the communities and stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

This research uses the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to offer an all-inclusive view of how CBT, STD, and belongingness in a community interact (Kunjuraman, 2023; Elbaz & Abou-Shouk, 2016). SLF focuses on the social interface of natural, financial, human, and physical forms of capital to build sustainable livelihoods. These closely align with the sociocultural, environmental, and financial impact of CBT that have been studied in this paper (Elbaz, 2013). By so doing, SLF lays a good background for exploring the manner in which CBT projects contribute to the general objectives of STDs. Furthermore, the focus of the framework on the communities' engagement and empowerment is appropriate to the objective of the study, which is to assess the weak effect of sense of belonging, as the construct matches the notion of social capital in SLF. Furthermore, SLF uses multidimensional and bottom-up approaches for sustainability, which makes it especially pertinent in the framework of this work. While many theories concentrate on a particular facet of development, SLF's all-encompassing perspective helps one to grasp the linked sociocultural, economic, and environmental consequences of CBT in reaching sustainable results (Natarajan et al., 2022). This method emphasizes the need for local action and participation, as they help one understand the moderate influence of a sense of belonging. By using SLF, the study fixes some theoretical problems with sustainable tourism research. Specifically, it looks into the link between psychological factors like belongingness and real, long-lasting results. The study guarantees theoretical strength and useful insights for legislators and community stakeholders seeking to enhance CBT operations for long-term sustainability through the use of SLF (Figure 1).

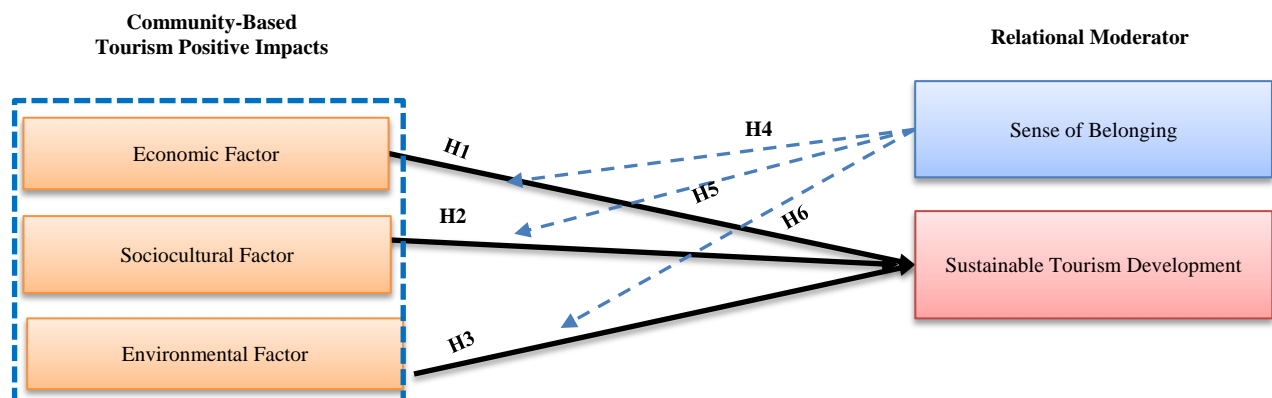


Figure 1. The study conceptual Framework (Source: Author's own work)

1. Community-based tourism's economic impacts on sustainable tourism development

Sapkota et al. (2024) define CBT as a participatory tourism development technique wherein local people actively

manage tourist operations to guarantee equitable benefit distribution in accordance with their socio-economic and environmental concerns. In this context, CBT aims to empower local communities, allowing them to leverage their natural and cultural resources for sustainable development. This tourist model is essential for attaining sustainable tourism development (STD), since it concurrently tackles economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects in a balanced and inclusive manner (Hariyadi et al., 2024). Based on Mia et al.'s (2024) research findings, the economic impact of CBT on sustainable tourism development is profound and multifaceted. First, by creating jobs in several sectors, including hotels, transportation, and cultural industries—CBT directly supports local economic development. Many times, this employment supports diversity by giving underprivileged groups—women and young people especially—income possibilities. Second, by helping locally owned companies—such as eco-lodges, cultural tours, and handcrafted goods—which meet visitor demands while thus honouring local customs, CBT promotes entrepreneurship within the community. CBT also strengthens economic vitality in a similar way that revenue generated remains within the community and does not rely on outsiders (Juma & Khademi-Vidra, 2019).

