

A Literature Review of Residents' Empowerment, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Quality of Life

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Abstract: Tourism is a well-known services industry with multidimensional impacts on different stakeholders. Residents as one important stakeholder play important role in the sustainability of tourism. In this regard, residents' empowerment is a critical factor in fostering sustainable tourism development with resulting impacts on their quality of life (QOL). This research carries out a literature review to explain how residents' empowerment plays role in the sustainable tourism development and quality of life. The study's analysis focuses on the articles available in the web of science database to highlight the current status of the knowledge and explore the potential areas for further research. The explored knowledge gaps will provide guidelines for future research. The study concludes by highlighting key findings and offering recommendations for future research in the field.

Keywords: Residents' empowerment, Sustainable tourism development, Quality of life, literature review.

JEL Classification: Z32, R11, Q01, I31

1 Introduction

Tourism serves as a cornerstone of economic development globally, significantly impacting local communities by fostering cultural exchange and generating substantial revenue. This sector is not only a vital source of income but also a catalyst for infrastructure development and job creation. As one of the fastest-growing industries, tourism's economic significance is underscored by its ability to attract foreign investment and stimulate local businesses, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. However, to maximize these benefits while minimizing adverse effects, sustainable tourism practices must be prioritized.

Residents' empowerment is becoming a critical area in the advancement of sustainable tourism. According to Scheyven's (1999), if residents feel empowered, they will support measures that resonate with their ideals and promote the wellbeing of the community. Such empowerment may take economic, social, psychological, and environmental forms, all of which will determine how residents react to and participate in tourism activities.

Studies also show that tourism development aims to incorporate them in decision-making processes when the residents are empowered. To define these facets of citizens' participation in tourism, a measure known as the Resident Empowerment via Tourism Scale (RETS 2.0) has been developed. The scale presents a whole picture of how locals see their participation in tourism (dos Santos et al., 2024) combining psychological and social elements with economic and environmental empowerment. RETS 2.0 claims that predictability of support for sustainable development is much influenced by psychological, economic, and environmental empowerment as well as by other aspects.

The sustainability of tourism development rests on empowering local people. Empowered citizens are more likely to support initiatives that coincide with their ideals and advance the society (Scheyvens, 1999). Empowerment can show up in environmental, psychological, social, and financial spheres, therefore impacting how locals participate in the tourism sector.

Involving in the process of decision making of tourism development makes residents feel empowered. The Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS 2.0) has been developed to measure these dimensions of empowerment effectively. It was pointed out that this scale demonstrates that psychological, economic, and environmental empowerment significantly predict support for sustainable tourism initiatives.

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In the literature, many findings suggest a robust link between residents' empowerment within tourism contexts and improvements in quality of life (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017; Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). It was reported that higher satisfaction levels regarding their community's development trajectory were achieved when residents actively participated in shaping tourism policies. Such satisfaction, most of the time, boosts social bonding, service delivery for the locality, and cultural integrity. Empowered communities can claim ownership over their financial resources and create means for long-term economic stability (Scheyvens, 1999). Economic empowerment ensures that the wealth generated from tourism is equitably distributed among community members rather than concentrated in the hands of external entities (Nguyen et al., 2021). Additionally, environmental empowerment enables residents to engage actively in conserving their natural resources, fostering a sense of responsibility toward their environment (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014).

In this literature review study, our aim is to explore these dynamics by examining existing research on resident empowerment within the context of sustainable tourism development. The results of this research can help enhance our comprehension of the important role that residents serve as stakeholders in the tourism sector and the wider impact on sustainable development strategies worldwide.

2 Research Objectives

The main goal of this literature review is to comprehensively examine the connection between residents' empowerment, sustainable tourism development (STD), and quality of life (QoL). Specifically, this study intends to examine how various aspects of empowerment, including psychological, social, economic, and environmental empowerment, influence residents' participation in decision-making concerning tourism and their support for sustainable tourism development initiatives. By means of an analysis of current literature, this study will highlight areas with knowledge gaps and possible future avenues for research, therefore providing recommendations for legislators and tourist developers to support empowered, sustainable communities.

