The Role of Cultural Resources in Sustainable Tourism Management: Evidence from Emerging Tourist Destinations

Rajan.C

Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning), K S Rangasamy College of Technology, Email: rajan@ksrct.ac.in

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Cultural resources are very important as far as the identity of the destination is concerned and in the growth of a sustainable tourism especially in the developing tourist destinations where heritage resources form a major competitive edge. Nevertheless, there is scanty empirical evidence on how cultural resources can be useful in managing sustainable tourism and destination competitiveness. The objective of this research paper is to address the structural association of cultural resource, sustainable practises in tourism management, satisfaction of the tourists, and competitiveness of the destination. Quantitative research design was utilised in the form of structured survey that was conducted on the tourists visiting the selected emerging destinations and 412 valid responses were received. The proposed hypotheses were tested on the basis of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis and the bootstrapping procedures of the proposed hypothesis analysis. According to the results, cultural resources play a significant role in the management of sustainable tourism ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$) and destination image ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$). There are also positive impacts of sustainable tourism management on tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$)and destination competitiveness ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$). The predicted model has significant explanatory power, and the R^2 of sustainable tourism management and destination competitiveness are 0.58 and 0.62 respectively. The results justify the Resource-Based View since they verify cultural resources as strategic amenities that precipitate sustainable and competitive development of the destination. This paper has added to the theoretical body of knowledge by incorporating the cultural resource management into the models of sustainable tourism and provided practical implications to the destination managers and policymakers who want to create long-term competitiveness based on the policies that are culturally based in terms of sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key pillars of tourism development, especially in the emerging tourist destinations, is cultural resources whereby they look to create a unique identity in the ever competitive global market. Physical heritage sites, including monuments, historical buildings, archaeological relics, and the intangible aspects of heritage including traditions, festivals, performing arts, and local customs, have an important impact on destination attraction and visitor participation. Cultural tourism has emerged as a necessary mechanism by which the destinations distinguish themselves as well as augment the tourist experience [11], [13]. The successful and sustainable management of cultural resources is of vital importance to help bring the emerging economies to compete and be competitive in the

long-term as they gain more and more based on such factors as cultural capital, which can drive growth through tourism.

The use of cultural resources in the management structures of sustainable tourism has been experiencing increased academic interest. Sustainable tourism is focused on adopting a balanced practise that will ensure environmental preservation, socio-cultural maintenance and economic sustainability simultaneously [3], [12]. When managed professionally and appropriately, cultural heritage has the potential to empower the community, further the local identity, and improve the advocacy of tourists towards the development of tourism among residents [5], [6]. The quality of governance as well as institutional frameworks have been instrumental in ensuring policy development is geared towards sustainability

intention so that policy failure is minimised and that adaptive management approaches can be ensured [3], [5]. Moreover, increasing focus on the sustainability indicators in accordance with the global development agendas has supported the necessity of systematic review of the tourism performance and cultural resources conservation over the long-term period [7]. Under this, the cultural assets are not just the attractions but strategic resources that can create sustainable value when incorporated in overall management systems.

The relationship between destination performance and cultural resources is enhanced further due to the tourist engagement and outcomes of tourist behaviour. The enjoyable cultural tourism moments add to satisfaction, loyalty, and value co-creation, which eventually lead to destination competitiveness [8], [11]. Nevertheless, tourism systems are still susceptible to environmental issues, climate related risks and external disturbances, which explains the need to have systematic sustainability oriented administration frameworks [9], [10]. Although previous studies have conducted studies on different dimensions of cultural tourism and sustainability separately, there is disjointed empirical evidence on the structural relationships of the relationships existing between cultural resources, sustainable tourism management and destination competitiveness.

