

Revealing how mutual trust, entrepreneurship, local engagement, and policy drive the sustainability of tourism villages

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Abstract

Tourism villages have expanded the discourse on sustainability, providing valuable insights into the fundamental mechanisms for achieving that goal. This study investigates how social capital, local entrepreneurship, stakeholder collaboration, and government policy support, with community empowerment as a mediator, shape the sustainability of tourism villages. A quantitative explanatory research design was employed; survey data from 282 tourism village stakeholders were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings demonstrate social capital and local entrepreneurship as the most influential determinants, followed by stakeholder collaboration and government policy support, which contribute to the sustainability of tourism villages. Community empowerment functions as a predictor and mediator; it acts as a booster mechanism in transmitting the influence of social capital and local entrepreneurship and in bridging the influence of policy support to sustainability outcomes. The study highlights the importance of strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, reinforcing social capital, and promoting collaborative governance mechanisms and effective policy support. This study provides valuable insights into the implementation of driving factors for rural tourism development; enhancing community empowerment is essential to unlock better sustainable tourism village development.

1 Introduction

The tourism village is increasingly seen as strategic for sustainable development; it integrates economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions holistically [1, 2]. Transforming rural areas into tourism areas strengthens the local economy, improves environmental management, and preserves community culture through sustainable management principles [3, 4]. Tourism villages serve as a tool to optimize local potential, reduce regional disparities between villages and cities [5, 6], and support local development to prevent economic accumulation [7].

In tourism villages, communities should be the primary managers of tourism assets; the scheme increases a sense of belonging, local capacity, and socio-ecological resilience [8]. Studies on pro-poor tourism highlight how benefit distribution schemes within CBT strengthen the empowerment of marginalized groups [9]. Studies on rural tourism indicate that the success of tourism development is influenced by resources, institutions, human capital, and community readiness for interaction between locals and visitors [10, 11].

Some studies identify social capital and local entrepreneurship as determinants of sustainability, linked to shared norms, conflict management, coordination, participation, and the creation of authentic products and the exploitation of local resources [12–14]. Stakeholders are important variables in tourism villages; collaboration with communities, businesses, academics, and the private sector is recognized as a prerequisite for the success of sustainable tourism [15]. In addition, empowerment, whether psychological, economic, social, or political, positively correlates with community support for tourism development and sustainability [16].

Previous studies have examined resource management strategies, traditional institutions, community empowerment, stakeholders, livelihoods, and social capital as key factors in sustainable development [17–20]. As a result, a gap remains in understanding the key factors that drive sustainability, particularly the structural relationships among social capital, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and trust. Further studies are urged on these terms, particularly to support rural tourism development; we seek to fill this research gap by proposing empowerment as a mediator.

Overall, social capital, entrepreneurship, trust, and collaboration play a crucial role in shaping a destination's sustainability. However, this gap prompted the researchers to conduct a targeted review of tourism villages. This study poses a simple yet important question: Can social capital, local entrepreneurship, policy support, stakeholder collaboration, and community empowerment shape a sustainable tourism village? We aim to reveal the potential of an integrated theoretical framework regarding these driving factors of village tourism sustainability and design community empowerment as an intervening variable. This research is expected to contribute theoretically and practically to a sustainability-oriented tourism village management model.

2 Literature review

2.1 Sustainability of tourism village

Sustainable tourism is a promising framework adopted in many tourism developments. Theoretically, sustainability emphasizes long-term benefits without sacrificing future generations' benefits. The scheme integrates economic, social, cultural or heritage, and environmental dimensions, as well as sustainability management, into tourism development [21, 22]. Aligned with the crucial dimensions of host culture, sustainability indicators target place-based reality as an objective parameter and serve as the foundation for tourism development [23].