3 Research Methodology

The research approach employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing a systematic literature review to investigate the existing research on the interplay between residents' empowerment, sustainable tourism development (STD), and quality of life (QoL). Academic articles and studies primarily from the Web of Science database will be the main focus of the review. A structured search strategy will be implemented, using key terms such as "residents' empowerment," "sustainable tourism," "quality of life," and "tourism development." The selection criteria will consist of peer-reviewed articles published within the past 9 years (2015-2024) that specifically address the role of empowerment in tourism contexts. The publication year has been chosen based on the first emergence of relevant peer-reviewed articles starting from 2015. This approach would shed light on the current state of knowledge, identify gaps in the literature, and propose avenues for future research on the role of empowerment in sustainable tourism.

4 Reviewed Literature and Discussions

Using the search function on web of science database the terms “residents' empowerment” and, “sustainable tourism”, and “quality of life” we identified a limited number of research papers. Although this number of studies provides some insight into the relationship between residents' empowerment, sustainable tourism development, and quality of life, the limited results highlight a clear research gap. Further research is needed to deepen the understanding of these connections and their implications for sustainable tourism.

To comprehensively examine the literature, this section will concentrate on three primary aspects of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental sustainability, commonly known as the three spheres of sustainability. These spheres are essential for understanding how residents' empowerment contributes to tourism development while improving their overall quality of life

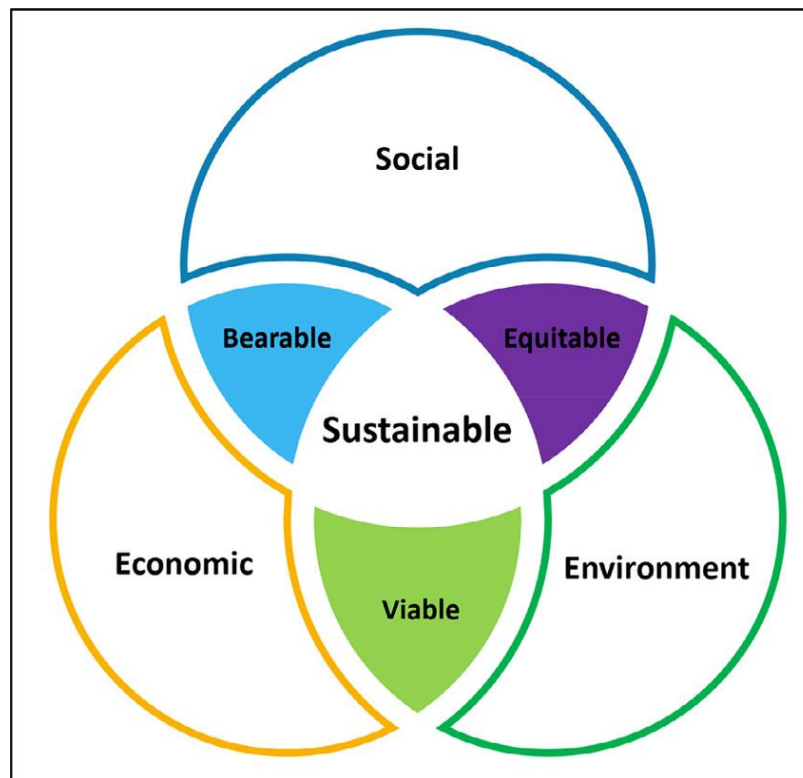
4.1 The Three Spheres of Sustainability in Tourism

Sustainability in the tourism sector is commonly seen through the lens of three interconnected areas: economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Achieving sustainable development in tourism depends on these basic elements, which also have to be in harmony to guarantee long-term success. Table 1 lists the main tourism-related sustainability categories together with their particular goals.