There is dissenting soundness in the insufficient incorporation of the advanced quantitative approaches, especially, the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to confirm the causal paths of the relationships between cultural assets and sustainable tourism outcomes. Despite the fact that SEM has been strongly defined as an effective approach of testing sophisticated theoretical framework in the study of hospitality and tourism literature [1], it has not been applied in studying culture-inspired sustainability frameworks in emerging destinations. This exclusion limits theoretical innovation as well as evidence-based policy making particularly in areas where cultural resources are most used as major tourism resources.

Consequently, the aim of this research is to analyse the structural relations existing between cultural resources, sustainable tourism management practises and destination competitiveness in emerging tourist destinations under SEM. This study aims to establish how much cultural resources can determine the sustainability-oriented management strategies and the subsequent promotion of performance of destinations. The study can inform the tourism, culture and management literature by empirically confirming these connexions by applying the

resource-based viewpoints to the area of sustainable cultural tourism and enhance the research methodology by using SEM [1], prompted by calls to conduct research on sustainability using indicators [7], [13]. The results are likely to bring both theoretical elucidation and practical advice to policymakers and destination managers who are struggling to find a way of compromising between heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development in the long term.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

Cultural resources are a focal point in the development of tourism, especially the emergent ones where heritage and identity-based resources may act as the primary differentiators and competitiveness. These sources comprise tangible resources including monuments, architectural sites, landmarks, museums, archaeological locations, and cultural landscapes and intangible resources including traditions, performing arts, rituals, gastronomy, and local traditions. Tangible and intangible heritage interactivity improves the experiential nature of tourism and building a strong sense of attachment with destinations. Studies show that cultural experience is one of the memorable influencing factors on how visitors perceive, feel satisfied with the destination, and their values [11]. Cultural capital offers a distinct strategic advantage which can hardly be matched by other competing destinations and in most emerging economies presents the culture as a core resource to tourism development. Nevertheless, the problem of uncontrolled development of tourism has been noted to result in commodification, loss of authenticity, and degradation of socio-cultural aspects, as scholars are concerned about the need to establish governments focused on sustainability and systemized management systems [3], [5], [13].

Sustainable tourism management allows us to have a model by which the cultural resources could be conserved and at the same time provide some economic and social advantages. The concept of sustainability in tourism is widely defined as multi-dimensional construct whereby the environment, socio-cultural, and economic importance are included [12]. Environmental sustainability plays downplay any ecological footprints, control the number of people visiting as well as preserving heritage sites against overuse and degradation [10]. Socio-cultural sustainability focuses on community involvement, respect to the local identity and equal allocation of benefits and acknowledges residents as the key stakeholders in the development of tourism [6]. The processes of governance and institutional flexibility also have impacts on the sustainability findings, as learning

of the policy and introduction of strategic plans are essential to adjust the increase in tourism with long-term cultural conservation [3]. Economic sustainability is aimed at creating constant income and jobs and being resilient to shocks of the external environment and environmental risks [9]. The modern research has strongly emphasised the fact that quantifiable sustainability metrics in consistency with the more extensive frameworks of development are essential in assessing tourism performance and guaranteeing its sustainability on a long-term basis [7]. Altogether, these attitudes indicate that sustainable tourism management is a mediating power that helps destinations to capitalise responsibly and competitively on cultural resources.

The effective incorporation of the cultural resources into the sustainable management systems is the concept closely associated with the destination competitiveness and growth. A culturally diverse destination helps to have a positive destination image, which is of great importance in explaining the tourist perception and travelling intentions. Authenticity increases the level of experience, resulting in the increased levels of tourist satisfaction and engagement [11]. Satisfaction on the other hand is one of the main determinants of revisit intention and somewhat positive word-of-mouth behaviour which enhances long-term destination performance and positioning in the marketplace [8]. In addition, destinations which incorporate such a sustainability practise within their marketing campaign and management approaches are more likely to gain greater credibility and resiliency, especially in environments that are prone to environmental and economic shocks [9], [10]. A sustainable tourist behaviour also enhances competitiveness through environmental pressure minimization and promoting responsible consumption patterns [4]. Thus, it can be seen that competitiveness does not necessarily emerge as a result of having attractions but rather the strategic fitment between cultural resource and

sustainability principles, and effectiveness in governance.