These profits further other, more general sustainable development goals and are often recirculated into sectors such as infrastructure, health, and education. CBT is a major component of the strategy for building sustainable tourism because, apart from eradicating poverty, this model creates an environment for long-term economic sustainability (Abreu et al., 2024). Thus, we propose the following theory:

H1. Community-based tourism's economic impacts positively influence sustainable tourist development.

2. Community-based tourism's sociocultural impacts on sustainable tourism development

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. Through this strategy, social integration is created because the people are able to pool the benefits from the earnings and activities of the tourist (Dobre et al., 2025). Additionally, Ngo et al. (2024) stated that CBT enhances local culture products, traditions, and ceremonies, thus preserving, developing, and displaying them to visitors, boosting cultural self-assertiveness. The biggest strength of CBT is that it benefits society by enhancing the well-being of local people (Elbaz et al., 2023). Through creating employment, enabling skills, and thereby enabling resource access, CBT also brings about poverty alleviation and economic equality in these communities (Wani et al., 2024). Furthermore, since people observe that there are real benefits deriving from travel, it leads to pride and responsibility (Mokabe et al., 2024). Since CBT focuses on community benefits instead of strict economic revenues, it complies with sustainable practices not to enslave or endanger the people it depends on (Lo & Janta, 2020). Indeed, based on a comprehensive review of the literature and analysing a case study, Abreu et al. (2024) established that, if well implemented, CBT can align the tourist and resident stakeholders and create a sustainable model of tourism that respects cultural integrity, promotes social equity, and sustains long-term development. Therefore, we recommend the following:

H2. Community-based tourism sociocultural initiative positively influences sustainable tourist development.

3. Community-based tourism's environmental impacts on sustainable tourism development

As a powerful tool for promoting sustainable tourist development, CBT puts a lot of emphasis on environmental stewardship. CBT management of tourism directly engages local people in the management of the tourism sector to ensure that they are responsible for the conservation of ecosystems and natural resources (Bagus et al., 2019). Shekhar (2024) argues that citizens of their environment choose the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem over its short-term profitability. Individuals practice waste minimisation, resource conservation, protection of species, and other processes that are required in the development process for sustainability (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). CBT projects may be of benefit to environmental sustainability within tourism, which includes nature walks, wildlife conservation efforts, and the development of environmentally friendly facilities. These initiatives give the guests true and least intrusive experiences, helping in decreasing the effects of tourism on the environment (Samal & Dash, 2023). These projects help tourists get real village experiences without harming the environment of tourism (Samal & Dash, 2023). Furthermore, CBT creates revenues to support environmental conservation activities, including land and wildlife rehabilitation, tree planting, and protection of threatened species. Being closely connected with travel, CBT reduces the adverse impact of improper mass tourism, for example, contamination and local environment degradation (Elbaz et al., 2023). In this respect, by aligning the supply-side pressures with tourist and community preferences, CBT enhances sustainable tourism enhancement overall. Not only does it conserve resources, but it also makes the visitors or residents' environment friendly, ensuring the sustainability and durability of tourism systems (Abreu et al., 2024). We propose that:

H3. Community-based tourism environmental impacts positively influence sustainable tourist development.

