

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERCEIVED EMPOWERMENT, WELL-BEING AND RESIDENTS' SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY IN DA NANG CITY, VIETNAM

MỐI QUAN HỆ GIỮA NHẬN THỨC VỀ SỰ TRAO QUYỀN, HẠNH PHÚC VÀ HỖ TRỢ PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH BỀN VỮNG CỦA NGƯỜI DÂN: TRƯỜNG HỢP NGHIÊN CỨU TẠI THÀNH PHỐ ĐÀ NẴNG, VIỆT NAM

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Abstract - This study proposes a conceptual model to assess the relationship between perceived empowerment, well-being, and support for sustainable tourism development (SSTD). At the same time, the study examines the mediating role of well-being in the relationship between perceived empowerment and SSTD. Data were collected through paper-based and online surveys from residents currently working or doing business in tourism-related services in Da Nang City. A total of 393 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis to test the model and research hypotheses through PLS-SEM. The research results confirm the relationship between the factors in the model. On that basis, this study provides theoretical implications and appropriate policy recommendations.

Key words - Perceived empowerment; well-being; residents' support for sustainable tourism development

1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism aims for a future in which economic prosperity, social welfare, and environmental responsibility coexist harmoniously [1]. However, realizing this vision largely depends on the active participation of local residents - who serve as the cornerstone of sustainable tourism development [2]. Residents not only help shape tourists' experiences but also play a central role in preserving cultural heritage and protecting the environment [3, 4]. From islands and heritage sites to conservation areas and small cities, consistent empirical evidence shows that community participation is a key factor in sustainable tourism [4]. In other words, when local residents are involved, sustainable tourism thrives; conversely, without them, tourism is unlikely to be sustained over the long term. Therefore, there is growing consensus among researchers that understanding how residents' support for tourism is formed is fundamental to building and maintaining a sustainable tourism development model [4, 5].

In the context of destination development, local residents are more likely to support tourism development when they perceive positive impacts on their lives and communities [6]. Perceived empowerment refers to residents' subjective

Tóm tắt - Nghiên cứu này đề xuất mô hình nhằm đánh giá mối quan hệ giữa nhận thức về sự trao quyền, hạnh phúc người dân và hỗ trợ phát triển du lịch bền vững (SSTD). Đồng thời, nghiên cứu kiểm tra vai trò trung gian của hạnh phúc người dân trong mối quan hệ giữa sự trao quyền và SSTD. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua khảo sát trực tiếp trên giấy và trực tuyến từ những cư dân hiện đang làm việc hoặc kinh doanh các dịch vụ liên quan đến du lịch tại thành phố Đà Nẵng. Tổng cộng 393 bảng hỏi hợp lệ được đưa vào phân tích để kiểm định mô hình và giả thuyết nghiên cứu thông qua PLS-SEM. Kết quả nghiên cứu xác nhận mối quan hệ giữa các nhân tố trong mô hình. Trên cơ sở đó, nghiên cứu đưa ra những hàm ý lý thuyết và khuyến nghị chính sách phù hợp.

Từ khóa - Sự trao quyền; hạnh phúc người dân; hỗ trợ phát triển du lịch bền vững của người dân

experience of empowerment, both individually and collectively, through their involvement in tourism at their destination (adapted from Aghazamani [7]). Empowering residents is essential to ensure their proactive involvement in tourism development issues [8]. Moreover, residents' well-being is defined as a positive emotional state, fulfillment, and functional happiness based on life evaluation, pleasurable experiences, and the development of happiness (adapted from Steptoe [9]). Higher quality of life and resident satisfaction enhance their support for sustainable tourism development (SSTD) [10-12]. However, studies exploring the relationship between perceived empowerment, residents' well-being, and SSTD remain limited [13].

Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been applied in tourism research to explain residents' perceptions of tourism development [14, 15]. According to this theory, if residents perceive that the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs they incur, they are more likely to participate positively and interact with tourists [16, 17]. The present study can apply SET to explain why residents support sustainable tourism development [18, 19]. When benefits (e.g., empowerment and well-being) exceed perceived costs, residents tend to support sustainable tourism; otherwise, they may oppose or

hold negative attitudes if perceived costs are higher than benefits. Although SET is a useful tool, it has been criticized for focusing solely on residents' attitudes [20]. Therefore, this study extends SET by integrating factors such as perceived empowerment and residents' well-being to explain residents' SSTD. In reality, despite many variables being added to the SET model, studies incorporating empowerment into this framework remain limited [21], especially in research on residents' behavior - a group strongly influenced by the degree of empowerment.