The hypothesised basis of the research is a combination of Resource- Based View (RBV), Stakeholder Theory, and Sustainable Development Theory to disclose the structural nexus among cultural resources, sustainable tourism management, and destination competitiveness. Resource-Based View assumes that sustainable competitive advantage is based on the valuable, rare, and inimitable resources. Assets that meet these requirements are cultural heritage and identity based assets which can be deployed as strategic resources and get to accumulate long term differentiation when managed well [11], [13]. In this view, sustainable tourism management is an organisational potential which makes destinations turn cultural assets to compete results. The theory of Stakeholder Theory adds value by focusing on the contributions made by residents, tourists, policymakers, and individuals in the economic process of establishing tourism sustainability. The use of institutional collaboration and support by residents is critical to ensuring legitimacy and sustainability in tourism governance in the long term [6], and institutional antecedents determine the results of sustainable heritage development [5]. The Sustainable Development Theory also offers a normative guiding principle that promotes intergenerational equity, environmental protection, and balanced social-economic development and growth justifying the necessity of protecting cultural resources and producing current benefits [7], [12]. It is based on these theoretical points that this research argues a structural model where cultural resources drive the practises of sustainable tourism management which then lead to growing destination competitiveness and development. The combination of RBV, stakeholder involvement and the idea of sustainability offers a holistic phenomenon of how cultural resources can be leveraged in emerging destinations in order to develop in the long-term perspective. Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual interrelationships.

Fig. 1. Proposed Structural Model of Cultural Resources, Sustainable Tourism Management, and Destination Competitiveness in Emerging Tourist Destinations.

3. Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development

The conceptual framework of this paper is based on the argument that the cultural resources serve as strategic resources which are used to shape sustainable tourism operations and eventually destination competitiveness in new tourist destinations. With the help of the Resource-Based View and sustainability-oriented tourism literature, the model suggests Cultural Resources (CR) as the main exogenous factor, which skills Sustainable Tourism Management (STM) and Destination Image (DI), which in turn impact on the satisfaction of Tourists (TS) and Destination Competitiveness (DC). The model will assume that sustainable management practises are considered as a key mechanism through which cultural assets get converted into competitive advantages. Figure 1 shows how the proposed constructs relate to each other.

Cultural Resources can denote tangible and intangible past features that are encompassed within a destination e.g. monuments, historic buildings, traditions, festivals, local identity and cultural manifestations. These assets are part of destination authenticity and differentiation which is the foundation of tourism appeal. Sustainable Tourism Management refers to use of environmental friendly practises, socio-cultural conservation programmes as well as economically viable tourism policies that guarantee sustainable development. Destination Image is the overall sensation and opinion of tourists about a given destination whose perception is formed by the endeavours of sustainability and cultural identity. Tourist Satisfaction refers to the evaluative reaction of visitors to their destination experience whereas Destination Competitiveness refers to how a destination is able to appear attractive to the visitors by attracting them to the destinations, building loyalty and maintaining economic performance in the long term.

The initial hypothesised association is that there is a strong role played by Cultural Resources in Sustainable Tourism Management. Cultural heritage destinations receive more awareness of putting up systematic preservation policies, community-led policies, and sustainability-driven management systems to ensure that such wealth resources are not squandered. Cultural resources require proper management to avoid degradation and commodification thus promote environmental and socio-cultural sustainable practises. Hypothesis: thus, it is hypothesised:

H1: Cultural Resources positively change Sustainable Tourism Management.

Destination Image is also supposed to be influenced by Cultural Resources. The true heritage, difference, and cultural colourful expressions improve the perception of tourists and develop a specific brand image. Culturally enriched destination is perceived to be more appealing, real, and significant which reaffirms its image in the touristic market. To this effect, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Cultural Resources have a positive impact on Destination Image.

