

EMPOWERMENT, EMOTIONAL SOLIDARITY, QUALITY OF LIFE AND SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM DA NANG CITY, VIETNAM

SỰ TRAO QUYỀN, SỰ GẮN KẾT CẢM XÚC, CHẤT LƯỢNG CUỘC SỐNG VÀ HỖ TRỢ PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH BỀN VỮNG: TRƯỜNG HỢP NGHIÊN CỨU TẠI ĐÀ NẴNG, VIỆT NAM

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Abstract - This study develops a model to examine the relationships among perceived empowerment (PE), emotional solidarity (ES), quality of life (QOL), and support for sustainable tourism development (SSTD). The research investigates the mediator of QOL and moderator roles of TD in the links between PE, ES, QOL and SSTD. Data were collected through direct surveys using paper questionnaires from local residents in Da Nang City, Vietnam. As a result, a total of 593 valid responses were analyzed using PLS-SEM to test the proposed model and hypotheses. The results indicate that (i) factors significantly influence QOL include psychological empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment, emotional closeness and sympathetic understanding, (ii) political empowerment, environmental empowerment, emotional closeness, sympathetic understanding and QOL positively influence SSTD. The results provide valuable theoretical insights and practical policy recommendations.

Key words – Perceived empowerment; emotional solidarity; quality of life; support for sustainable tourism development; Vietnam

1. Introduction

Local residents play a central role in the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations, as their daily behaviors, hospitable attitudes, and perceptions of tourism directly influence the destination image, local identity, and the quality of tourist experiences [1, 2]. However, the rapid growth of mass tourism flows also causes several negative impacts, such as environmental degradation, destination overcrowding, social tension, and pressure on household livelihoods. These impacts not only reduce the QOL of residents but also decrease their level of SSTD strategies [3, 4]. To understand how to sustain resident support amidst these challenges, prior literature has heavily relied on social exchange theory (SET), predominantly viewing resident attitudes through a transactional lens of economic costs and benefits [5]. While valuable, this economic focus often overlooks the underlying socio-psychological and relational mechanisms that drive long-term, genuine SSTD [6]. Consequently, shifting the focus towards the psychological and emotional factors driving resident attitudes has emerged as a key priority in tourism research.

Tóm tắt - Nghiên cứu này xây dựng một mô hình nhằm khám phá mối quan hệ giữa nhận thức sự trao quyền (PE), sự gắn kết cảm xúc (ES), chất lượng cuộc sống (QOL), hỗ trợ phát triển du lịch bền vững (SSTD). Nghiên cứu kiểm tra vai trò trung gian của QOL và vai trò điều tiết của sự phụ thuộc vào du lịch (TD) trong mối quan hệ giữa PE, ES, QOL và SSTD. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua khảo sát trực tiếp bằng bảng hỏi giấy từ cư dân tại Đà Nẵng. Tổng cộng 593 bảng hỏi hợp lệ được sử dụng để phân tích và kiểm định mô hình và giả thuyết thông qua PLS-SEM. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng (i) các nhân tố tác động đến QOL bao gồm trao quyền tâm lý, trao quyền xã hội, trao quyền kinh tế, sự gắn gũi về cảm xúc, sự thấu hiểu, (ii) trao quyền chính trị, trao quyền môi trường, sự gắn gũi về cảm xúc, sự thấu hiểu, QOL ảnh hưởng đến SSTD. Trên cơ sở đó, nghiên cứu đưa ra những hàm ý lý thuyết và khuyến nghị chính sách phù hợp.

Từ khóa – Nhận thức sự trao quyền; sự gắn kết cảm xúc; chất lượng cuộc sống; hỗ trợ phát triển du lịch bền vững; Việt Nam

To address this limitation, recent studies have increasingly highlighted two distinct yet complementary constructs to explain residents' attitudes toward tourism development: PE and ES. Empowerment captures an internal capability - the psychological, social, and political agency of residents to exert control over tourism development and advocate for their interests [7]. Conversely, ES represents an external relational bond - the affective closeness and sympathetic understanding forged between residents and tourists [7]. While empowerment equips residents with a sense of control, ES fosters a sense of shared humanity.

Crucially, both constructs serve as powerful, independent drivers of favorable pro-tourism attitudes. For instance, empowerment enables residents to increase their access to both tangible and intangible benefits from tourism development, thereby strengthening their commitment to sustainable development goals [6]. Similarly, when residents cultivate positive emotional bonds with tourists, they tend to exhibit more favorable attitudes toward tourism and a greater willingness to support destination development initiatives, even when the perceived economic

benefits are not immediately apparent [9, 10]. However, despite their proven individual impacts on resident attitudes, these two constructs are rarely integrated into a unified framework. Consequently, their relative influence on residents' well-being and their collective capacity to predict SSTD remain largely untested. This lack of integration constitutes the first research gap.

Furthermore, even when PE and ES are present, the mechanism through which they translate into support for sustainable tourism requires further clarification. A growing body of evidence positions QOL as a key indicator of community well-being and a main driver for residents' support for sustainable tourism strategies [11, 12]. It is theoretically plausible that PE and ES do not merely trigger support directly; rather, they enhance residents' perceived QOL, which subsequently translates into a stronger commitment to sustainable development. Despite this logical progression, the mediating role of QOL in connecting residents' socio-psychological capacities and affective bonds with SSTD remains inadequately explained. Addressing this mediating pathway represents the second research gap.