Furthermore, existing studies mainly measure perceived empowerment using the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) developed by Boley [22], which conceptualizes empowerment through three components: psychological, social, and political empowerment [7]. Although widely used, the limited scope of RETS has led to calls for a more comprehensive framework [7, 23]. Recently, dos Santos [23] introduced RETS 2.0, which expands empowerment into five components: psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental. Compared to the original RETS, RETS 2.0 provides a more holistic perspective on how tourism influences residents' empowerment and their willingness to support sustainable development [23]. However, to date, empirical validation of RETS 2.0 remains rare [23]. Therefore, this study conducted empirical research to measure perceived empowerment based on RETS 2.0, including five components: psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental empowerment.

In Vietnam, research on the relationships between perceived empowerment, residents' well-being, and SSTD is still very limited. Previous studies have mainly focused on residents' perceptions of empowerment or sustainable tourism development, without simultaneously considering the role of residents' well-being [24-27]. For example, Nguyen [24] analyzed barriers and opportunities in community empowerment in Thai Nguyen, providing policy recommendations for community tourism development. Meanwhile, Ngoc's study [28] in Cu Lao Cham addressed residents' well-being through factors such as catch rates, employment, and income, but these were primarily linked to biodiversity conservation rather than tourism. In general, current studies have only addressed two aspects: empowerment and tourism development. Simultaneously considering empowerment, residents' well-being, and the level of residents' support is necessary to better understand the drivers of support for sustainable tourism, thereby providing appropriate recommendations for policy and development practice.

In summary, this study explores how empowerment and residents' well-being influence the level of SSTD. Additionally, the study evaluates the mediating role of residents' well-being in the relationship between empowerment and SSTD. Specifically, the research focuses on residents participating in tourism activities in Da Nang City - a rapidly developing tourism destination - using a survey approach. Theoretically, this study is pioneering in integrating SET to explain residents' intentions to support sustainable tourism, while also expanding understanding of

the role of psychological and emotional factors in forming such support. In practice, the findings provide guidance for policymakers and destination management organizations (DMOs) in engaging the community in local sustainable tourism development.

2. Theoretical Framework and Proposed Research Model

2.1. Research concepts

2.1.1. Perceived empowerment

Empowerment in tourism is a dynamic and multidimensional process aimed at enhancing the agency, freedom, and capabilities of individuals and communities to improve their quality of life through tourism activities [7]. This study does not directly measure "empowerment in tourism", but instead focuses on "perceived empowerment in tourism." Residents' perceptions are widely used in tourism literature and relate to their opinions, attitudes, and feelings [16]. Residents' perception of empowerment in tourism refers to what they think about empowerment in tourism. Perceived empowerment in tourism is subjective, reflecting how residents feel about their level of participation, being heard, or having a voice in the tourism development process. In this study, residents' perception of empowerment in tourism is measured using the RETS 2.0 model, which includes five aspects: psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental.

Psychological Empowerment (PSE) reflects residents' self-esteem and pride when they feel appreciated by tourists for their local culture, natural environment, and traditions [29].

Social Empowerment (SE) demonstrates the ability of community members to cooperate in a united and effective manner [29].

Political Empowerment (POE) arises when residents feel they have a voice and motivation to participate in socio-political issues [30].

Economic Empowerment (ECE) relates to income generation from tourism and access to productive resources.

Environmental Empowerment (ENE) refers to residents' ability to manage and protect natural resources through active participation in sustainable tourism initiatives [31].

2.1.2. Residents' well-being

Well-being in psychology is defined as a positive emotional state, a sense of fulfillment, satisfaction in life, health, and prosperity [9, 32]. Well-being is often approached from two main perspectives: hedonic and eudaimonic [33]. The hedonic perspective emphasizes positive emotions and pleasure from enjoyable experiences such as vacations, while the eudaimonic perspective focuses on self-development, life meaning, and deep engagement with valuable activities [33].

In tourism, an increasing number of studies approach well-being through concepts derived from philosophy and

psychology, such as quality of life, life satisfaction, health, and fulfillment [34]. While residents' well-being is a subjective perception of satisfaction, fulfillment, and life meaning (including emotional, spiritual, and intrinsic happiness), quality of life synthesizes objective conditions affecting human life. Based on these approaches, the present study defines residents' well-being (PW) as a positive emotional state, a sense of fulfillment, and functional happiness, evaluated through three aspects: life satisfaction, pleasurable emotions, and self-development (adapted from Steptoe [9]). Additionally, this study adopts Yopal's approach [35], in which well-being is conceptualized as an overall construct. This approach allows for the measurement of individuals' emotional responses to specific events, as well as the subjective assessment of satisfaction and fulfillment gained from those experiences.