4. The Moderating role of sense of belongings

Social inclusion and acceptance are measured by people's attachment to the group using values, support, and identity (Haim-Litevsky et al., 2023). This sense of belonging is critically necessary for the improvement of the positive effects of CBT on sociocultural, financial, environmental, and sustainable development. Perceived obligation to their town makes locals willing to cooperate, participate actively, and ensure that tourist projects are successful (Mendes et al., 2020). Economically, for example, the feeling of belonging fosters unity and collective responsibility, hence the benefits of tourism (Behr & Nix, 2024). Tightly connected and cooperative communities are going to support local businesses, pool money, and spend it on activities that would be useful for all of them with money spent on travelling. In addition, these

communities are more likely to integrate their resources. So, through the harmonisation of sustainable development goals with the said inclusive economic involvement, living circumstances are enhanced and inequality minimised (Quaye et al., 2024).

Chauhan (2022) found that a positive CBT feeling of belonging leads to trust and cooperation, which are crucial in protecting cultural heritage and increasing local pride and thus make CBT rather effective. Residents promote cultural tourism development and are more willing to participate in the decision-making process; thus, they contribute to the preservation of traditions and the development of close-knit relationships with tourists. The feeling of community pride enhances the friendliness of the place, which in turn makes visitors have satisfactory experiences.

Elbaz & Abou-Shouk, in their 2016 study, argue that such individuals are likely to protect natural environments because they define them as part of themselves. Therefore, 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). In general, therefore, a community's sense of belonging plays an important moderate role in the enhancement of the positive effects of CBT. That is why it contributes to building a sustainable model of tourism that is beneficial for both locals and tourists and promotes economic equality, social inclusion, and environmental care for the future. Therefore, we suggest the following hypotheses:

H4: A sense of belonging positively moderates the relationship between community-based tourism's economic impacts and sustainable tourism development.

H5: A sense of belonging positively moderates the relationship between community-based tourism's sociocultural impacts and sustainable tourism development.

H6: A sense of belonging positively moderates the relationship between community-based tourism's environmental impacts and sustainable tourism development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Participants

In the current study, 183 Omani women selected to explore their views on community-based tourism (CBT) in Oman made up the poll. The participants were selected via convenience sampling, therefore facilitating efficient data gathering over the course of the investigation. Convenience sampling was approved given the exploratory nature of the study and the need to gain understanding from a particular demographic group - Omani women - who significantly participate in community and tourism-related activities in Oman. Enough sample size would ensure the sustainability of data gathering inside the constraints of the research and support major statistical analysis.

2. Data Collection

Data gathering ran from January 21 to the end of February 2024. Two research assistants employed and equipped to help with questionnaire collecting and delivery. The tools of the survey sought to gather data on important factors, including economic elements (ECO), sociocultural components (SCI), environmental concerns (ENV), a sense of belonging (PS), and sustainable tourist development (STD). To gather both quantitative and qualitative information, the poll consisted of closed-ended Likert-scale questions as well as open-ended ones. To guarantee that ethical standards were followed, the participants were given comprehensive knowledge on the goals, methods, and rights related to the study. Before they could start taking part—that is, by responding to the first question they approved to answer, every person had to complete an informed consent form. Throughout the trial, confidentiality and secrecy were respected; information that may be used to identify specific people was not gathered.

3. Procedure

The authors and research assistants distributed the questionnaires to local markets, cultural institutions, university students and community gatherings, among other places, in order to get a diverse sample of Omani women. Participants might decide to bring the survey home and later return it or finish it on-site. This flexibility allowed adequate time for responders to provide thoughtful responses, hence optimising participation rates. The research assistants were ready to respond to any questions or concerns participants raised during the data-gathering process.