Beyond these psychological and emotional mechanisms, the socio-economic context can significantly influence how residents evaluate tourism impacts. A critical factor in this regard is TD – defined as the degree to which residents rely on the tourism sector for their livelihood [13]. According to SET, highly dependent residents may prioritize economic survival over socio-environmental concerns. Consequently, this prioritization can alter how QOL improvements dictate their support for sustainable initiatives [14]. TD is widely recognized in tourism literature. However, its specific moderating role in the QOL–SSTD relationship has not been fully examined. This limitation is particularly evident within models that include non-economic drivers like empowerment and solidarity [6, 13, 14]. This lack of understanding regarding the conditional effects of economic reliance forms the third research gap.

To address these research gaps, this study proposes an integrated model grounded in three complementary theoretical foundations. First, SET explains that residents' SSTD depends on the evaluation of perceived benefits and costs; wherein, empowerment can reinforce benefit perceptions by enhancing residents' access to resources and opportunities [6]. Second, Emotional Solidarity Theory (EST) emphasizes that the affective bonds between residents and tourists can serve as an independent catalyst driving pro-tourism behavior, going beyond mere economic benefits [7]. Third, Empowerment Theory (ET) explains how the psychological, social, and political capacities of residents contribute to the improvement of living conditions and community well-being [8]. The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks allows the study to concurrently compare the roles of PE and ES, while examining the conditional impact of TD in shaping residents' SSTD.

The research aims to achieve three primary objectives: (1) to compare the relative impacts of PE and ES on residents' QOL; (2) to investigate the mediating role of QOL in the relationship between these constructs and

SSTD; and (3) to examine the moderating role of TD in the QOL–SSTD relationship. Theoretically, the study contributes by simultaneously integrating capability-based (RE) and affective-relational (ES) approaches within a single research model, thereby clarifying the mediating mechanism of QOL as well as the moderating role of TD. Practically, the research findings provide a scientific basis for destination managers in prioritizing among strategies to empower the community, enhance resident-tourist relations, or design development policies tailored to the local level of economic reliance on tourism.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Social exchange theory (SET)

SET has been widely utilized as a foundational theoretical framework in analyzing residents' attitudes toward tourism, particularly how their perceptions of positive and negative impacts influence their level of SSTD [15]. According to Emerson [16], social exchange is an interactive process between two entities wherein each provides and depends on the benefits received from the other. Homans [17] posited that SET is based on the assumption that social behaviors are the outcome of exchanging tangible and intangible resources, such as costs and benefits, whereby individuals tend to select actions that yield high value and minimize losses. When accumulated benefits outweigh the costs, individuals will repeatedly sustain that relationship or behavior over time [18].

Consequently, within the tourism context, SET explains that if residents perceive tourism development as generating substantial benefits, such as an enhanced QOL, they will actively support tourism policies. Conversely, if they evaluate that the environmental, social, or living-standard costs exceed the derived benefits, they will tend to oppose or hold negative attitudes toward tourism.

2.2. Empowerment Theory (ET)

In the context of developing nations, the majority of studies concerning residents' SSTD have yet to adequately emphasize perceived empowerment at the individual level, a key factor determining whether residents feel respected, engaged, and motivated to contribute to development initiatives [19]. In reality, residents who feel excluded from decision-making processes or disempowered often exhibit apathy or opposition toward sustainable tourism programs [20]. In this study, PE is defined as residents' subjective experiences regarding the extent to which they are empowered, both individually and collectively, through their participation in local tourism activities (adapted from [19]). PE is comprehensively conceptualized across five interrelated dimensions. Specifically, psychological empowerment (PSE) reflects residents' self-esteem and pride when local culture, traditions, and environments are respected by tourists [21]. Social empowerment (SOE) manifests in the capacity for community cohesion, collaboration, and the strengthening of social capital [22]. Political empowerment (POE) emerges when residents feel they have a voice and the motivation to participate in local governance issues [22]. Economic empowerment (ECE) relates to tourism-generated income and accessibility to

productive resources. Environmental empowerment (ENE) refers to residents' capability to manage and conserve natural resources through active involvement in sustainable tourism initiatives [23].

2.3. Emotional solidarity theory (EST)

ES is defined as the emotional investment and affective bond between individuals or groups, influenced by the frequency and quality of their interactions [24]. For sustainable tourism, ES acts as a catalyst, fostering connection, empathy, and shared responsibility among stakeholders [14]. The theoretical framework of ES in tourism was first introduced by Woosnam, Norman, and Ying [25], providing an empirical model to explain the relationship between local residents and tourists. From the residents' perspective, Woosnam and Norman [26] developed an ES scale comprising three dimensions: emotional closeness (EC), welcoming nature (WN), and sympathetic understanding (SU). Woosnam [27] discovered that ES between locals and visitors significantly impacts locals' support for tourism development; the stronger the emotional bond, the greater the support for regional tourism development.

2.4. Theoretical integration

This study integrates three distinct yet complementary theories, ET, EST, and SET, to explore residents' intentions to SSTD. While these theories collectively provide a comprehensive understanding, they also offer different perspectives in explaining resident behavior. Specifically, whereas ET and EST emphasize the emotional aspects of behavior, SET provides a contrasting viewpoint by focusing on a more rational evaluation of tourism's economic and social impacts. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how both emotions and rational evaluations influence residents' SSTD.