Currently, we have concrete implementations of sustainable tourism, such as community-based tourism, cultural tourism, agrotourism, ecotourism, or integrated protected areas within tourism destinations [24, 25]. Although extensive studies have shown these tourism concepts to provide a positive impression, they also carry long-term caveats. Previous studies have highlighted sustainable tourism as an instrument for driving social development, economic circulation, cultural preservation, environmental conservation, community resilience and empowerment, and destination resilience [9, 26–28].

However, previous research also raises concerns about its implementation. Many tourism developments adopted the label "sustainable"; in practice, they neglect basic sustainability principles. Without ignoring the facts, issues of environmental degradation and pollution, unresolved waste management, social change, unequal distribution of tourism benefits, relocation, land disputes, and cultural commercialisation are growing issues in the tourism industry [29–31]; is the concept of sustainability truly being implemented? However, this situation simultaneously encourages academics to explore potential areas that can further support sustainability.

Scholars link values, ideologies, stakeholder relationships, institutions, policy, entrepreneurship, social capital, and empowerment as factors driving sustainability [32–35]. However, a comprehensive review is crucial for examining indicators that can drive tourism sustainability. However, can this set of factors truly encourage sustainability, especially in the context of rural tourism and its limitations? Although related factors have been extensively tested as drivers of the successful establishment of sustainable tourism, we argue that a "One-Size-Fit-All" approach is inappropriate; geographical, cultural, and socio-economic differences can lead to variations.

We highlight social capital, local entrepreneurship, stakeholder collaboration, government policy, and community empowerment as drivers of sustainable tourism. Examining these factors is crucial, as sustainability emphasises host-community involvement and context-sensitivity [36]. This approach also aligns with the characteristics of rural tourism: the authenticity of the natural environment, resident engagement, hospitality and high levels of social interaction, unique local products, and an agrarian-based economy. Collectively, these factors are expected to reflect the requirements for fostering sustainable rural tourism.

2.2 Theoretical and hypothesis development

Social capital has been recognized as a crucial determinant of tourism development. Social capital is social behavior and cooperation to achieve common goals. It can encourage and influence people's growth and behavior [37]. Social capital enables better institutional functioning, networking, monitoring, evaluation, and innovation, increasing community participation, strengthening coordination, preventing conflict, and fostering a sense of ownership in tourism villages [38, 39]. Furthermore, Social capital contributes to a community's ability to innovate, adapt, and maintain a tourism destination [12].

Previous research has highlighted trust, norms, and networks as elements that shape social capital, manifested through mutual trust, customary and government regulations, social activities, and community service [40]. Furthermore, social capital has been examined as a central mechanism facilitating social trust, networks, and community participation in tourism development; related studies have also identified its potential to serve as an integrated theoretical framework encompassing broader factors [41].

Although social capital has been extensively examined, related studies predominantly frame it as a link connecting factors such as trust, tourism, policy, and networks to shape tourism sustainability. Studies in relevant fields are needed to broaden our understanding of the potential areas that can be supported by the associated variables. We argue that social capital can serve as an initial factor influencing sustainability by strengthening social capacity and community empowerment. Following the review, we propose the hypotheses as follows:

H1 Social capital has a positive influence on sustainability of tourism villages.

H2 Social capital has a positive influence on community empowerment.

Local entrepreneurship plays a central role in the development of tourism villages; business actors act as agents of change, packaging natural and cultural resources into tourism products and value creation [42]. Local entrepreneurship opens up opportunities for communities to engage in tourism and creates a space for community empowerment. Local entrepreneurs also serve to balance economic and social development with ecological support. This approach contrasts with conventional tourism development, which prioritizes capital monopolies, irresponsible resource exploitation, the marginalization of local communities, and a limited scope of tourism's impact [43].

Furthermore, sustainable tourism development and support for local entrepreneurship aim to address issues such as poverty, poor infrastructure, low-quality education, and high unemployment problems often overlooked by conventional businesses [44]. Contemporary studies show that local entrepreneurship drives rural economic diversification, tourism product innovation, destination competitiveness, and community resilience [45–47]. In the context of sustainability, local entrepreneurship has been linked to outcomes such as environmental impact mitigation, infrastructure development, socio-cultural advancement, and stronger collective attitudes [48, 49].