4. Measures

Sense of belonging was the first latent variable chosen from Han et al. (2019), therefore guaranteeing a strong theoretical basis for the suggested model. Furthermore, derived from Ko & Stewart (2002), which are extensively acknowledged in tourism sustainability research, were the aspects of tourist effects, economic impacts, sociocultural impacts, and environmental impacts. Furthermore, the adopted variable on sustainable development from Abou-Shouk et al. (2021) captures the present perspective on environmentally friendly travel choices. To investigate these elements, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was applied on a standardised questionnaire. Combining these approved principles with a validated survey instrument increases the validity and reliability of the study, therefore ensuring a correct assessment of the linkages among the key components.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Data Analysis

The current study employed PLS-SEM, the statistical tool to examine the gathered data in order to probe the relationships between the variables (Elbaz et al., 2022; Ghazi et al., 2024). Descriptive statistics were used to give a brief

overview of the demographic traits of the sample together with the distribution of responses. Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic profile (N = 183), therefore exposing several noteworthy trends. In this sense, the age distribution shows that 25.1% of respondents fall between the 26–35 age range, whereas 53% of respondents are between the 18–25 age range.

Table 1. Demographic data (N= 183) (Source: Author's own work)

	Item	Frequencies	Percent
Age	18-25 Years	97	53
	26-35 Years	46	25.1
	36 to 45 Years	35	19.1
	46-55 Years	5	2.7
	More than 55 Years	-	-
Marital status	Single	106	57.9
	Married	77	42.1
Occupation	Student	87	47.5
	Employee	75	41.0
	Other	21	11.5
Benefits from tourism industry	Yes	132	72.1
	No	51	27.9

With no responders beyond 55 years of age, the 36–45 age group represents 19.1%; the 46–55 age group accounts for 2.7%. Of the responders, 42.1% said they were married; 57.9% said they were single. Occupationally, of the respondents, 47.5% are students, 41% are workers, and 11.5% fall into other occupations. While 27.9% of respondents said they had no such benefits from the tourism industry, a vast majority of respondents, 72.1%, said they do. These results provide a complete study of demographic elements together with their correlation with advantages connected to tourism (Figure 2).

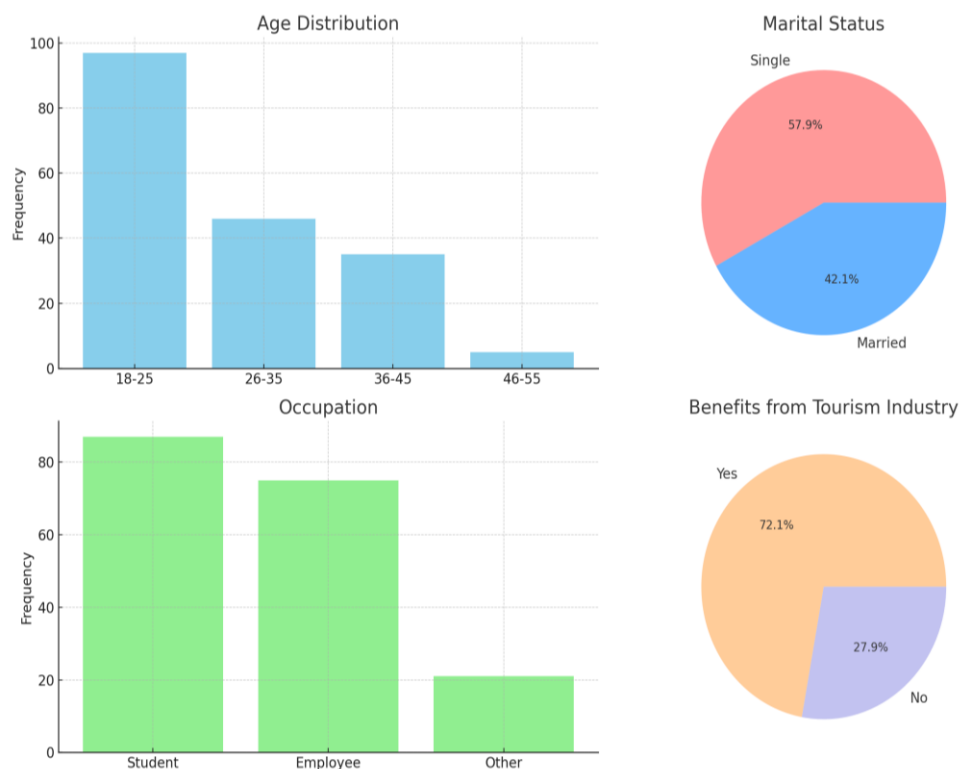


Figure 2. Visual representation of demographic data (Source: Author's own work)