ET emphasizes residents' subjective experiences regarding their level of individual and collective empowerment through local tourism participation [19], which enhances engagement, life satisfaction, and pro-tourism attitudes. This theory centers on how residents perceive gaining greater control over decisions affecting their community and personal well-being [28] - a process primarily driven by emotions. Conversely, SET approaches the issue rationally, suggesting that residents evaluate tourism based on perceived costs and benefits. Within the SET framework, resident support is influenced by a cost-benefit analysis rather than emotional attachments. This contrast between emotional attachment (in ET) and rational judgment (in SET) highlights the different motivations residents may have toward tourism development. EST, similar to ET, also highlights emotional bonds; however, it shifts the focus from perceived control over community decisions to attachments with people (tourists). EST explores how frequent and positive interactions between residents and tourists lead to WN, EC, and SU-all of which foster positive relationships between residents and tourists, as well as support for tourism. This differs from SET's rational approach, where resident support for tourism is based on perceived material benefits rather than emotional connections.

2.5. Residents' SSTD in developing countries

Local community support is considered the core foundation determining the success or failure of sustainable tourism strategies [29]. This study defines residents' SSTD as their willingness and active participation in activities, policies, and initiatives that promote environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable tourism within their community (adapted from [30]). To date, literature on resident SSTD has grown; however, the majority of studies has been conducted in developed contexts [31].

Unlike SET, recent studies have explored the role of affective, psychological, and situational factors in driving resident support for SSTD; however, the scope remains narrow. Specifically, studies have identified community-level psychological drivers such as community empowerment, attachment, involvement, and active participation [32, 33]. Individual-level factors, including ES [12, 24] and perceived QOL [12], are relatively new in this discussion. These studies reveal three primary limitations: (1) a heavy reliance on SET, with a focus on economic costs and benefits; (2) a lack of integrated models incorporating psychological, emotional, and social context factors; and (3) contextual limitations, particularly in developing nations where local communities are both the beneficiaries and the groups most vulnerable to tourism development.

2.6. Hypotheses development

2.6.1. The impact of PE on QOL and SSTD

Numerous studies indicate that empowerment enhances residents' QOL by delivering both material and non-material benefits. For instance, psychological empowerment fosters pride and life satisfaction, social empowerment strengthens interpersonal relationships and community harmony, while political empowerment ensures fairness and equity in development outcomes [34]. Furthermore, empowered residents are more likely to support tourism policies and practices, as they feel their voices are heard and their interests are protected [15]. Therefore, empowerment not only enhances residents' QOL but also directly contributes to their SSTD. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1a,b,c,d,e: Psychological (a), social (b), political (c), economic (d), and environmental (e) empowerment have an impact on QOL.

H2a,b,c,d,e: Psychological (a), social (b), political (c), economic (d), and environmental (e) empowerment have an impact on SSTD.

2.6.2. The impact of ES on QOL and SSTD

Previous studies have consistently emphasized that ES improves residents' QOL by nurturing pride, social harmony, and a positive community atmosphere [4, 35]. For example, residents who feel an emotional connection with tourists often experience higher life satisfaction, while those who maintain a welcoming attitude view tourism as a source of cultural enrichment. Moreover, ES is directly linked to residents' SSTD, as positive emotions toward tourists translate into favorable attitudes and greater acceptance of tourism growth [36]. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3a,b,c: WN (a), EC (b), and SU (c) have an impact on QOL.

H4a,b,c: WN (a), EC (b), and SU (c) have an impact on SSTD.

2.6.3. QOL and SSTD

Empirical research provides strong evidence for the role of QOL in shaping tourism support. Eslami et al. [32] found that the benefits residents perceive from tourism, whether economic empowerment, ES, or cultural exchange, enhance their QOL, which in turn strengthens their support for sustainable tourism initiatives. In other words, residents are more likely to support tourism development when it positively contributes to their well-being, rather than when it causes stress or disrupts social harmony. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: QOL has an impact on SSTD.

2.6.4. Mediating effects of QOL

In this study, QOL is positioned as a mediating factor linking PE and ES with residents' SSTD. Empowered residents are posited to experience a higher QOL, thereby translating their empowerment into greater support for tourism [32]. Similarly, ES with tourists heightens residents' sense of belonging and satisfaction, which subsequently culminates in stronger support for sustainable practices. Based on the above analysis, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H6a,b,c,d,e: Psychological (a), social (b), political (c), economic (d), and environmental (e) empowerment influence SSTD through QOL.

H7a,b,c: WN (a), EC (b), and SU (c) influence SSTD through QOL.

2.6.5. Moderating effects of TD

TD reflects the extent to which residents' livelihoods, income, and well-being rely on tourism-related activities [13, 37]. Previous studies suggest that residents with higher TD are more sensitive to tourism-related benefits and costs, leading them to evaluate these outcomes more critically when forming their attitudes and support [38]. Drawing on SET, highly dependent residents are likely to perceive improvements in QOL, empowerment, and ES with tourists as directly tied to their economic and social well-being, thereby reinforcing their willingness to SSTD [12, 39]. Conversely, residents with low TD may not translate these positive perceptions into tangible support, as the perceived benefits are less prominent in their daily lives. The moderating role of TD has been observed in several tourism contexts, where communities highly reliant on tourism tend to exhibit stronger positive relationships between socio-psychological antecedents and pro-tourism behaviors [6, 13]. Based on this argument, we propose that TD strengthens the impact of QOL, RE, and ES on residents' SSTD:

H8: TD moderates the relationship between QOL and SSTD, such that the positive effect of QOL on SSTD is stronger when TD is higher.

H9a,b,c,d,e: TD moderates the relationship between psychological (a), social (b), political (c), economic (d), and environmental (e) empowerment and SSTD, such that the positive effect is stronger when TD is higher.

H10a,b,c: TD moderates the relationship between WN (a), EC (b), and SU (c) and SSTD, such that the positive effect is stronger when TD is higher.