2.1.3. Residents' SSTD

Residents' SSTD refers to their willingness and active participation in activities, policies, and initiatives aimed at promoting environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable tourism within the community (adapted from Tang [36]). Such support is reflected in positive attitudes, compliance with regulations, participation in decision-making, and cooperation with stakeholders.

The study focuses on residents directly involved in tourism services at destinations, including: staff and owners of accommodation establishments, restaurant managers and owners, tour guides, souvenir artisans, and transportation businesses such as taxi drivers or vehicle rental companies. These individuals have practical experience and deep understanding of tourism activities and the concept of sustainable tourism in the local context.

2.2. Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET has been widely used as an important theoretical foundation for analyzing residents' attitudes towards tourism, particularly how their perceptions of tourism's positive and negative impacts affect their level of support for tourism development [14, 37-38]. According to Emerson [39], social exchange is the process of interaction between two individuals, in which each party provides and depends on benefits received from the other. Homans [40] argues that SET is based on the assumption that social behaviors result from the exchange of tangible and intangible resources - such as benefits and costs - where people tend to choose actions that maximize value and minimize losses. When the benefits obtained exceed the costs, individuals will maintain that relationship or behavior repeatedly over time [41].

Extending SET in this study allows for deeper analysis of how residents assess tourism development not only based on economic benefits but also including perceived empowerment and personal well-being. SET emphasizes that people make decisions by comparing the benefits and costs from a relationship or activity. In the context of sustainable tourism, areas such as material welfare, health, emotions, and personal safety are important components of the "cost-benefit" that residents consider. Therefore, SET

is extended to explain that if residents perceive that tourism development brings high benefits - such as feelings of empowerment, improved quality of life, and enhanced well-being - they will tend to actively support sustainable tourism development policies. Conversely, if they assess that environmental, social, or quality-of-life costs exceed the benefits received, they will tend to oppose or maintain negative attitudes toward tourism. Integrating the concepts of empowerment and well-being into SET enriches the theoretical approach, providing a more comprehensive view of the motivations, expectations, and supportive behaviors of residents in the context of sustainable tourism development.

2.3. Development of research hypotheses

2.3.1. The Relationship between perceived empowerment and SSTD

Community empowerment can evoke positive emotions and promote residents' supportive behaviors toward tourism [42]. In an effort to systematize the relationship between empowerment and tourism support, Boley [22] developed the RETS framework, measuring the level of empowerment perceived by residents from tourism development across three main dimensions: psychological, social, and political. Initially, RETS did not include the economic dimension; however, subsequent studies such as Boley [43] and Strzelecka [44] integrated SET to reflect the economic benefits received by residents. Additionally, scholars have emphasized the role of the environmental dimension in sustainable tourism development, showing that residents' perception of environmental improvement or conservation due to tourism can also increase their support [23; 42].

According to Perkin [45], empowerment provides insights into development at individual, organizational, and community levels. When residents do not feel empowered, they are less likely to effectively participate in tourism development activities [46], while Sofield [47] argues that the absence of empowerment is a barrier to community tourism development. Specifically, psychological empowerment helps residents feel confident, valued, and able to control local situations, thereby improving well-being and fostering positive attitudes toward tourism [21, 48]. Social empowerment encourages community connection, strengthens social networks, and increases consensus in tourism-related decisions. Political empowerment is reflected in the ability to access and participate in decision-making, policy planning, and tourism management [49, 50]. This creates a sense of autonomy and fairness, helping residents feel that they are part of local development [22]. Economically, financial benefits from tourism such as employment, income, or business opportunities can increase residents' support. At the same time, the environmental dimension - if tourism promotes natural resource conservation or improves living conditions - can also positively influence residents' perceptions and behaviors.

Many studies have confirmed the link between positive perceptions of tourism impacts and support for tourism [51-53]. Specifically, Boley [22] and Strzelecka [30]

indicate that these perceptions can be strongly influenced by empowerment across the aforementioned dimensions. From the above analysis, comprehensive empowerment - including psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental aspects - is a necessary condition to increase residents' SSTD. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1a – H1e: Perceived empowerment positively affects SSTD (H1a – PSE; H1b – SE; H1c – POE; H1d – ECE; H1e – ENE).

2.3.2. The relationship between residents' well-being and SSTD

Recent studies have highlighted the central role of residents' well-being as a powerful driver of tourism's positive impacts [54]. Specifically, residents who perceive improvements in well-being when participating in tourism development tend to more strongly support tourism activities in their locality. This demonstrates a positive link between perceived well-being and community support for tourism [54]. Additionally, studies show that when residents highly value their quality of life and satisfaction with recreational activities, they are more willing to support sustainable tourism development initiatives [10-12, 55-57]. According to Eslami [58], satisfaction with overall well-being leads to residents' SSTD. Similarly, Li's study [59] confirms that residents' well-being affects their support for tourism development.