It is further argued that Sustainable Tourism Management increases the Tourist Satisfaction. Tourists will have a stronger level of comfort, trust, and perceived value when the environmentally friendly policy is used and cultural integrity is preserved, as well as when the destination offers an equitable quality of its services. The sustainability measures portend good governance and commitment to long-term sustainability in responsibly managing tourism that benefits the experiences of the visitors. In this way, the third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Sustainable Tourism Management has a positive impact on the Tourist Satisfaction.

Tourist Satisfaction has been established to be a direct indicator of Destination Competitiveness. Satisfied customers will tend to revisit, refer their friends and family to the destination and do positive word-of-mouth marketing hence, reinforcing competitive positioning and performance. Loyalty and long term stability of demand is strengthened by high levels of satisfaction. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is the following one:

H4: Destination Competitiveness has a positive impact on Tourist Satisfaction.

Lastly, this paper gives a mediating theory in which Sustainable Tourism Management can be seen as a mediator between Cultural Resources and Destination Competitiveness. Although cultural assets have a direct influence on attractiveness, their effects in competitiveness are enhanced when the management of assets is done strategically using sustainability-oriented initiatives. Good management will provide preservation of resources, improved experiences of the visitors, and destination credibility. Therefore, the formulated hypothesis is the following:

H5: Sustainable Tourism Management mediation between Cultural Resources and Destination Competitiveness.

Combining these hypotheses, a structural model where cultural resources are the backbone assets, sustainable tourism management is an important strategic ability, and the consumer of tourist products competitiveness is the tourist satisfaction was created. The framework proposed offers a synthesised approach to discussing how the emergent destinations can use the cultural heritage in the framework of the system of

sustainability-oriented management in order to gain the competitiveness and grow in the long-term.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the selected study is qualitative research design to empirically test the structural relations between cultural resources, sustainable tourism management, and destination competitiveness in the emerging tourist destinations. The study used a cross-sectional survey as the data collection method to obtain primary information among the tourists visiting some of the emerging destinations with strong cultural heritage sites as well as rapidly developing tourism destinations. The quantitative method was deemed suitable, as the research has the objective of testing theoretically based hypotheses, using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), as well as to be able to estimate the causal connexions between various latent constructs in one analysis package.

The data samples were in the form of visitors to the emerging tourist locations known to have both tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources. The sampling method that was used was non-probability convenience, because of the availability factors and the dynamisms of the tourist populations. The respondents were selected in big tourist attractions, heritage sites, and tourism service zones. To guarantee statistical sufficiency of SEM analysis, the sample size was calculated with a reference to the suggested recommendations of structural modelling that recommend a minimum amount of 10 times the largest amount of structural paths directed at each construct in the model. Based on these suggestions

and sufficient statistic power, 450 questionnaires were administered, and 412 valid responses received after screening of data on completeness and outliers. This is a robust sample size to do the analysis of the SEM and can provide good estimation of the parameters.

The measurement tool was created based on the validated scales that were founded on the previous tourism and sustainability research. Constructs were all operationalized as reflective latent variables that were measured on multi pointers. Cultural Resources were measured by using items that comprised perceptions of tangible heritage, intangible expressions of culture and identification with a community. Environmental sustainable practises, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability plans were part of Sustainable Tourism Management. The measured criteria were Destination Image, Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Competitiveness, which are developed indicators of tourism performance based on perception, evaluative experience and competitive positioning. The perceptions and attitudes of respondents were aimed at by a five point Likert scale in which 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) served. The questionnaire was piloted on 30 respondents and then reviewed by an expert to determine the questionnaire in question and its clarity, reliability, and construct validity. Minor changes in wording have been done so as to enhance the understand ability as well as contextual relevance.

Table 1 indicates the operational definition of the constructs, items measurement and scale adaptation source utilised in the research.