The proposed research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

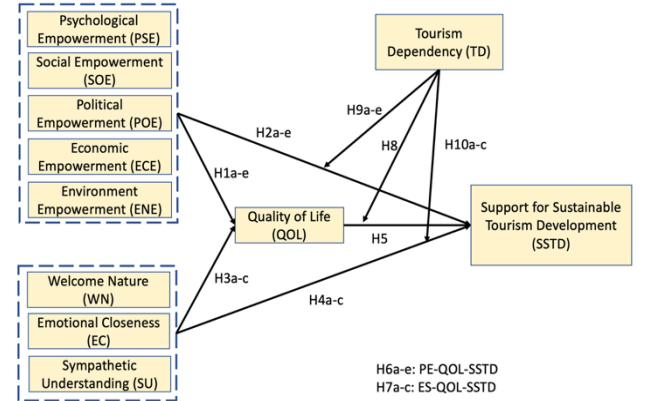


Figure 1. The research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

The empirical setting for this research is Da Nang, a leading tourist destination in Central Vietnam. Ranking as the country's fourth-largest city, it draws significant numbers of both local and international travelers [40]. In recent years, local residents have become more actively engaged in sustainable tourism efforts. With sustainable development positioned as a key priority in the city's tourism planning [41] and supported by recent green investments, Da Nang presents a suitable context to examine community attitudes.

3.2. Questionnaire design

This study applied a quantitative approach to test the proposed theoretical model, as this method is highly suitable for examining complex relationships among multiple variables. The questionnaire was designed in Vietnamese and divided into six sections: (1) PE, (2) ES, (3) QOL, (4) SSTD, (5) TD, and (6) demographic information. In total, the survey included 38 observable items to measure the five main constructs (see Table 2). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The original questionnaire was developed in English and then translated into Vietnamese by bilingual experts.

3.3. Data collection

Data collection was conducted over two months, from February to March 2026. First, five academic experts reviewed the questionnaire to guarantee the its content validity. Their recommendations were incorporated to optimize the clarity and structural integrity of the questionnaire. Following this expert review, a pilot test was administered to a sample of 50 individuals. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha assessments were executed to confirm the reliability and validity of the scales. The results showed high reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$) and acceptable factor loadings (all > 0.50). After this step, the final survey was ready for the main study.

The target participants were residents working or running businesses in Da Nang's tourism sector. This group

included hotel staff, tour guides, restaurant managers, Airbnb hosts, souvenir sellers, and local craftspeople. They lived in various wards across the city, such as Hai Chau, Son Tra, Ngu Hanh Son, Lien Chieu, Thanh Khe, Cam Le, and Hoa Vang.

A convenience sampling strategy was utilized, both offline and online. For the offline approach, participants were approached at key tourist zones and commercial hubs to capture voices across various tourism segments (including accommodation, retail, transport, and catering). For the online approach, a web-based version of the survey generated via Google Forms was circulated. This digital link was shared across local Facebook groups related to tourism. To maximize demographic diversity and ensure a broad reach, participation was restricted to online groups boasting at least 5,000 members. This dual-method approach ultimately yielded a final valid sample of 593 responses. Table 1 shows the demographic details of these respondents. In terms of length of residence, 42.7% had lived in the region for more than 10 years, indicating substantial local attachment.

Table 1. Demographic profile

Items		n	%
Gender	Male	226	38.11
	Female	367	61.89
Age Group	18 - 40	509	85.83
	41 – 60	82	13.83
	>61	2	0.34
Length of Residence	1 – 5 years	234	39.46
	6 – 10 years	106	17.88
	> 10 years	253	42.66
Educational Level	Secondary school	4	0.67
	High school	64	10.79
	Vocational school	11	1.85
	College	33	5.56
	University	445	75.04
	Postgraduate	36	6.07
Occupation	Student	287	48.4
	Employee	139	23.44
	Self-employed	127	21.42
	Government Officer	33	5.56
	Retired	7	1.18
Annual Income	< 60 million VND	282	47.55
	60–120 million VND	119	20.07
	>120 million VND	192	32.38

3.4. Data analysis

This study applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed theoretical model and hypotheses. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondents' demographic information. Second, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate construct reliability and validity. Key indicators, including the average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha (CA), and composite reliability (CR), were utilized to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the latent variables. Discriminant validity was assessed by

comparing the construct correlation coefficients with the square root of each AVE. SmartPLS 4.0 software was employed to analyze both the measurement and structural models. This tool supports the bootstrapping procedure for hypothesis testing, providing a non-parametric approach to evaluate the significance of the relationships within the model.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model assessment

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity assessment

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
ECE	ECE1	0.868	0.844	0.906	0.762
	ECE2	0.861			
	ECE3	0.890			
ENE	ENE1	0.849	0.798	0.881	0.713
	ENE2	0.806			
	ENE3	0.876			
POE	POE1	0.932	0.936	0.954	0.840
	POE2	0.930			
	POE3	0.906			
	POE4	0.898			
PSE	PSE1	0.832	0.906	0.930	0.728
	PSE2	0.851			
	PSE3	0.869			
	PSE4	0.859			
	PSE5	0.853			
SOE	SOE1	0.914	0.894	0.934	0.825
	SOE2	0.896			
	SOE3	0.916			
EC	EC1	0.933	0.830	0.921	0.854
	EC2	0.916			
SU	SU1	0.832	0.893	0.926	0.757
	SU2	0.880			
	SU3	0.887			
	SU4	0.880			
WN	WN1	0.889	0.909	0.936	0.785
	WN2	0.873			
	WN3	0.894			
	WN4	0.888			
QOL	QOL1	0.871	0.903	0.933	0.776
	QOL2	0.851			
	QOL3	0.859			
	QOL4	0.941			
SSTD	SSTD1	0.833	0.916	0.935	0.705
	SSTD2	0.863			
	SSTD3	0.830			
	SSTD4	0.862			
	SSTD5	0.783			
	SSTD6	0.864			

The measurement model was evaluated based on internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As presented in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated robust internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.798 to 0.936 and 0.881 to 0.954, respectively, both well above the 0.70 threshold [42]. Convergent validity was also established, as the outer loadings for all items fell between 0.783 and 0.941, and the average variance extracted (AVE)

values for all constructs exceeded the recommended minimum of 0.50 (ranging from 0.705 to 0.854).