2. Measurement Model

The quality of the measurement model, which evaluates the latent variables used in the study, was assessed through an examination of both validity and reliability. Internal reliability of the constructs was evaluated using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha (Table 2).

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Statistics (Source: Author's own work)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Full Collinearity VIFs
ECO	0.736	0.851	0.655	1.802
SCI	0.963	0.976	0.932	6.291
ENV	0.958	0.967	0.855	5.942
STD	0.829	0.898	0.745	1.461
PS	0.972	0.982	0.947	4.991

Validity, on the other hand, was assessed by analyzing the item loadings (Appendix 1) and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for convergent validity (Table 2). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the square roots of the AVE values. Additionally, potential co-workers were checked through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for all latent variables (Table 2). The validity and reliability of the constructs were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs). All latent variables demonstrate satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.7, ranging from 0.736 (ECO) to 0.972 (PS), and composite reliability values ranging from 0.851 (ECO) to 0.982 (PS). Likewise, convergent validity was validated as the AVE values for all latent variables above the advised threshold of 0.5, with values ranging from 0.655 (ECO) to 0.947 (PS), as well as factor loadings having been satisfied (see Table 3). For several constructions, especially SCI (6.291), ENV (5.942), and PS (4.991), the whole collinearity VIFs suggested possible multicollinearity problems, though, as these values are beyond the generally acknowledged threshold of 3.3. Nevertheless, the results guarantee the robustness of the measurement model by providing substantial proof for the validity and dependability of the latent variables. To solve the noted multicollinearity problems, more study might be needed.

As the table below shows, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT2) was used to evaluate the construct's discriminant validity. Table 4 shows that the HTMT2 values for most construct pairs are below the advised threshold of 0.85, therefore showing adequate discriminant validity. Some construct pairings, though, especially those involving SCI and ENV as well as SCI and PS, approach or exceed this threshold and call for more thought. Moreover, the table below shows the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), thereby evaluating the construct's discriminant validity once more. The square roots of AVE are denoted in parentheses for every construct; these values were then matched against the construct-based correlations (Table 5). If discriminant validity is to be shown, the square root of the AVE for each construct should be larger than the correlations between that construct and every other construct.

Table 3. Factor loading (Source: Author's own work)

Variable	Item	Loading	Sig.
Economic factors (ECO)	ECO1	(0.826)	0.000
	ECO2	(0.844)	0.000
	ECO3	(0.756)	0.000
Social factor (SCI)	SCI1	(0.960)	0.000
	SCI2	(0.965)	0.000
	SCI3	(0.971)	0.000
Environmental factor (ENV)	ENV1	(0.913)	0.000
	ENV2	(0.919)	0.000
	ENV3	(0.929)	0.000
	ENV4	(0.930)	0.000
	ENV5	(0.931)	0.000
Sense of belonging (PS)	PS1	(0.875)	0.000
	PS2	(0.872)	0.000
	PS3	(0.842)	0.000
Sustainable tourism development (STD)	STD1	(0.972)	0.000
	STD2	(0.979)	0.000
	STD3	(0.968)	0.000

Table 4. Discriminant validity by heterotraitmonotrait (HTMT2) Values (Source: Author's own work)

Construct	ECO	SCI	ENV	STD	PS
ECO	-				
SCI	0.166	-			
ENV	0.092	0.907	-		
STD	0.508	0.045	0.049	-	
PS	0.106	0.879	0.907	0.039	-