Table 1. Measurement Constructs, Number of Items, and Source References

Construct	Number of Items	Source References
Cultural Resources (CR)	6	Seyfi et al. (2020) [11]; Zubiaga et al. (2024) [13]
Sustainable Tourism Management (STM)	8	Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023) [7]; Torres-Delgado & Palomeque (2014) [12]
Destination Image (DI)	4	Rather et al. (2022) [8]; Seyfi et al. (2020) [11]
Tourist Satisfaction (TS)	4	Juvan &Dolnicar (2016) [4]; Rather et al. (2022) [8]
Destination Competitiveness (DC)	5	Nunkoo & Gursoy (2012) [6]; Rosselló et al. (2020) [9]

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the proposed relationships. Because of the predictive nature of the research and the exploratory counterpart of cultural resources integration into the sustainability models, the eyes were on the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) as the main analytical approach. PLS-SEM is especially

applicable in complex models, non-normal form of data, and predictive research scenarios. A mean of standards was performed through the SmartPLS software. The evaluation process was conducted in a two-step methodology; evaluation of the measurement (reliability and validity) model and evaluation of the structural (path coefficients, explanatory power and predictive relevance)

model. A test of the statistical significance of the path coefficients and mediation effects was performed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. This resampling tool makes parameter estimation stronger, and has confidence interval to a hypothesis. Methodological approach of the aforementioned research provides the statistical integrity, dependability, and validity of the statistical investigation of the role of cultural resources in the sustainable tourism management systems. The combination of verified measurement tools and superior SEM analysis creates a strong empirical basis of the intended conceptual framework, which the study has to validate.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structural Equation Modelling was used to conduct the empirical analysis of the proposed relationships between cultural resources, sustainable tourism management and destination competitiveness in emerging tourist destinations. The findings are displayed in a sequential manner including descriptive statistics, measurement model, structural model evaluation and theoretical interpretation of findings. The descriptive statistics will give an overview of the characteristics of the respondents and the central tendency of the constructs of the study. The end sample was obtained as 412 valid answers sampled among tourists visiting emerging destinations where there are either cultural heritage assets. The respondent framework shows that the sample is distributed equally in terms of gender, the 2140 age bracket represents the majority segment with most respondents being well informed and experience based tourist sectors. The descriptive values of the latent measures indicate that Cultural Resources (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.63) and Sustainable Tourism Management (mean = 3.98, SD = 0.67) were rated quite high, which means that the tourists consider the destinations culturally rich and moderately sustainable tourism-based. Other perception scores were high also under Destination Competitiveness (mean = 4.05, SD = 0.59) which showed positive general ratings. A summary of these results is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cultural Resources (CR)	6	4.12	0.63
Sustainable Tourism Management (STM)	8	3.98	0.67
Destination Image (DI)	4	4.05	0.61
Tourist Satisfaction (TS)	4	4.08	0.58
Destination Competitiveness (DC)	5	4.05	0.59

Measurement model was initially tested to assure the reliability and validity then the structural relationships were tested. The reliability was determined at the internal consistency level through Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The constructs all had a better value than the suggested level of 0.70 indicating a satisfying internal consistency. Convergent validity was sure since all loading factors were greater than 0.60 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) factors were greater than 0.50, which means that the indicators represented their constructs well. The FornellLarcker and the HTMT ratio were used to evaluate discriminant validity. The square root of AVEs of each construct was higher than its inter-construct correlation, and all HTMT coefficients were less than the 0.85 cut-off which demonstrated a sufficient level of discriminant validity. The results prove that the measurement model is statistically adequate and fits in hypothesis testing.