Regarding discriminant validity, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations was utilized. The analysis revealed that all HTMT ratios ranged from 0.358 to 0.785. Since the maximum HTMT value (0.785) is strictly below the conservative cut-off threshold of 0.85 [43], discriminant validity is firmly established for all constructs in the model.

4.2. Common method variance test

The potential issue of method bias was assessed through the Partial Correlation Procedures [44]. A General Factor (GEN) variable was created using random data with a replicate sample size of 5,000 and linked to the dependent constructs of the model. The analysis revealed that the R^2 values for QOL and SSTD remained strictly unchanged at 0.555 and 0.610, respectively, both before and after incorporating the GEN variable. This absence of significant differences confirms that Common Method Variance (CMV) is not a concern in this study [44], indicating that subsequent analyses can be reliably conducted.

4.3. Structural model assessment

Table 3. Results of structural model

Hypotheses	Path	VIF	Beta value	t-value	p-value	Result
H1a	PSE → QOL	2.126	0.186	3.760	0.000	Support
H1b	SOE → QOL	2.577	0.155	3.425	0.001	Support
H1c	POE → QOL	1.857	-0.049	1.132	0.258	Reject
H1d	ECE → QOL	2.537	0.258	5.150	0.000	Support
H1e	ENE → QOL	2.071	-0.036	0.854	0.393	Reject
H2a	PSE → SSTD	2.204	0.032	0.775	0.438	Reject
H2b	SOE → SSTD	2.631	0.056	1.239	0.215	Reject
H2c	POE → SSTD	1.862	0.275	6.754	0.000	Support
H2d	ECE → SSTD	2.688	-0.036	0.808	0.419	Reject
H2e	ENE → SSTD	2.074	0.109	2.735	0.006	Support
H3a	WN → QOL	2.592	0.055	1.271	0.204	Reject
H3b	EC → QOL	2.225	0.147	3.901	0.000	Support
H3c	SU → QOL	1.522	0.231	6.649	0.000	Support
H4a	WN → SSTD	2.599	-0.016	0.418	0.676	Reject
H4b	EC → SSTD	2.274	0.088	2.634	0.008	Support
H4c	SU → SSTD	1.642	0.214	6.218	0.000	Support
H5	QOL → SSTD	2.249	0.299	6.584	0.000	Support

The hypothesized structural relationships were examined using PLS-SEM. Table 3 summarizes the path coefficients, t-values, and significance levels for all direct effects. Collinearity was not a concern in the structural model, as all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged between 1.522 and 2.688, remaining strictly below the critical threshold of 3 [42].

4.3.1. QOL

The results indicate that ECE had the strongest positive effect on QOL ($\beta=0.258$, $p<0.001$), followed by PSE ($\beta=0.186$, $p<0.001$) and SOE ($\beta=0.155$, $p = 0.001$). In contrast, political and environmental empowerment did not significantly influence QOL. Overall, economic, psychological, and social empowerment emerged as more salient predictors of QOL than political and environmental factors. Regarding ES, SU exerted the strongest positive effect on QOL ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.001$), followed by EC ($\beta = 0.147$, $p < 0.001$). However, WN did not significantly affect QOL. Consequently, H1a, H1b, H1d, H3b, and H3c were supported, while H1c, H1e, and H3a were rejected.

4.3.2. SSTD

A structurally different pattern emerged for SSTD. Among the empowerment dimensions, POE exerted the strongest direct influence on SSTD ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$), followed by ENE ($\beta = 0.109$, $p = 0.006$). In contrast, economic, psychological, and social empowerment did not significantly influence SSTD. These results indicate that political and environmental capacities were more critical direct predictors of SSTD than personal or social empowerment. Similarly, SU ($\beta = 0.214$, $p < 0.001$) and EC ($\beta = 0.088$, $p = 0.008$) positively influenced SSTD, whereas WN did not. Finally, QOL exerted a significant positive effect on SSTD ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$), fully supporting H5.

Overall, 10 of the 17 hypothesized direct relationships were supported. The findings demonstrate that specific dimensions of empowerment (political and environmental), deep relational bonds (SU and EC), and residents' QOL play distinct and critical roles in driving SSTD.

4.4. Explanatory power of the model

The explanatory power of the proposed model was assessed using the R^2 values of the endogenous constructs. According to Cohen [45], R^2 values of 0.25, 0.09, and 0.01 represent large, medium, and small effect sizes, respectively. The results indicated that the model accounted for 55.5% of the variance in residents' QOL and 61.0% of the variance in SSTD, demonstrating substantial explanatory power.