Table 1 Key areas of sustainability in the tourism

Sustainability area	Key objectives
Economic sustainability	Fair profit distribution, job creation, support for local enterprises
Social sustainability	Welfare of residents, preservation of culture, social equality
Welfare of residents, preservation of culture, social equality	Preservation of natural resources, minimizing environmental impact

Understanding the function of empowering citizens in the sustainable tourism development depends on the three sectors' interaction. Figure 1 shows the three areas of sustainability and their junction in the framework of tourism.

Figure 1 The three spheres of sustainability

Source: Blaauw, 2021

4.2 Review of Literature on Residents' Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development

Long-term success and sustainability of tourism development depend on empowering local people. Empowerment in the context of tourism refers to enabling citizens to actively participate in making travel decisions, get equitable benefits from tourist activities, and handle travel-related resources (Berbekova et al., 2023). In addition to improving the social structure of their neighborhoods, empowered citizens help to further goals of sustainable tourist development (STD). With an eye toward the basic elements of empowerment, psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental- this section reviews the body of current research on resident empowerment.

4.2.1 Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment involves enhancing residents' self-esteem, pride, and sense of identity through their involvement in tourism. Literature shows that when residents feel that tourism positively reflects their culture, environment, and heritage, they experience an increased sense of pride and belonging (Scheyvens, 1999). Tourists' appreciation of local traditions can elevate residents' perception of their community's cultural significance, leading to

higher levels of psychological well-being (Boley & McGehee, 2014). This sense of pride also fosters stronger support for sustainable tourism, as residents feel personally invested in maintaining their cultural and natural resources for future generations (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014).

Psychological empowerment is improving residents' self-esteem, pride, and feeling of identity by means of their tourism involvement. Studies of literature reveal that people feel more pride and belonging when they believe that travel reflects their culture, surroundings, and legacy (Scheyvens, 1999). The appreciation of local customs by tourists might improve the view of the cultural value of their neighborhood, so promoting greater psychological well-being among the people (Boley & McGehee, 2014).

However, psychological empowerment is not automatic; it requires that tourism be developed in a way that genuinely involves and benefits the local population. If tourism is perceived as exploitative or if it commodifies local culture in ways that are inauthentic, residents may experience psychological disempowerment, leading to negative attitudes towards tourism (Li et al., 2022).

4.2.2 Social Empowerment

Social empowerment refers to the strengthening of community ties and social cohesion through tourism activities. Socially empowered communities are more likely to engage collectively in tourism planning and decision-making, which enhances their ability to address common challenges and share in the benefits of tourism (Boley & McGehee, 2014). Tourism, when managed sustainably, can create opportunities for community members to interact with each other and with tourists in meaningful ways. This fosters mutual respect and understanding, both within the community and with visitors (Strzelecka et al., 2017). Research on local citizens' satisfaction of sustainable tourism development revealed different degrees of satisfaction with environmental, socio-cultural, and economic elements of tourism. The results showed a considerable positive association between these elements, therefore underlining their major influence on the development of sustainable tourism (Tiwari et al., 2021).

Since social empowerment develops resilience in communities, the literature strongly supports that it is a necessary component of sustainable tourism. Those who feel socially empowered are more suited to handle challenges posed by tourism including controlling tourist influxes, safeguarding of cultural legacy, and guaranteeing fair distribution of benefits (Nguyen et al., 2021). On the other hand, tourism that promotes some groups or individuals at the expense of others, hence creating social divisions, can result in social disempowerment and disappointment inside the society.