Structural model was further analysed to test the hypotheses suggested. The evaluation of collinearity showed that all the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are less than 5, which implies that multicollinearity risk is not an issue. To establish the significance of path coefficients, the significance of the hypothesis test was done through bootstrapping under the resamples of 5,000. Table 3 provides the results saying that the Cultural Resources have a significant impact on Sustainable Tourism Management ($\beta = 0.64$, t = 12.87, $p < 0.001$), which proves H1. H2 is also confirmed because Cultural Resources have a significant impact on Destination Image ($\beta = 0.52$, t = 9.34, $p < 0.001$). Sustainable Tourism Management has a positive impact on the Tourist Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.48$, t = 8.21, $p < 0.001$). In addition, H4 is validated when Tourist Satisfaction positively impacts Destination Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.46$, t = 7.95, $p < 0.001$). The mediation analysis reveals that Sustainable Tourism Management is a partial mediator between Cultural Resources and Destination Competitiveness which upholds H5.

Table 3. Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

| Hypothesis	Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Cultural Resources → Sustainable Tourism Management	0.64	12.87	< 0.001	Supported
H2	Cultural Resources → Destination Image	0.52	9.34	< 0.001	Supported
H3	Sustainable Tourism Management → Tourist Satisfaction	0.48	8.21	< 0.001	Supported
H4	Tourist Satisfaction → Destination Competitiveness	0.46	7.95	< 0.001	Supported
H5	Cultural Resources → Destination Competitiveness (via STM, indirect effect)	0.29	5.76	< 0.001	Supported

The magnitude and significance of path coefficients are visually illustrated in (**Figure 2**), which presents the bootstrapping results and comparative strength of structural paths.
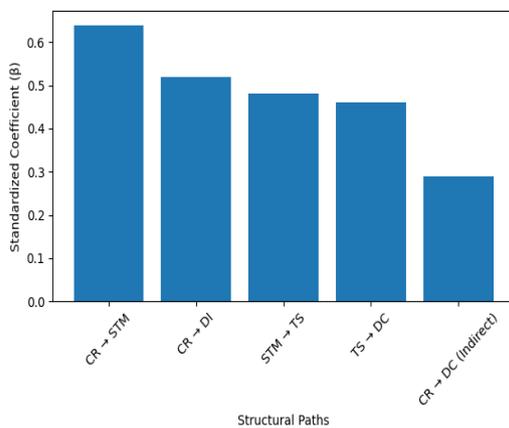
Fig. 2. Bootstrapping path significance and standardized coefficients.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the explanatory power of the model. The model showed a moderate explanatory power as the value of (R^2) was 0.58 under the Sustainable Tourism Management and a moderate power to predict since (R^2) was 0.49 under Tourist Satisfaction. Destination Competitiveness has obtained a strong (R^2) of 0.62, indicating that it is good in terms of its explanatory power. These values show that the model is useful in explaining differences in major endogenous constructs. All the values of predictive relevance (Q^2) were again above zero which asserted that the model has sufficient predictive power. Effect size (f^2) analysis also was used to investigate the extent of influence of constructs. Cultural Resources had a large effect on Sustainable Tourism Management whereas a medium effect was shown on Sustainable Tourism Management on Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Competitiveness on Tourist Satisfaction. The following findings are summarised as (Figure 2) that allows the visual

comparison of the relative effect sizes of the structural relationships.
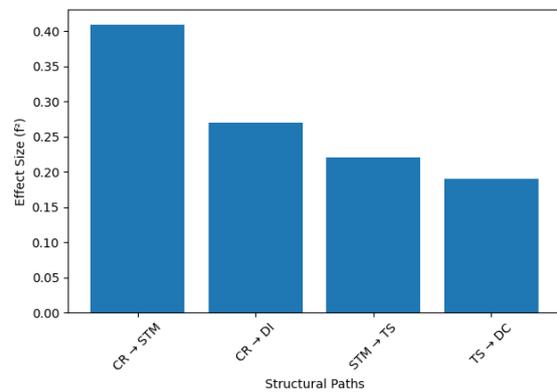
Fig. 3. Effect size (f^2) comparison among structural paths.