A comparative analysis of explanatory power across tourism-dependent and non-tourism-dependent residents revealed differences between the two models. For the empowerment model, the explained variance of SSTD was similar across the full sample ($R^2 = 0.485$), the tourism-dependent group ($R^2 = 0.484$), and the non-tourism-dependent group ($R^2 = 0.526$), with no significant difference between the sub-groups (permutation $p = 0.493$). In contrast, the ES model exhibited significant heterogeneity. The explained variance was substantially lower among tourism-dependent residents ($R^2 = 0.362$) than among non-tourism-

dependent residents ($R^2 = 0.551$), and the difference was statistically significant (permutation $p = 0.008$).

Finally, the integrated model incorporating empowerment, ES, and QOL achieved the highest explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.610$ for the full sample). This robust explanatory capacity remained consistently strong across both sub-groups ($R^2 = 0.571$ for tourism-dependent; $R^2 = 0.647$ for non-tourism-dependent), with no significant difference between them (permutation $p = 0.195$). Overall, while PE contributes stably across groups, ES is particularly influential among non-tourism-dependent residents. The integrated framework substantially improves predictive accuracy, reinforcing the critical mediating role of QOL and the combined influence of PE and ES in shaping residents' SSTD.

4.5. Mediating effect tests

The mediating role of QOL in the relationships between PE, ES, and SSTD was examined using a bootstrapping procedure. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Specific mediation test results via bootstrapping method

Hypotheses	Path	Beta value	t-value	p-value	Result
H6a	PSE -> QOL -> SSTD	0.056	3.201	0.001	Full mediation
H6b	SOE -> QOL -> SSTD	0.046	2.855	0.004	Full mediation
H6c	POE -> QOL -> SSTD	-0.015	1.105	0.269	No impact
H6d	ECE -> QOL -> SSTD	0.077	4.131	0.000	Partial mediation
H6e	ENE -> QOL -> SSTD	-0.011	0.845	0.398	No impact
H7a	WN -> QOL -> SSTD	0.016	1.245	0.213	No impact
H7b	EC -> QOL - -> SSTD	0.044	3.454	0.001	Partial mediation
H7c	SU -> QOL - -> SSTD	0.069	4.430	0.000	Partial mediation

For the PE dimensions, QOL significantly mediated the relationships between PSE and SSTD as well as SOE and SSTD. Given the absence of significant direct effects, H6a and H6b demonstrated full mediation. In addition, QOL partially mediated the relationship between ECE and SSTD, supporting H6d. In contrast, POE and ENE exhibited no significant indirect effects on SSTD through QOL. Hence, H6c and H6e were rejected.

Regarding ES, QOL significantly mediated the effects of EC and SU on SSTD. Because both variables retained significant direct effects on SSTD, H7b and H7c indicated partial mediation. However, the indirect effect of welcoming nature on SSTD through QOL was insignificant, which, coupled with its lack of direct effect, indicates that this dimension has no meaningful impact on residents' support.

Overall, the results highlight the important mediating role of QOL in explaining how PE and ES influence residents' SSTD. Specifically, PSE, SOE, ECE, together with EC and SU, enhanced residents perceived QOL, which subsequently strengthened their SSTD. Full

mediation was observed for PSE and SOE, whereas partial mediation emerged for ECE, EC, and SU. In contrast, POE, ENE, and WN exhibited neither significant indirect effects through QOL nor significant direct effects on SSTD, indicating limited explanatory relevance within the proposed model.

4.6. Moderator analysis

Prior to conducting the multi-group analysis (MGA), measurement invariance was assessed using the Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) procedure [43]. The results confirmed configural invariance and compositional invariance across tourism-dependent and non-tourism-dependent residents, as all constructs satisfied the requirements of Steps 1 and 2. Although equality of composite means and variances was not fully established for all constructs, partial measurement invariance was achieved. According to Henseler et al. [43], partial measurement invariance is sufficient for conducting meaningful MGA comparisons.

Table 5. Results of hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path coefficient difference	p-value difference	Result
H8	QOL -> SSTD	3.201	0.001	Support
H9a	PSE -> SSTD	0.305	0.001	Support
H9b	SOE -> SSTD	0.017	0.831	Reject
H9c	POE -> SSTD	-0.083	0.348	Reject
H9d	ECE -> SSTD	-0.043	0.620	Reject
H9e	ENE ->SSTD	0.025	0.774	Reject
H10a	WN -> SSTD	0.010	0.902	Reject
H10b	EC -> SSTD	-0.010	0.879	Reject
H10c	SU -> SSTD	-0.138	0.034	Support

The permutation-based MGA results revealed several significant moderating effects of TD. First, the positive effect of QOL on SSTD was significantly stronger among tourism-dependent residents ($\beta = 0.439$, 95% CI [0.270, 0.588]) than among non-tourism-dependent residents ($\beta = 0.133$, 95% CI [0.032, 0.228]). The difference between the two groups was statistically significant ($\Delta\beta = 0.305$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H8. No significant differences were found in the relationships between PE dimensions and SSTD, indicating that TD did not moderate these effects. In contrast, significant differences emerged for two dimensions of ES. The effects of EC and SU on SSTD were significantly stronger among non-tourism-dependent residents than among tourism-dependent residents, supporting H10b and H10c. However, no significant group difference was found for WN, leading to the rejection of H10a.

Overall, the results indicate that TD moderates the influence of QOL and selected dimensions of ES on residents' SSTD, whereas the effects of PE remain largely stable across groups.

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive investigation into the complex socio-psychological and economic factors that

drive residents' SSTD. By integrating RET, EST, and SET within a single causal framework, the results provide a nuanced understanding of how power, affect, and life satisfaction collectively shape sustainable intentions.