As tourism research increasingly emphasizes welfare and sustainability, understanding the role of perceived well-being in forming residents' SSTD becomes particularly important [54]. Based on this, the present study assumes that higher levels of residents' well-being contribute to stronger SSTD efforts in the locality. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Residents' well-being positively affects SSTD.

2.3.3. The relationship between perceived empowerment and residents' well-being

The process of empowering residents plays an essential role in enhancing perceived well-being and promoting supportive behaviors for tourism development [13]. Empowerment is considered an important intermediary factor that improves social functioning and life satisfaction by strengthening intrinsic power, promoting social participation, and expanding access to resources [60]. According to Kifer [61], a sense of control and influence in life helps individuals feel more authentic, thereby triggering positive emotions and increasing subjective well-being. Similarly, Li's study [62] shows that empowering residents significantly affects life satisfaction. Wahid [63] also emphasizes that empowerment increases social, economic, and human capital, thereby reducing poverty, improving welfare, and promoting sustainable development in rural areas.

Specifically, psychological empowerment is manifested through a sense of pride and attachment to the community or local culture, thereby increasing personal well-being [64, 65]. Social empowerment contributes to community cohesion, sustainable development, and enhanced

community well-being [22, 66]. Studies such as Yang [67] show that close social relationships and frequent community interactions also contribute to higher life satisfaction. Furthermore, political empowerment through encouraging residents' participation in tourism-related decision-making not only increases perceived political efficacy but also strengthens autonomy and enhances satisfaction with political life [68]. Economic empowerment helps residents improve income, strengthen financial control, and enhance quality of life, thereby increasing perceived happiness and positive attitudes toward tourism [69, 70]. Finally, environmental empowerment encourages residents' involvement in protecting and managing natural resources, thereby promoting responsibility, attachment to the living environment, as well as strengthening community pride and personal satisfaction [52, 71].

Synthesizing these aspects shows that empowerment - psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental - contributes to enhancing residents' perceived well-being. Based on this analysis, the study proposes the following research hypotheses:

H3a – H3e: Perceived empowerment positively affects residents' well-being (H3a – PSE; H3b – SE; H3c – POE; H3d – ECE; H3e – ENE).

2.3.4. The mediating role of residents' well-being in the relationship between perceived empowerment and SSTD

Perceived empowerment can enhance residents' positive perceptions of life, thereby promoting overall well-being. Studies indicate that this sense of well-being is not only a result of empowerment but also serves as an important mediating mechanism leading to supportive behaviors for sustainable tourism [21, 72]. Specifically, Eluwole [21] demonstrated that psychological and social empowerment can improve residents' perceived well-being, thereby fostering their commitment to sustainable tourism development activities. Similarly, Lei [72] showed that feeling involved in decision-making and having control over tourism resources increases satisfaction and a sense of meaning in life - key factors promoting residents' support for tourism development policies. Wei [73] also found that the feeling of empowerment is strongly linked to the desire to interact with tourists - a clear manifestation of supportive tourism behaviors, especially in the context of community events and festivals. Meanwhile, Chi [74], through research at world heritage sites in China, affirmed that perceived well-being mediates the relationship between the quality of social relationships within the community and supportive tourism behaviors.

From the above empirical evidence, a logical mediating chain can be established: the five aspects of empowerment → increased residents' well-being → promotion of supportive behaviors for sustainable tourism development. The mediating role of residents' well-being is crucial in transforming the impact of empowerment into specific and positive community behaviors. Therefore, the theoretical model proposed in this study emphasizes that residents' well-being is an important bridge between community empowerment and their SSTD. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4a – H4e: Residents’ well-being mediates the relationship between empowerment and SSTD (H4a – PSE; H4b – SE; H4c – POE; H4d – ECE; H4e – ENE).