The results of the conducted research hold valuable theoretical and managerial implications. To start with, the findings substantiate the assumptions of the Resource-Based View, that cultural resources can be used as sources of strategic value that can spur sustainability-oriented tourism management. The assets that are based on cultural heritage and identity are a more competitive advantage when they are managed well in organised sustainability systems. Second, the mediation position of Sustainable Tourism Management points out that alone cultural resources do not produce competitiveness such that strategic and responsible management practises accentuate the effect. Third, a positive relationship between Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Competitiveness goes in line with the existing studies on tourism which have highlighted the significance of experiential quality and loyalty as predictors of long term development. The findings also serve as extensions of the past literature in cultural tourism and sustainability including the empirical testing of the structural links between cultural assets, cultural tourism management practise, and competitive

performance based on SEM. The results imply that new destinations can benefit themselves by focusing on the concept of integrated sustainability strategies to ensure the cultural resources are not secured at the expense of visitors and their improvement of economic results. Through the integration between cultural conservation and environmental sustainability with social and economic inclusion, the destinations will be able to gain competitiveness over the long-term and become resilient in a more dynamic tourist environment.

6. Practical and Managerial Implications

The results of this research can have a number of implications in the context of the selected destination managers, policymakers, and tourism planners of emerging tourist destinations. First, the considerable impact of the cultural resources on sustainable tourism management implies the need to have systematic cultural resource conservation policies. Destination authorities are supposed to engage in elaborate heritage conservation initiatives that preserve tangible and non-tangible cultural resources. This incorporates historic building renovation, recording of practises in tradition, protection of the festivals and rituals, and putting up of regulatory structures to curb over-commercialization and loss of authenticity. Ecotourism surveillance systems like visitor management, environmental management, and cultural sensitive tourism policies are needed to make sure that cultural resources are sustainable to the future generation that will keep benefiting the society economically.

Second, it highlights the critical role of community involvement in the tourism planning and decision-making processes because of sustainable tourism management. Cultural identity is kept within the local communities which are the most important agents in ensuring authenticity. This means that participatory models of governance must be embraced in the process of getting residents to participate in tourism development policies, heritage conservation programmes and in formulating policies. The support to tourism at the local level can be increased through community-based tourism businesses, capacity-building initiatives, and revenue-sharing such that the socio-cultural sustainability can be supported. Through their inclusion as stakeholders, destinations are able to enhance their legitimacy, enhance social cohesion, and make sure that the development of tourism suits the values of a community and long-term sustainability interests.

Third, the existence of positive associations between sustainable management practises and tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness implies the need of the emerging destinations to build sustainability within their branding and marketing plans. Sustainable branding is supposed to focus on genuineness, cultural distinctiveness, responsible tourism behaviours, and environmental amenities. Publication of sustainability promises may boost the tourist image and cultivate the confidence of eco-friendly and culturally aware tourists. In order to distinguish the destination within competitive markets, marketing campaigns ought to emphasise the heritage experiences, local traditions and sustainability efforts. Through the parallelism of cultural preservation and sustainability to form branding, destinations would be in a position to increase visitor loyalty and competitiveness on the long-term basis.

Lastly, the research will offer recommendations of the policy level to the tourism authorities. It is the responsibility of the policymakers to formulate comprehensive cultural tourism policies that would offer a balance between economic growth and environmental and socio-cultural conservation. These involve the setting up of transparent standards of sustainability, adopting a system of monitoring that would be based on the international tourism indicators and framework of fostering partnership systems between the public and the private to promote infrastructure development that would be sustainable. With further financial incentives, grants and a regulatory support on heritage conservation projects, sustainable tourism ecosystems can be enhanced. Moreover, the tourism officials need to invest in information-driven planning and impact assessment frameworks to measure changes in tourism performance and make changes based on these strategies. Through the process of operationalizing the concept of sustainability in the systems of tourism governance, the emerging destinations can leverage cultural resources into competitive advantages that are long-term in nature and balance as well as resilient development. The below is the constructed section of Limitations and Future Research Directions implemented in continuous academic format and in accordance with your abstract and methodology.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this research gives a valuable level of empirical understanding on the nature of the cultural resources role in management of sustainable tourism, it has a number of limitations that can be identified. First, the study is cross-sectional, obtaining the perceptions on tourists at the moment. Although this method is suitable to test the structural relationships with the help of SEM, this approach does not allow seeing the dynamic changes in sustainability practises and