Table 5. Correlations among Latent Variables with Square Roots of AVEs (Source: Author's own work)

Construct	ECO	SCI	ENV	STD	PS
ECO	(0.810)				
SCI	0.140	(0.965)			
ENV	0.065	0.871	(0.925)		
STD	0.398	0.019	0.008	(0.863)	
PS	0.088	0.850	0.875	0.022	(0.973)

3. The structural model

In our study we examined the direct and moderating factors affecting community-based tourism (CBT) in Oman; the structural model looked at Figure 3. The findings showed that CBT ($\beta = 0.18$, $P < 0.01$) had a notable positive direct effect from economic factors (ECO), meaning that the success of community-based tourism projects is mostly dependent on financial considerations, including income generation, job creation, and economic benefits for local communities. This is consistent with research stressing that local populations must actively support tourist operations by means of economic sustainability, as it immediately guarantees long-term involvement and directly enhances their livelihoods.

Moreover, we found that sociocultural elements (SCI) showed a notable direct influence on CBT ($\beta = 0.15$, $P < 0.01$), thereby underlining the need for social conventions, cultural legacy, and community engagement in forming travel behaviour. Hence, in the context of the sultanate of Oman, where cultural identity and customs are highly prized, community-based tourism is flourishing when it fits local conventions and helps locals to feel pride and ownership. Research shows that effective community-based tourism approaches mostly rely on social cohesiveness, and cultural preservation supports this result. The present research additionally illustrated that CBT ($\beta = 0.19$, $P < 0.01$) had a notable favourable direct effect from environmental influences (ENV). This implied that, to increase community-based tourism, this demonstrates the need to know the surroundings, engage in conservation activities, and handle resources in a way that does not damage them. One prominent example of Oman's environmental preservation—where natural surroundings like deserts, mountains, and coastal areas are significant attractions—will help to retain the attractiveness of tourism sites and guarantee their long-term profitability. This outcome reveals increasing awareness of the reciprocal reliance between environmental sustainability and increasing tourist count. These findings usually indicate how environmental, social, and economic factors taken together define Omani community-based tourism (CBT). Local people travel for financial purposes; sociocultural elements ensure adherence with their values and practices; and environmental issues highlight the importance of using sustainable approaches to preserve natural resources. Oman's strong and inclusive community-based tourism depends on this integrated strategy, as it addresses the related areas of environmental preservation, cultural preservation, and economic growth. Studies of community-based tourism models provide references stressing the need of balancing these three pillars to generate fair and sustainable travel systems.

4. The moderating role of sense of belonging

The findings indicated substantial and intricate impacts of a sense of belonging (PS) on community-based tourism (CBT) in Oman. Initially, PS was identified as a significant negative moderator of the association between sociocultural characteristics (SCI) and sustainable tourist development (STD) ($\beta = -0.14$, $P = 0.03$). Remarkably, this research indicates that in communities with a robust feeling of belonging, the impact of social norms, peer behaviour, or cultural expectations on sustainable tourism practices may lessen. This may be due to the fact that cohesive groups in Oman, with a profound sense of identification and belonging, would choose their traditional beliefs and traditions over external societal pressures.

Consequently, external social forces may exert diminished influence on their acceptance of sustainable tourism projects, since they depend more on internal community cohesiveness and collective ideals. Conversely, PS greatly and favourably moderates the connection between environmental variables (ENV) and STD ($\beta = 0.21$, $P < 0.01$). This suggests that environmental awareness and sustainability commitment of community members are enhanced when they experience a great feeling of belonging. In the sultanate of Oman, where a feeling of community identity and livelihoods depends on natural surroundings like deserts, mountains, and coastal areas, a sense of belonging helps one to develop a closer relationship to the surroundings. This link inspires communities to actively participate in sustainable practices like resource conservation and ecosystem protection in order to maintain their legacy and guarantee the long-term survival of tourism. Not surprisingly, PS ($\beta = 0.09$, $P = 0.11$) had no appreciable effect on the link between economic effects (ECO) and sustainable development (STD). This implies that the influence of economic aspects, like the creation of money or the supply of financial incentives, on the evolution of sustainable tourism that is sustainable does not much depend on a feeling of belonging.