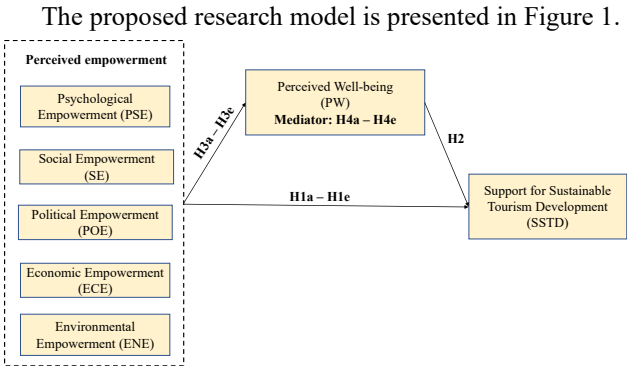


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

3. Research methods

This study focuses on Da Nang City - a key tourist destination in Central Vietnam. According to Nguyen and Hoang [75], Da Nang is the fourth largest city and one of the most popular destinations in Vietnam for both domestic and international tourists, where local communities are increasingly involved in sustainable tourism development. As noted by Tran et al. [76], sustainable tourism development is a top priority in Da Nang’s planning and destination development strategy. Recent investments in sustainable tourism initiatives make Da Nang an ideal context for examining residents’ attitudes.

The preliminary research phase centered on developing measurement scales, designing the questionnaire, and conducting pilot surveys to ensure validity and reliability. The survey instrument was adapted from previously validated scales and adjusted to fit the Da Nang context. In total, 21 observed variables representing 7 constructs were included (see Table 2 for sources and descriptions). Each construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). A qualitative pilot study was conducted with academic experts in sustainable tourism and tourism researchers. These experts assessed each construct and its content validity using a five-point relevance scale (1 = Not relevant at all, 5 = Highly relevant). Observed variables with mean scores above 4.0 were considered relevant and included in the second draft of the scale.

To minimize common method bias, which may arise if respondents rate all survey items at once, the questionnaire included key features: an introductory explanation of the research purpose and assurance of respondent anonymity. The initial questionnaire was written in English, then translated into Vietnamese and subjected to a back-translation procedure to ensure accuracy. A preliminary quantitative survey with 98 participants was conducted to refine the measurement instrument. Exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach’s Alpha indicated high reliability ($\alpha > 0.7$), with all observed variables achieving loadings > 0.5 . The finalized scale was then used for the main survey.

The target respondents were residents currently working or conducting business in tourism-related services in Da Nang City, such as restaurant managers, hotel staff, Airbnb hosts, local artisans, souvenir shop owners, tour guides, etc. Respondents resided in central and coastal districts including Son Tra, Ngu Hanh Son, Hai Chau, Thanh Khe, Cam Le, Lien Chieu, and Hoa Vang. To ensure data quality and improve response rates, eligibility was confirmed through two screening questions: (1) *Are you currently working or providing tourism-related services (e.g., accommodation, food and beverage, souvenir shops, tour guiding, transportation, etc.)?* and (2) *How long have you been working or providing these services?*

Data collection was conducted through both paper-based and online surveys. For the paper-based survey, a convenience sampling method was used to ensure a diverse and representative sample of tourism-related residents. Residents were approached at various tourist attractions and local sites, reflecting different types of tourism services such as accommodation, dining, transportation, and souvenir sales. Trained research assistants followed a standardized approach, explained the study’s purpose, and invited eligible residents to voluntarily complete the survey. A two-step eligibility screening process was implemented to confirm that only individuals currently engaged in tourism-related services participated.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Profile

Characteristic		n	%
Sex	Male	187	47.6
	Female	190	48.3
	Other	16	4.1
Age (years)	18 - 30	171	43.5
	31 – 45	118	30
	46 – 60	83	21.1
	> 60	21	5.3
Income (monthly)	< 5 million VND	4	1.0
	5 – 10 million VND	106	27.0
	10 – 20 million VND	181	46.1
	> 20 million VND	102	26.0
Job (Multiple Choices)	Homestay/hotel business	117	29.8
	Restaurant business	108	27.5
	Tour guide service	24	6.1
	Local products business	83	21.1
	Taxi services	45	11.5
	Other	16	4.1

For the online survey, a convenience sampling method was also used. A self-administered questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed via Facebook, a popular social media platform. To ensure broad reach, the survey was shared on multiple Facebook fan pages serving local communities and tourism-related groups, with a minimum follower threshold of 5,000 to ensure diversity and coverage. The research team first obtained approval from page administrators before sharing the survey link, which was then posted to reach active members from

various tourism sectors. A clear eligibility screening section was included to ensure only those currently involved in tourism-related services participated. To maintain data quality, respondents were required to complete all questions before submitting the survey. Throughout the process, the research team monitored responses to ensure balanced representation from different tourism sectors, and additional outreach was conducted as needed. To prevent duplicate participation, a note was included in survey posts asking those who had already participated to skip the questionnaire. This approach ensured diverse participation, minimized bias, and maintained data integrity.