4.2.3 Political Empowerment

Political empowerment pertains to the voice that residents have in tourism governance and decision-making. Literature emphasizes that local community involvement in tourist planning is crucial to guarantee that the development of a destination aligns with the needs and expectations of its citizens (Timothy, 2007). Tourism policies and initiatives that consider community needs are more successful when approached from a politically empowered perspective, as this directly influences tourism outcomes (Ramos & Prideaux). A study on Cyprus' tourism policy suggests that an 'inside-out' planning approach, focused on the kind of development locals desire, can enhance residents' quality of life and foster socio-cultural revitalization. Shifting from 'top-down' bureaucratic processes to 'bottom-up' decision-making can empower residents to take an active role in tourism planning, promoting local prosperity (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016)

As pointed out by Scheyvens (1999), political empowerment enables residents to influence how tourism is managed in their communities including decisions related to land use, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation. Exclusion of residents from these processes might result in political disempowerment, therefore influencing community resistance against tourism initiatives. Thus, political empowerment is absolutely essential to guarantee that tourism is grown in a fair, inclusive, and in line with long-term objectives of the community.

4.2.4 Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is one of the most frequently discussed dimensions of residents' empowerment in tourism literature. It refers to the ability of residents to benefit financially from tourism, whether through employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, or revenue-sharing schemes (Scheyvens, 1999). When tourism is economically empowering, it leads to higher household incomes, improved living standards, and reduced economic inequality within communities (Nguyen et al., 2021).

The literature also highlights the uneven distribution of economic empowerment in the tourism sector. The economic benefits of tourists are often felt by foreign investors or elites, while locals don't see much of an impact. This lack of economic power can make people angry and resistant to tourists (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). Local people should be able to fully participate in the tourism value chain and have a lot of economic possibilities thanks to sustainable tourism. An importance-performance analysis (IPA) study of how residents felt about sustainable tourism initiatives (STIs) found that while residents in different regions gave these initiatives high marks, their opinions on how well they worked changed depending on how much emphasis was put on sustainable tourism in strategic plans (Boley et al., 2017). This shows how important strategic planning is for changing how locals think about and participate in sustainable tourism.

4.2.5 Environmental Empowerment

Environmental empowerment is the ability of residents to help to preserve and manage their own natural resources. Since local communities are often the main protectors of the natural and cultural heritage that tourism depends on, effective sustainable tourism development calls for active participation of these local communities in preserving their environment (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014; Falatoonitoosi et al., 2022). Environmentally empowered communities are more likely to adopt sustainable practices including ecotourism, which aims to strike a balance between environmental preservation and economic development (Scheyvens & Van der Watt, 2021). A conceptual model by Boley (2015) advocates balancing tourism's positive contributions (handprint) with its environmental impacts (footprint) alongside rising concerns about the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the industry and their effect on climate change. This approach underlines that while reducing GHG emissions, sustainable tourism should maximize benefits for residents' quality of life, cultural legacy, and economics (Boley, 2015).

Studies show that environmental empowerment is especially important in delicate areas like coastal or island communities where tourism can have a significant impact on the surroundings. By means of sustainable tourism management, people may guarantee that the growth of tourism does not compromise the natural resources sustaining their livelihoods (Strzelecka et al., 2017).

4.2.6 Integration of Empowerment Dimensions in Sustainable Tourism Development

Empowerment in the tourism industry encompasses numerous aspects, including psychological, social, political, economic, environmental, and psychological ones, all of which have functions in advancing sustainable development of travel. According past studies, empowerment guarantees fair distribution of tourism benefits, increases community involvement, and promotes resilience. People who feel empowered in these areas are more likely to support sustainable tourism projects and actively engage in tourist management (Boley & McGehee, 2014).

5 Results and Discussion

The studies conducted by dos Santos et al. (2024) and Gautam & Bhalla (2024) taken together offer a comprehensive knowledge of the links between tourist involvement, resident empowerment, quality of life (QoL), and support of sustainable tourism development (STD). Both research assessed several facets of empowerment - psychological, social, and political - and their effects on people's views toward tourism using the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (REts 2.0). Hu et al. (2022) highlighted the unique challenges faced by community empowerment in government-controlled heritage sites, such as disempowerment in political and economic aspects. The study proposed a comprehensive framework incorporating systemic, informational, and educational empowerment to address these challenges, offering valuable insights for sustainable tourism development in similar contexts.