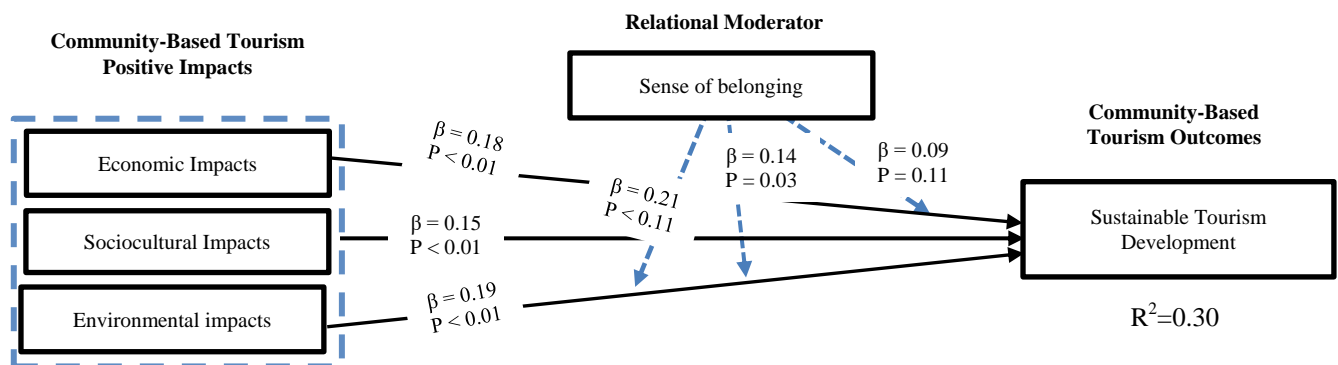


Figure 3. The structural Model (Source: Author's own work)

5. Theoretical implications

The results of the study considerably progress the theoretical knowledge of community-based tourism (CBT) in Oman by defining the complex connections between economic, social, and environmental components as well as the moderating function of a feeling of belonging (PS). First, the study blends social influence theories, including Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, with environmental psychology to explain how sociocultural aspects (SCI) and environmental variables (ENV) interact with a sense of belonging to effect sustainable tourism development (STD). Particularly in Oman, which is ecologically sensitive and culturally varied, this integration provides a more complete basis for understanding CBT. Hence, the current research stresses the significance of considering both internal community dynamics and exterior impacts in tourism research by connecting two theoretical areas. In addition, by exposing the dual function of a sense of belonging (PS) in modulating relationships inside CBT, the research extends the literature on place attachment and community psychology. PS reduces the impact of outside social conventions even as it enhances the relationship between environmental knowledge and

sustainable behaviour. This result fits Stedman's (2002) research on place attachment, which holds that emotional ties to a place can influence activities in ways that give local values first priority over outside demands. This complex knowledge of PS enhances theoretical debates on how the growth of tourism is influenced by community identification and belonging. The fact that PS does not have a strong moderate influence on the link between economic variables (ECO) and STD is a fundamental theoretical insight that may be gleaned from this observation. For the purpose of conclusion, this finding is offered. It argues that economic impulses act as pragmatic concerns rather than being deeply tied to identities and that they operate independently of emotional or cultural attachments at the same time. On the other hand, this stands in opposition to the idea that economic forces are significantly linked to the identity of the community. As a consequence of this research, the argument made by Sharpley (2014), which asserts that financial motivations in tourism typically work as practical requirements, is given more weight than it would have been otherwise. In addition to this, it highlights the need of addressing the economic parts of tourism frameworks in a manner that is distinct from the method in which the sociocultural aspects are treated.