Most tourism entrepreneurs are profit-oriented; however, few studies show that local entrepreneurship can empower and sustain rural tourism. The relationship between local entrepreneurship, community empowerment, and the sustainability of tourism villages requires further empirical studies. We assess that this role has the potential to support sustainability; we propose the following hypothesis for future investigation:

H3 Local entrepreneurship has a positive influence on sustainability of tourism villages.

H4 Local entrepreneurship has a positive influence on community empowerment.

Stakeholder collaboration is crucial to achieving sustainable tourism development; they align with better in managing economic, social, and environmental goals and sustainability, as the community is directly affected by tourism [50]. Two stakeholder models in community-based tourism are internal stakeholders with direct influence within the industry (management groups, hotels, and business actors), and external actors with indirect influence and more likely to be influenced by tourism (local communities and political representatives) [51].

Collaborative relationships facilitate knowledge exchange, build trust, mobilize resources, and support the emergence of innovations for sustainable tourism [52]; these may be overlooked by corporate governance models that prioritize decision-making efficiency and profit. Previous studies emphasize collaboration among actors as a strategic step toward achieving innovation, developing capacities and competencies, and driving a multiplier effect in tourism [53, 54].

Destinations need stakeholders integrated at all levels to support cooperation and coordination. However, corruption, distrust of the government, and a lack of well-organized initiatives remain challenges [55]. In the context of rural tourism, building trust between stakeholder groups is crucial, as

collaborations without a foundation of trust, social and human capital, and adequate supporting elements risk failure [56]. Although collaboration is an important strategy in development, examining perceived collaboration between actors in the context of tourism sustainability needs further attention. Following the review, we proposed the hypotheses as follows:

H5 Stakeholder collaboration has a positive influence on sustainability of tourism villages.

H6 Stakeholder collaboration has a positive influence on community empowerment.

Furthermore, policy support is a strategic approach to development planning that integrates social, cultural, economic, and public participation to achieve long-term development [57]. Tourism policy can be defined as efforts, guidelines, principles, frameworks, and planning for developing services or products for the sustainability of tourism in the future [58]. Previous research advocates policy continuity to address current problems and strengthen the role of local communities, recognizing them as a key pillar in addressing poverty [59, 60]. In the context of sustainable tourism, policies should take a multi-oriented approach; rather than focusing solely on profit, they must weigh impacts on crucial social, cultural, and environmental roles [61].

In the context of this study, policies must serve as development instruments, creating a climate that improves the quality of services and destinations and leverages local potential. Supporting policies must deliver benefits to communities, promote local economic empowerment, and protect their socio-cultural and environmental aspects [62]. Furthermore, policies and stakeholders should be aligned in a single cycle; policies must support multi-stakeholder and multi-institutional collaboration, and stakeholders must implement established policies for better outcomes. Local government must act as a regulator and facilitator, coordinating programs to support linear development [63].

However, sustainable tourism policies are often overlooked during implementation by policymakers, business operators, and local communities alike. The issues are rooted in minimal stakeholder engagement, inadequate financial support, and a lack of sustainability education [64]. Discrepancies between policy and implementation frequently lead to negative impacts, such as environmental degradation, lifestyle changes, and rising crime rates [65]. For further study, we propose the following hypotheses:

H7 Government policy support has a positive influence on sustainability of tourism villages.

H8 Government policy support has a positive influence on community empowerment.

Community empowerment is a multidimensional concept that plays a crucial role in various fields, including sustainable development, health, and community participation. In tourism, empowerment serves as a pathway to enhance management capabilities and innovation and expand opportunities for community participation, resource control, and sustainability in tourism [66]. It is also relevant to enhancing community participation in planning, managing, and distributing the impacts of community-based tourism [67].