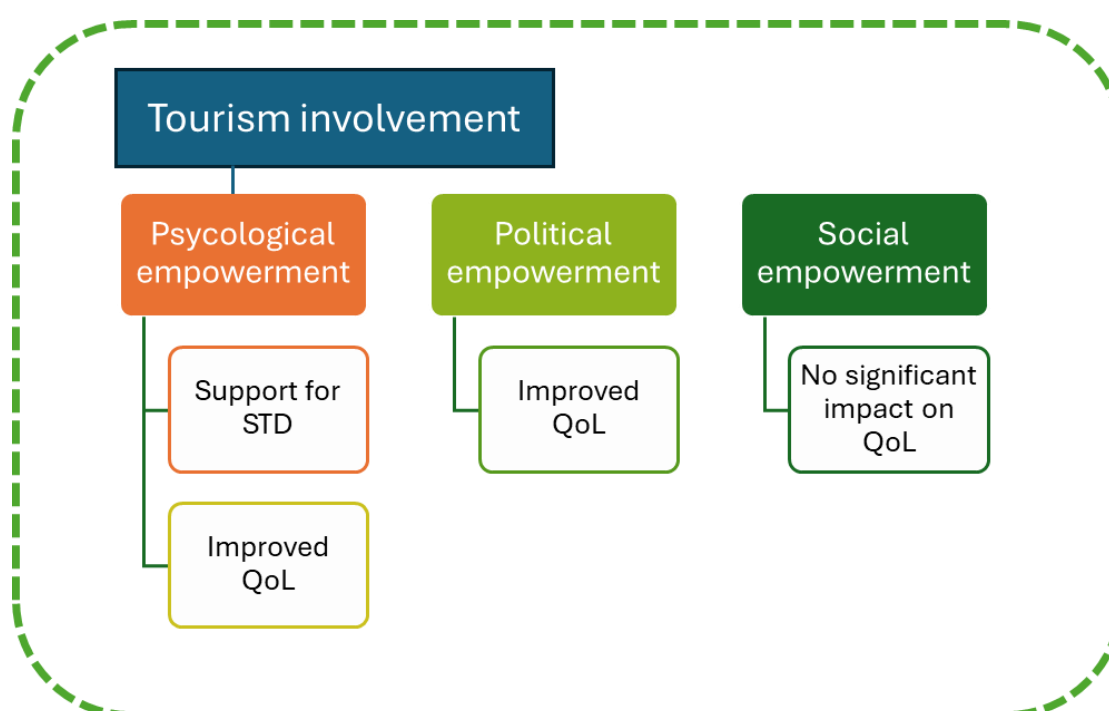
Gautam and Bhalla's study revealed that residents' psychological and political empowerment significantly increases through active engagement in tourism. Psychological empowerment emerged as the primary factor influencing the endorsement of sustainable tourism initiatives. The study also indicated that political empowerment strongly affects residents' quality of life, suggesting that feeling represented and having a voice in decision-making processes leads to enhanced overall satisfaction. However, no statistically significant relationship was found between social empowerment and quality of life outcomes.

Similarly, dos Santos and colleagues stressed that residents' involvement in tourism positively affects their psychological, social, and political empowerment. Their findings supported the idea that psychological empowerment is crucial for garnering support for sustainable tourism practices. The research overall emphasizes that empowered residents are more likely to advocate for sustainable tourism growth, which positively contributes to their communities and enhances their overall quality of life.

Khalid et al. (2019) demonstrated that community empowerment significantly influences sustainable tourism development through the mediating role of community support for tourism. Their findings underscore the importance of fostering positive attitudes and active participation among residents to ensure the success of tourism initiatives. The significance of destination management organizations focusing on empowering residents, particularly in psychological and political aspects, is highlighted in both studies, with the aim of gaining increased support for sustainable tourism practices. These findings indicate that empowering local communities is essential for realizing sustainable tourism objectives and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits among residents. In summary, these results underscore the importance of understanding the impact of tourism participation on resident empowerment and how this empowerment can contribute to improved quality of life and greater support for sustainable tourism efforts.