6. Practical implications

This research delivers important practical uses to policymakers and tourist planners as well as community leaders in Oman who aim to develop community-based tourism. Environmental stewardship holds significant importance because its positive moderation effects strengthen the connection between ENV and STD, according to study findings. Strategies need to build community members' bond with nature by delivering educational content and cultural heritage-awareness programs regarding the essential connection between environmental stewardship and cultural heritage. Community involvement represents a crucial element for sustainable practice development, according to Pretty et al. (2009), in order to maintain the permanence of tourism destinations. The relationship between SCI and STD receives opposition from PS, which indicates external social norms struggle to affect communities that maintain close social bonds. Tourism planners need to work together with local leaders and influencers to develop sustainable practices that both preserve traditional community values and promote tourism. The approach adheres to Murphy's (1985) recommendations about community-led tourism planning because it requires local participation and cultural sensitivity to make tourism initiatives successful.

Third, the absence of PS moderation indicates that financial incentives should be created to satisfy practical needs independently from emotional or cultural ties despite their importance in CBT. Tourism development through microfinance options and training programs and infrastructure improvements enables local communities to participate in tourism activities alongside economic sustainability objectives. Economic empowerment stands as an essential factor according to Scheyvens' (1999) research in community-based tourism because it provides sustainable benefits needed to maintain local participation. The implementation of participatory planning alongside co-management programs for tourism resources creates the best conditions for enhancing PS and promoting community ownership. Every community member becomes more dedicated to sustainable practices when they participate in tourism management decisions through local ownership schemes. Research by Tosun (2000) demonstrates that participatory approaches represent a key factor for attaining sustainable tourism development. Communities involved in tourism planning and implementation help stakeholders create initiatives that suit cultural norms while preserving economic stability and environmental sustainability.

7. Limitations and further research

The new research provides important insights about CBT elements in Oman while analysing sustainable development for Omani women but faces certain boundaries. The geographic focus on Oman in this study hinders broader result generalisation to different regions or cultural environments. The distinctive social and environmental aspects, along with the strong community values of Oman, limit how well its CBT dynamics represent international tourism dynamics. Additional research should analyse different geographic areas because this expansion would boost the general applicability of the research outcomes. The research applies quantitative analytical methods to explore how environmental factors relate to social aspects and financial elements in sustainable tourist development (STD). Although providing statistical precision, this method might not demonstrate the full spectrum of community understandings and experiences of the topic. Local populations involved in CBT benefit from qualitative approaches through interviews and focus groups because these methods deliver deeper understanding of their motivations and goals and their identified problems. The study points out PS as a moderating variable but omits the investigation of alternative possible mediators or moderators affecting the analyzed connections. The results of CBT assessments heavily depend on government institutions together with resource availability and community empowerment levels. Future research should incorporate additional elements to develop better knowledge of both supportive and obstructive factors that affect sustainable tourism development. A study design that uses a cross-sectional approach restricts researchers from showing the relationship between variables that lead to cause and effect. Research built on longitudinal methodologies tracking community changes in attitudes and behaviors alongside tourism effects through time would enhance the understanding of CBT program benefits while proving causality. Self-reported data dependence generates biases within studies since participants tend to report responses that match their desired public image instead of genuine thoughts.

CONCLUSION

Community-based tourism stands as a fundamental mechanism for sustainable development because positive transformation occurs mainly through economic growth and environmental management. The research confirms the need for economic and environmental approaches as fundamental elements to boost sustainability initiatives in local communities, even though sociocultural aspects bind less strongly to the results. Women's sense of belonging modifies the positive effects of these factors to benefit sustainable tourism practices.

Policymakers and stakeholders should develop inclusive tourism strategies that build women's engagement and community social bonds to address these findings. Additional studies should expand their focus on the long-term effects of these relationships while studying other cultural factors that guide community-based tourism development.

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