Previous studies confirm that empowerment positively impacts destination sustainability by encouraging local community support [68, 69]. Empowerment supports community participation, increases individual self-efficacy, influences social and organizational structures, and strengthens a sense of community, although power dynamics and traditional, exclusive social structures [70]. The effectiveness of empowerment in supporting development is linked to several key elements; it is designed to enhance regenerative tourism, governance, policy, and management [66, 71, 72].

In addition, empowerment elements such as trust and social networks have been shown to positively affect community development and community participation, with community development mediating these relationships [73]. However, we notice that gaps in implementation have not been fully integrated into policy formulation and public service delivery [74]. This study attempts to design an empowerment variable that bridges key aspects such as social capital, entrepreneurship, stakeholders, and policy to achieve sustainability. This study is important for broadening our understanding of sustainability, considering that previous studies have mostly tested social, cultural, and environmental indicators as the basic foundation for sustainability. To achieve this goal, the following hypotheses are for further review:

H9 Community empowerment positively affects sustainability of tourism village.

H10 The effect of social capital on sustainability of tourism village is positively mediated by community empowerment.

H11 The effect of local entrepreneurship on sustainability of tourism village is positively mediated by community empowerment.

H12 The effect of stakeholder collaboration on sustainability of tourism village is positively mediated by community empowerment.

H13 The effect of government policy support on sustainability of tourism village is positively mediated by community empowerment.

3 Methodology

3.1 Study context

A review of sustainability is crucial to rural tourism as a development framework. The study was conducted in tourism villages in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province (NTB), which is one of the leading and priority areas for rural or village tourism and halal tourism development in Indonesia [75]. Lombok Island is located close to Bali Island, one of the world's tourism icons; it facilitates the integration of development and spillover benefits from the high intensity of tourists' visits to Bali. Furthermore, tourism development on Lombok Island has been in the spotlight and has increased rapidly. The beauty of the natural landscape, including mountains and maritime ecosystems, along with support for the development of tourism facilities and amenities, creates a perception of "harmonization

of nature and development”. However, host readiness through the lens of social and managerial capabilities remains a major concern. To address relevant issues, this study examined factors driving the sustainability of tourism villages. Data were collected from stakeholders based on their involvement and knowledge to increase objectivity regarding tourism villages.

3.2 Survey Instrument

This study used a survey method by distributing structured questionnaires to respondents directly involved in the management and development of tourism villages. The research instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of two parts: a respondent identity section and a research statement section that measures latent constructs. Each variable was measured using several indicators adapted from previous literature on community-based tourism, sustainable tourism management, and the social sciences. Social capital has six indicators (SC1 – SC6), local entrepreneurship (LE1 – LE6), stakeholder collaboration (STC1 – STC6), government policy support (GPS1 – GPS6), community empowerment (CE1 – CE6) and sustainability of tourism village has six (STV1 – STV6). All statement items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). We designed the questionnaire in English, then translated it into Indonesian, as it is easier for respondents to understand. Furthermore, we consulted with experts, including academics and rural tourism practitioners, before distributing the instrument, resulting in minor language corrections to improve the accuracy of information delivery. Thus, the questionnaire we distributed was in Indonesian and was designed for ease of understanding for participants. We also included the purpose of the study, a guarantee of data confidentiality, and the principle of voluntary participation.

3.3 Sample and data collection

The population in this study consisted of stakeholders involved in rural tourism management, including Pokdarwis managers, local tourism business actors, village government officials, and community or traditional leaders. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed in person and online. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, with the criteria that they must have been actively involved in tourism village development for at least one year, live in the tourism village area, and understand the program and governance of village tourism development. The sample size was determined following Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) guidelines, considering model stability and statistical power, resulting in 282 respondents.