The survey was conducted over two months, from February to March 2025. A total of 393 valid questionnaires were collected and used for analysis. Sample characteristics are described in Table 1. Data analysis followed a systematic process, including sample analysis, assessment of the measurement model, and evaluation of the structural model using SmartPLS 4.0 software.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model assessment

Seven constructs with 21 observed variables were tested based on criteria such as outer loadings, scale reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The results (Table 2) show that all outer loadings exceed the minimum threshold of 0.708. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs are above 0.7, demonstrating the reliability of the scales. Convergent validity of the latent variables is also confirmed by the average variance extracted (AVE), as all values exceed the required minimum of 0.5.

Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT correlation index. The correlation matrix (Table 3) indicates that correlations between construct pairs are all lower than the square root of their respective AVEs. Furthermore, all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85. These results demonstrate high discriminant validity for the scales in the research model.

Table 2. Evaluation of the measurement model

Construct	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR (rho_c)	AVE
Psychological Empowerment (PSE) – Adopted from dos Santos [23]				
PSE1: Makes me feel special because people travel to see my country's unique feature.	0.851			
PSE2: Reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors.	0.828	0.762	0.863	0.678
PSE3: Makes me want to work to keep Danang special.	0.789			
Social Empowerment (SE) - Adopted from dos Santos [23]				
SE1: Makes me feel more connected to my community.	0.848			
SE2: Fosters the sense of community spirit within me.	0.879	0.824	0.894	0.738
SE3: Provides ways for me to get involved in my community.	0.850			
Political Empowerment (POE) - Adopted from dos Santos [23]				
POE1: I have a voice in Danang tourism development decisions.	0.866			
POE2: I have access to decision-making process when it comes to tourism in Danang.	0.823	0.764	0.857	0.667
POE3: I have an outlet to share my concerns about tourism development in Danang.	0.757			
Economic Empowerment (ECE) - Adopted from dos Santos [23]				
ECE1: Makes me feel I can benefit economically long-term.	0.793			
ECE2: Provides ways for me to support my family.	0.858	0.762	0.861	0.674
ECE3: Makes me feel I can improve my standard of living.	0.811			
Environmental Empowerment (ENE) - Adopted from dos Santos [23]				
ENE1: Reminds me that I have the obligation to protect my natural surrounding.	0.830			
ENE2: Provides ways for me to promote environmentally friendly initiatives.	0.830	0.790	0.876	0.702
ENE3: Makes me feel I can contribute to my community's wellbeing through preservation of physical surrounding.	0.853			
Perceived Well-being (PW) - Adopted from Yolal [35]				
PW1: Overall, I feel Danang has enriched my life. I'm really glad that I lived in Danang.	0.809			
PW2: While living in Danang, I accomplished my purpose of the experience and this experience has enriched me in some ways.	0.831	0.763	0.864	0.679
PW3: Living in Danang was rewarding to me in many ways that I feel much better about things and myself.	0.831			
Support for Sustainable Tourism Development (SSTD) - Adopted from Tang [36]				
SSTD1: I would like to participate in Danang in the future.	0.841			
SSTD2: I will try to participate in Danang in the future.	0.825	0.756	0.860	0.672
SSTD3: I will continue to participate in Danang.	0.793			

Table 3. The Fornell Larcker's criterion and HTMT ratio

Fornell & Larcker criterion results							
AVE/R	PSE	SE	POE	ECE	ENE	PW	SSTD
PSE	0.23						
SE	0.269	0.859					
POE	0.226	0.185	0.817				
ECE	0.010	0.084	0.041	0.821			
ENE	0.215	0.175	0.104	0.367	0.838		
PW	0.273	0.426	0.233	0.258	0.328	0.824	
SSTD	0.259	0.269	0.174	0.243	0.234	0.426	0.820
HTMT ratio results							
Construct	PSE	SE	POE	ECE	ENE	PW	SSTD
PSE							
SE	0.339						
POE	0.283	0.224					
ECE	0.090	0.105	0.048				
ENE	0.278	0.210	0.134	0.473			
PW	0.358	0.533	0.279	0.331	0.419		
SSTD	0.341	0.336	0.211	0.314	0.296	0.465	

4.2. Common method bias test

The study checked for common method bias using the "Partial Correlation Procedures – General Factor" approach. A general factor variable was created and linked to the dependent variables in the research model. The results show that the R^2 values of the dependent variables before and after adding the general factor remained almost unchanged, specifically 0.299 and 0.300 for PW, and 0.200 and 0.201 for SSTD. This indicates that common method bias is not present in this study.

4.3. Structural model assessment

The analysis results show that the research model fits the survey data, with the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) at 0.061 (< 0.08) and the normed fit index (NFI) at 0.847 (> 0.8).