5.1.1. PE, QOL and SSTD

A key finding of this study is the differentiated influence of empowerment dimensions on QOL and SSTD. Economic, psychological, and social empowerment significantly enhanced residents' QOL, supporting the propositions of Andrews and Withey [46] and aligning with previous tourism studies [32]. The strong effect of ECE suggests that, within developing tourism destinations, material benefits continue to play a central role in shaping subjective well-being [47]. When residents perceive tourism as generating employment opportunities, income stability, and improved living conditions, they are more likely to report higher levels of life satisfaction.

In contrast, political and environmental empowerment exerted significant positive effects on SSTD but did not significantly influence QOL. This finding suggests important boundary conditions for ET [48] in explaining residents' well-being. While residents appear to value political participation and environmental stewardship as essential components of sustainable destination governance, these forms of empowerment may not directly translate into immediate improvements in personal life satisfaction. Instead, residents may perceive political voice and environmental responsibility as mechanisms that safeguard the long-term sustainability of the destination and its tourism sector [6, 8].

The mediation results further reinforce this distinction. Psychological and social empowerment influenced SSTD only through QOL, indicating that these dimensions contribute to SSTD primarily when they enhance residents' perceived well-being. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that empowerment-related benefits become behaviorally meaningful when residents experience tangible improvements in their QOL [49].

5.1.2. ES and SSTD

The findings regarding ES provide important insights into the relational foundations of residents' SSTD. While SU and EC emerged as significant predictors of both QOL and SSTD, WN did not exhibit significant effects. This finding contradicts several previous studies (e.g., Woosnam [27]; Hasani et al. [50]), which identified WN as an important dimension of ES.

The absence of significant effects for WN suggests that, within mature tourism destinations, general hospitality orientations may be less influential than deeper forms of resident–tourist connection. In contrast, SU and EC reflect stronger cognitive identification, empathy, and interpersonal bonds between residents and tourists [51]. These deeper relational ties appear to contribute more substantially to residents' perceived well-being and their sustainable intentions.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings extend SET by demonstrating that residents' support for tourism is shaped not only by instrumental exchanges and perceived

benefits but also by meaningful affective relationships with visitors [52]. Rather than replacing economic considerations, ES complements them by providing an additional pathway through which tourism generates positive resident attitudes.

5.1.3. The mediating effects of QOL

The confirmation of QOL as a primary catalyst for SSTD reinforces the central role of life satisfaction in sustainable tourism research [53]. More importantly, the findings position QOL as a critical integrative mechanism linking PE and ES to SSTD. In doing so, the study brings together the core assumptions of ET and EST, demonstrating that both empowerment-related benefits and affective host–guest relationships ultimately influence support through residents' evaluations of their overall life quality.

The structural model further demonstrates that QOL serves as an important explanatory bridge, particularly through the full mediation of psychological and social empowerment. This finding extends SET by suggesting that residents evaluate tourism impacts through a broader appraisal of life quality that incorporates both material and relational dimensions, rather than relying solely on isolated benefit–cost assessments [12].

However, the partial mediation observed for ECE and the deeper dimensions of ES (i.e., EC and SU) indicates that these constructs possess sufficient explanatory power to influence SSTD both indirectly through QOL and directly as independent antecedents of support. Consequently, strong economic prospects and meaningful resident–tourist relationships may encourage SSTD even when overall life satisfaction is only moderate [32, 47].

5.1.4. The moderating effect of TD

The moderation analysis provides additional insight into how residents' economic circumstances shape the formation of sustainable tourism support. Specifically, TD significantly strengthened the relationship between QOL and SSTD. For residents whose livelihoods depend on tourism, improvements in QOL generated by tourism appear to provide a particularly strong motivation to support the sector's long-term sustainability. This finding is consistent with the pragmatic cost–benefit analysis of SET, whereby residents are more likely to support tourism when it contributes directly to their well-being and economic security [13, 15].

More importantly, EC and SU emerged as significantly stronger predictors of SSTD among non-tourism-dependent residents. This finding suggests that the foundations of tourism support differ across resident groups. Because non-dependent residents do not rely directly on tourism for their livelihoods, their support appears to be influenced more strongly by meaningful affective bonds and a sense of mutual understanding with visitors. Such a pattern is consistent with the notion of substantive rationality, whereby attitudes are shaped not only by instrumental considerations but also by social values, empathy, and interpersonal connections [52].

In contrast, among tourism-dependent residents, the influence of ES appears to be comparatively less pronounced

than the role of tourism in maintaining household well-being and economic stability. This observation aligns with arguments emphasizing formal rationality, where behavioral support is guided primarily by practical and economic considerations [54]. Rather than suggesting that emotional bonds are unimportant for tourism-dependent residents, the findings indicate that their influence may be overshadowed by more immediate livelihood concerns.

These results help explain why previous ES studies have occasionally reported inconsistent findings across destinations and resident groups [55]. By identifying TD as a significant moderating condition, this study demonstrates that the relative importance of emotional and well-being-related drivers of support varies according to residents' economic reliance on tourism. While QOL considerations are particularly salient among tourism-dependent residents, EC and SU appear to play a more influential role among residents who do not derive direct financial benefits from tourism.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions by proposing an integrative framework that simultaneously incorporates PE, ES, QOL, and TD as determinants of SSTD. In doing so, it addresses a persistent fragmentation in the literature, where these constructs have often been examined independently despite their conceptual interconnections [5, 34, 39].