destination competitiveness over time as well as its causality. Tourism systems will continue to change of their own, more so in the emerging destinations where policy reforms, infrastructural development, and market positioning can change at a very fast pace. Future researchers may use longitudinal research designs in order to monitor the cultural resource management and sustainability performance changes over several periods and, thus, provide additional information on long-term impacts and trend development.

Second, the research centres on the identification of new tourist destinations, thus may limit the applicability of the study. Different regions have differences in their cultural, institutional, and governance contexts and the role of the cultural resources in sustainability and competitiveness might also differ based on the socio-economic and political settings. In turn, the findings are supposed to be viewed in the contextual perimeters of the study area. The proposed research might also be extended in the future to a broader geographic area of study because it can be carried out using a comparative multi-country analysis to investigate the validity of the suggested structural relationships in different cultural and institutional contexts. These cross-national comparisons would help in increasing the external validity and also provide widener theoretical insight into sustainable cultural tourism development.

Third, the study is based on self-reported survey data, and it is prone to both the common method bias and to the social desirability bias. There is a likelihood of respondents exaggerating a positive sustainability practises or destination performance because of the subjective interpretation or inclination to respond. In as much as the statistical procedures were used to enhance reliability and validity, there are still limitations inherent with the use of perceptual data. Future studies might combine various sources of data, such as objective measures of performance, observations, or interviews with stakeholders to support each other and minimise the impact of bias.

As far as methodology improvement is concerned, the advantage of future studies can be seen in the use of more advanced methods of analysis. Although PLS-SEM offers good predictive power and can be utilised in complicated structural modelling, such sophisticated methods as multi-group SEM, higher-order modelling of constructs, or longitudinal SEM may enrich the theoretical understanding. Also, the combination of mixed-methods research, where quantitative modelling and qualitative case study (or ethnographic inquiry) would be used, might offer a more contextual insight into cultural preservation practises and community involvement mechanism. Explanatory and predictive capabilities of future

tourism sustainability studies can be further improved with the generation of emerging analytical uses like machine learning-assisted SEM or hybrid predictive models, as well. By overcoming these possible limitations and considering new methodological and contextual aspects, the future studies will be able to develop the theoretical and practical perception of how cultural resources can be utilised in the context of sustainable tourism management and destination competitiveness in various global environments.

CONCLUSION

The present research was done on the use of cultural resources in enhancing sustainable tourism management and destination competitiveness in the emerging tourist destinations by using Structural Equation Modelling. The main goal was to empirically confirm the structural correlations between the cultural resources, sustainable tourism management practises, and tourist satisfaction and destination competitiveness. These results affirm that cultural resources can be discussed as the strategic assets which have a considerable impact on sustainability-focused management practises and make a positive impact on the destination image and visitor satisfaction which, consequently, reinforces the performances of competitiveness. Results of the SEM reliability, validity, and explanatory power is satisfactory that proves the strength of the proposed structural model and the mediator aspect of the sustainable tourism management in the transformation of cultural assets to competitive advantages. The paper combines the Resource-Based View and sustainability-related ideas in a single empirical framework, which makes it an addition to tourism sustainability literature since it offers some evidence-based information about the possibilities of cultural heritage as a significant means toward sustained growth. All in all, these findings highlight the fact that sustainable protection and conservation of cultural resources are more than protection policies but key strategic processes of ensuring destination development, survival and long-term competitiveness in upcoming tourism markets.

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