Direct effects: The results (Table 4) show that, except for hypotheses H1c and H1e - assessing the effects of POE and ENE on SSTD, which were rejected due to p-values > 0.05 - all other direct relationships were supported (p-value < 0.05). All path coefficients are positive, indicating positive effects.

Indirect effects: The mediation role of residents' well-being (PW) in the relationship between empowerment perceptions and intention to support sustainable tourism development was examined. The criteria for significance included (i) t-value greater than 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level, and (ii) no zero value in the confidence interval. Table 5 shows that all hypotheses regarding indirect effects are statistically supported, except for H4a, which was rejected.

Explanatory power and predictive power assessment: To assess the model's explanatory power, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated. This value measures the proportion of variance in SSTD that can be explained by the components of perceived empowerment and residents' well-being. The R^2 value for SSTD is 0.200, indicating a moderate explanatory level.

Predictive power assessment is crucial for evaluating the model's ability to accurately estimate the latent dependent variable values when applied to new data. In SmartPLS 4.0, the PLSpredict tool supports out-of-sample prediction simulation, using the PLS model to estimate the dependent variable and compare it with benchmark models such as: (i) IA – prediction based on the actual mean value of the target variable in the training set, representing the simplest model; and (ii) LM – prediction from a standard multivariate linear regression model, as a comparator to PLS.

The predictive power indicators include: (i) positive Q^2 values, indicating out-of-sample predictive capability; and (ii) mean error differences, measuring the difference between the PLS model's error and that of IA and LM. Negative values compared to IA indicate PLS outperforms, while values near zero compared to LM indicate similar performance.

The results (Table 6) show that the PLS model has good predictive power in this research context. Specifically, positive Q^2 values for both PW and SSTD (0.263 and 0.146, respectively) indicate the model can predict beyond the training set - a clear sign of predictive capability. Moreover, the PLS model yields lower mean errors than the IA model, with statistically significant differences ($P = 0.000$), confirming that PLS is more accurate than the simple prediction model. Although not superior to the LM model, PLS performs equivalently ($P > 0.05$), indicating the model's stability and suitability for practical application. Thus, it can be concluded that the PLS model ensures both predictive accuracy and high reliability, making it a useful tool for studying behaviors related to dependent variables such as SSTD.

Table 4. Direct Relationships

Hypothesis	relation	Path coefficients	T value	P value	Decision
H1a	PSE \rightarrow SSTD	0.153	2.755	0.006	Supported
H1b	SE \rightarrow SSTD	0.112	1.979	0.048	Supported
H1c	POE \rightarrow SSTD	0.061	1.112	0.266	Unsupported
H1d	ECE \rightarrow SSTD	0.164	3.106	0.002	Supported
H1e	ENE \rightarrow SSTD	0.052	0.918	0.359	Unsupported
H2	PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.191	2.935	0.003	Supported
H3a	PSE \rightarrow PW	0.122	1.972	0.049	Supported
H3b	SE \rightarrow PW	0.327	5.689	0.000	Supported
H3c	POE \rightarrow PW	0.120	2.288	0.022	Supported
H3d	ECE \rightarrow PW	0.164	3.486	0.001	Supported
H3e	ENE \rightarrow PW	0.172	3.227	0.001	Supported

Table 5. Indirect Relationships

Hypot he sis	relation	Path coefficients	T value	P value	Lower bounds (2.5%)	Upper bounds (97.5%)	Decision
H4a	PSE \rightarrow PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.023	1.516	0.130	0.000	0.059	Unsupported
H4b	SE \rightarrow PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.063	2.848	0.004	0.020	0.108	Supported
H4c	POE \rightarrow PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.031	2.702	0.049	0.002	0.054	Supported
H4d	ECE \rightarrow PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.031	2.065	0.039	0.006	0.064	Supported
H4e	ENE \rightarrow PW \rightarrow SSTD	0.033	2.063	0.039	0.007	0.068	Supported

Table 6. Predictive power of the structural model

Construct	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM vs IA		PLS-SEM vs LM	
		Average loss difference	P value	Average loss difference	P value
PW	0.263	-0.128	0.000	0.008	0.369
SSTD	0.146	-0.066	0.000	-0.011	0.187
Overall		-0.097	0.000	-0.002	0.820

5. Conclusion

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study proposes a model to evaluate the relationships between perceived empowerment, residents' well-being, and SSTD. Several key theoretical contributions are highlighted:

First, the research extends the application of SET by integrating psychological (perceived empowerment) and emotional (residents' well-being) factors - important components of the benefit-cost calculus considered by residents - to explain their motivation to support sustainable tourism development. This represents a significant advancement, enriching the traditional SET approach, which has primarily focused on material benefits and costs.