First, the study advances the integration of ET and EST within a unified explanatory framework. Although both perspectives have independently informed research on residents' tourism attitudes [8, 27, 56], their comparative assessment remains limited. The findings reveal distinct pathways through which PE and ES influence resident outcomes. Economic, psychological, and social empowerment primarily enhanced QOL, whereas political and environmental empowerment directly influenced SSTD. In addition, EC and SU emerged as significant predictors of both QOL and SSTD, while WN was not significant. These findings refine EST by demonstrating that deeper affective bonds, rather than general hospitality orientations, constitute the critical relational mechanisms in explaining residents' SSTD.

Second, the study contributes to the TD literature by identifying TD as an important boundary condition that shapes the formation of resident support. The multi-group analysis revealed a meaningful asymmetry between tourism-dependent and non-tourism-dependent residents. QOL exerted a stronger influence on SSTD among tourism-dependent residents, suggesting that support is more strongly linked to perceived well-being benefits when residents rely economically on tourism. In contrast, ES dimensions exerted stronger effects among non-tourism-dependent residents, indicating that relational considerations become more salient when tourism is less central to household livelihoods. These findings provide a more nuanced understanding of how TD conditions the relative importance of well-being and relational drivers of support [13].

Third, the study advances the QOL literature by positioning QOL as a central explanatory mechanism

linking PE and ES to SSTD, rather than treating QOL solely as an outcome of tourism development or a direct antecedent of resident attitudes [4, 11]. The differentiated mediation pattern is theoretically informative. PSE and SOE influenced SSTD exclusively through QOL, whereas ECE, EC, and SU retained both direct and indirect effects. These findings clarify the conditions under which QOL functions as a full versus partial mediator and highlight its role in translating tourism-related experiences into supportive behavioral intentions.

Fourth, the study extends SET beyond its conventional utilitarian boundaries by demonstrating that residents' support is shaped not only by instrumental benefits but also by meaningful relational exchanges [5, 39]. The important roles of EC and SU alongside empowerment-related benefits suggest that residents endorse sustainable tourism through a dual lens of material necessity and affective engagement with visitors. This repositioning enriches the explanatory scope of SET, seamlessly integrating relational exchange mechanisms into the traditional cost-benefit calculus within sustainable tourism contexts.

Collectively, by synthesizing capability-oriented, emotional-relational, and contextual perspectives, this study responds to recent calls for theoretically pluralistic approaches to resident attitude research [6, 7] and establishes a foundation for future inquiry into the affective, psychological, and socio-economic determinants of destination sustainability.

5.3. Practical contributions

The findings provide several implications for destination managers, policymakers, and tourism planners seeking to strengthen residents' SSTD.

First, local governments should prioritize participatory governance and transparent decision-making processes that enable residents to engage in tourism planning and destination management. At the same time, environmental management initiatives should provide opportunities for community involvement and strengthen residents' sense of responsibility toward local tourism resources. These efforts may enhance the legitimacy of tourism governance and foster stronger support for sustainable tourism development, even when their influence on residents' day-to-day QOL is less immediate [56].

Second, destination management organisations should focus not only on increasing tourism activity but also on ensuring that tourism generates visible benefits for local communities. In particular, strategies that strengthen economic opportunities, community pride, social cohesion, and residents' confidence in engaging with tourism activities may contribute to higher perceived QOL and, consequently, stronger SSTD [5, 8, 56].

Third, for tourism planners and operators, the findings highlight the importance of creating opportunities for meaningful host-guest interactions. Tourism experiences that encourage mutual understanding, communication, and cultural exchange may strengthen EC and SU between residents and visitors, thereby contributing to both residents' well-being and their SSTD [8, 27]. More broadly, the results suggest that tourism planning should move

beyond promoting hospitality as an isolated objective and place greater emphasis on fostering positive social relationships between residents and tourists.

Fourth, for tourism-dependent residents, communication and development initiatives should emphasize how sustainable tourism contributes to long-term economic stability and community well-being. Given the stronger QOL-SSTD relationship observed in this group, maintaining and enhancing tourism-related QOL benefits is likely to be particularly important for sustaining support. In contrast, for non-tourism-dependent residents, support appears to be influenced more strongly by relational considerations. Stakeholders may therefore benefit from promoting opportunities for meaningful resident-tourist interaction and reinforcing the social and cultural value of tourism within the community. Such an approach is consistent with the stronger effects of EC and SU observed among this group [8, 13, 27].

5.4. Limitations and future research

This study is subject to several limitations that open avenues for future inquiry. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences and obscures temporal dynamics in the relationships among empowerment, ES, QOL, and SSTD. Given that residents' attitudes are inherently dynamic and susceptible to shifts in tourist flows and policy changes [3, 57], future studies should employ longitudinal designs to track how these relationships evolve across different stages of destination development. The sample consisted of students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader groups. Future studies should expand into more diverse samples.

Second, the study is geographically confined to Da Nang in central Vietnam, which limits generalizability to destinations with distinct governance frameworks, cultural norms, or development trajectories. Cross-cultural replications across rural ecotourism communities, island destinations, or urban mass-tourism contexts are encouraged to assess the boundary conditions of the proposed model. Third, TD was operationalized as a binary, single-item construct, necessarily simplifying a multidimensional phenomenon [13]. Future research should employ more granular measures capturing degree of income reliance, household employment in tourism, and duration of dependency to more precisely delineate its moderating role and reveal potential threshold effects.

Finally, the proposed framework does not incorporate other potentially relevant constructs, including well-being (e.g. Tuan et al. [58]), community attachment, place identity, perceived crowding, and destination governance quality, which may interact with empowerment and ES in meaningful ways [6]. Future research is encouraged to extend the model by integrating these variables and exploring their interaction effects to further advance understanding of the socio-psychological foundations of sustainable tourism support.

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