In Figure 2, one can observe the impact of tourism involvement on residents' empowerment, quality of life (QoL), and support for sustainable tourism development (STD), as evidenced in the research conducted by dos Santos et al. (2024) and Gautam & Bhalla (2024).

Figure 2 Influence of tourism involvement on residents' empowerment, quality of life (QoL), and support for sustainable tourism development (STD)



6 Future Implications and Conclusion

6.1 Future Implications

The exploration of existing research on the empowerment of residents, the development of sustainable tourism, and the quality of life has revealed numerous areas that require additional investigation. Understanding these dimensions is vital for both academic research and policy formulation. The following implications provide a roadmap for future research and practical applications:

Most studies on residents' empowerment and sustainable tourism have focused on developed countries or specific regions. Future research should prioritize exploring empowerment in developing countries, particularly in tourism-dependent regions where residents' livelihoods are closely tied to tourism. This will help address how cultural, economic, and political contexts affect the empowerment process and the success of sustainable tourism initiatives. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions and cultural contexts will provide a more nuanced understanding of how empowerment manifests and its impacts on tourism development.

While there is a robust link between empowerment and improved QoL, longitudinal studies are needed to assess whether the benefits of empowerment are sustained over time. Such studies could investigate whether the positive effects of empowerment persist, or if they diminish once initial tourism projects mature. Longitudinal research would provide insights into how the long-term involvement of residents in tourism decision-making continues to impact their QoL and support for sustainable tourism.

The literature suggests that political and environmental empowerment are critical, yet often underexplored, dimensions of residents' involvement in tourism. Future research should focus on how political empowerment through inclusive governance and decision-making processes affects residents' support for tourism projects. Similarly, environmental empowerment, which involves residents actively participating in the preservation and management of natural resources, deserves more attention in relation to its role in fostering sustainable tourism.

Policymakers should use the insights gained from empowerment studies to create more inclusive tourism frameworks. Policies that focus on equitable benefit-sharing, capacity-building, and community engagement will enhance residents' roles in tourism development. Empowerment should be integrated into national and regional tourism policies, emphasizing the importance of involving local communities at every stage of the tourism planning process. Governments and tourism developers should prioritize community-based tourism models, which ensure that tourism benefits are distributed fairly and residents have control over how tourism impacts their lives and environment.

6.2 Conclusion

The concept of residents' empowerment has emerged as a cornerstone of sustainable tourism development (STD). This literature review has demonstrated that empowerment is a multi-dimensional process encompassing psychological, social, political, economic, and environmental factors. Each of these dimensions plays a crucial role in determining how residents perceive, engage with, and benefit from tourism activities.

Empowered residents are more likely to support tourism initiatives that align with their values and contribute to the sustainability of their communities. Psychological and social empowerment lead to greater community pride and cohesion, while economic and environmental empowerment ensure that residents benefit financially and have a stake in the conservation of their natural resources. Political empowerment allows residents to have a voice in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and control over tourism development.

The literature consistently demonstrates that residents' empowerment not only enhances their quality of life but also contributes to the long-term success of sustainable tourism initiatives. However, achieving empowerment requires careful planning, inclusive policies, and active community engagement. Empowerment cannot be a passive outcome of tourism; rather, it must be intentionally cultivated through collaborative, community-centered approaches.

Future research and policy must continue to explore ways to deepen residents' empowerment, particularly in developing regions, where tourism often has the potential to drive significant economic and social change. By focusing on the empowerment of local communities, tourism can become a powerful tool for sustainable development, benefiting both residents and the broader environment in which they live.

In conclusion, the empowerment of residents is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for ensuring the sustainability of tourism. As we move toward more responsible and equitable forms of tourism, empowering local communities will be at the heart of creating resilient, inclusive, and environmentally conscious tourism systems.

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