Second, the study adopts the RETS 2.0 scale, which encompasses five dimensions of empowerment (psychological, social, political, economic, environmental), thereby refining the measurement framework for empowerment in sustainable tourism. The findings confirm the multidimensional role of empowerment in influencing both well-being and support among residents. Notably, psychological, social, and economic empowerment perceptions have significant positive effects on support for sustainable tourism, consistent with prior studies such as Boley [22] and Strzelecka [30]. This suggests that when residents perceive both tangible and intangible benefits - such as cultural appreciation, strong community connections, and economic gains - they are more likely to actively support sustainable development. However, unlike some previous studies [31, 49], political and environmental empowerment did not have a significant direct effect on support, reflecting the reality in Da Nang where residents may not yet perceive clear benefits from political decisions or environmental protection related to tourism.

Third, in contrast to much existing research that has focused mainly on economic, social, or political factors, this study emphasizes the role of residents' well-being as a key psychological and emotional determinant. The results align with recent work by Demirović Bajrami [10] and Tam [54], and further expand the literature by measuring well-being from both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives, including fulfillment and life satisfaction. This underscores that improving quality of life is not only about increasing income or material benefits, but also about enhancing residents' spiritual and emotional experiences (intangible benefits), which in turn foster SSTD.

Fourth, the research deepens understanding of the empowerment-well-being relationship by comprehensively testing all five RETS 2.0 dimensions. Results show that all aspects positively influence well-being, supporting conclusions from Boley [43], Guo [64], and Wang [69]. The

comprehensive application of RETS 2.0 is a notable advancement compared to prior studies that often used only the original three-component RETS. Especially, the demonstrated impact of economic and environmental empowerment on well-being opens a multidimensional approach, integrating economic and environmental protection factors into local community behavioral research - a gap in much of the existing literature.

Fifth, a key contribution is the identification of residents' well-being as a mediator in the relationship between empowerment (except psychological empowerment) and SSTD. This adds to existing models that have largely considered only direct effects or have not clarified the psychological mediation mechanism. Compared to studies such as Eluwole [21] and Chi [74], this research specifies the indirect effects of each empowerment dimension via well-being, clarifying how psychological and emotional factors jointly drive supportive behaviors in the community. The absence of a mediating role for well-being between psychological empowerment and support is also noteworthy, suggesting that psychological empowerment may directly influence support without emotional mediation, and opening avenues for further research on the independence and interaction of empowerment dimensions.

5.2. Practical implications

The findings provide several practical recommendations for DMOs in Da Nang:

First, psychological, social, and economic empowerment all have significant, direct effects on sustainable destination development (SSTD). DMOs should implement programs that enhance residents' self-esteem, confidence, and cultural appreciation, while also promoting community cooperation and improving local income from tourism. For example, skill development workshops, support for local economic initiatives, and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities can be effective. Community-building programs and cultural events also strengthen connections among residents and stakeholders, fostering consensus and commitment to sustainability.

Second, residents' well-being has a clear positive impact on SSTD. DMOs should focus on improving quality of life, enabling residents to experience satisfaction and personal development through tourism. Creating a friendly, safe, and community-oriented tourism environment is essential. Moreover, tourism development should balance economic benefits with residents' long-term social and spiritual values.

Third, although political empowerment and environmental protection do not have direct effects on SSTD, they contribute indirectly through residents' well-being. Therefore, DMOs should establish transparent mechanisms, encourage resident participation in decision-making, and raise awareness of environmental protection and green tourism. Integrating environmental protection with personal benefits can transform responsibilities into motivations for sustainable tourism development. Organizing community forums, conferences, or using online tools for resident input can enhance political empowerment, satisfaction, and consensus in tourism development.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

This study has several limitations. **First**, it focuses on residents involved in tourism activities in Da Nang, so the findings may not fully reflect the cultural, economic, social, and environmental diversity of other regions in Vietnam or internationally. Future research could be conducted in various locations, both within and outside Vietnam, to test the model's applicability and robustness.

Second, while the study extends SET by integrating perceived empowerment and residents' well-being, SET still primarily emphasizes benefit-cost aspects and attitudes, without deeply considering more complex socio-cultural variables, environmental/external factors, or regulatory mechanisms that may influence supportive behavior. Future research could incorporate additional socio-cultural factors, public policy, environmental changes, and individual factors such as values, beliefs, risk perceptions, or regulatory and supervisory mechanisms to provide a more comprehensive explanation of SSTSD behaviors.

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