3.4 Data analysis

The study used a quantitative explanatory approach. We aimed to analyze the influence of social capital, local entrepreneurship, stakeholder collaboration, government policy support, community empowerment, and sustainability of the tourism village. Data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling method with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. SEM-PLS was considered for its ability to accommodate data complexities, complex models, and many indicators, and its tolerance for non-normal data distributions [76]. The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software (version 4.1.1.8). The analysis stages included descriptive statistics, testing the measurement model (outer model) to

ensure construct validity and reliability, and testing the structural model (inner model) to evaluate the hypothesized relationships using bootstrapping at a 5% significance level.

4 Result

4.1 Respondents Demography

The number of respondents in East Lombok Regency was 282, dominated by men (196 respondents, 69.5%), while women (86 respondents, 30.5%). By age, most respondents were in the productive age group: 35–44 years (105 respondents; 37.2%) and 25–34 years (65 respondents; 23.0%) (see Table 1).

Our respondents came from tourism village managers/Pokdarwis (73 respondents; 25.9%), local public figures (61 respondents; 21.6%), village government (58 respondents; 20.6%), and tourism business actors (homestays, culinary, and crafts (57 respondents; 20.2%). 20 respondents in the youth leader group (7.1%), and 13 respondents in other categories (4.6%). In terms of involvement experience, most respondents were relatively new to participating in tourism village development, 114 respondents (40.4%) with < 1 year of involvement and 86 respondents (30.5%) with 1–3 years, while 3–5 years of involvement were recorded by 54 respondents (19.1%) and 28 respondents (9.9%) with > 5 (see Table 1).

Table 1
Distribution of research respondents

Characteristic		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	196	69,5%
	Female	86	30,5%
Age	< 25 years	48	17,0%
	25–34 years	65	23,0%
	35–44 years	105	37,2%
	45–54 years	51	18,1%
	≥ 55 years	13	4,6%
Village Government	Tourism business actors (homestay, culinary, crafts, etc.)	57	20,2%
	Youth figures	20	7,1%
	Tourism village managers / tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis)	73	25,9%
	Village administrator	58	20,6%
	Community or indigenous community figures	61	21,6%
	Others	13	4,6%
Length of Involvement	< 1 year	114	40,4%
	1–3 years	86	30,5%
	3–5 years	54	19,1%
	> 5 years	28	9,9%

4.2 Measurement model evaluation

Evaluation of the measurement model consists of convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity. Convergent validity assesses the significance of the indicator variable using outer loading values greater than 0.7 – those below 0.7 are removed and retested; our study exceeds the threshold. We then evaluate Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR); this study meets the internal consistency with values greater than 0.7. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.5 [77]; all AVE values were above the threshold (see Table 2). The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) with a cutoff of less than 0.9 [78], all meet the criteria (see Table 3). We also present the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Appendix 1 to support the data.

Table 2
Measurement model assessment

Construct/Measurement items	λ	α	rho_A	CR	AVE
Social capital		0,934	0,934	0,948	0,752
SC1: The local community has mutual trust in tourism activities	0,803				
SC2: The local community has a strong and supportive relationship	0,883				
SC3: The local community works together for tourism village development	0,911				
SC4: Information of tourism village activities is spread and understood easily by community.	0,895				
SC5: Local community participates solving tourism village problems	0,873				
SC6: Village internal conflicts can be resolved through local community deliberation	0,833				
Local entrepreneurship		0,979	0,980	0,983	0,906
LE1: local business actors actively seek new opportunities from tourism activities.	0,877				
LE2: Tourism local products and services are innovative.	0,949				
LE3: Local entrepreneurs are willing to try new business ideas	0,910				
LE4: Local business actors promote their products actively	0,986				
LE5: Local business actors keep improving the quality of products and services	0,990				
LE6: Local businesses contribute to the tourism village development	0,994				
Stakeholder collaboration		0,957	0,961	0,966	0,827
STC1: Local tourism managers, government and community often hold meetings together	0,838				
STC2: The tourism village program was planned jointly by various related parties	0,824				
STC3: Local government, business actors and community work together to promote tourism villages	0,873				

Construct/Measurement items	λ	α	rho_A	CR	AVE
STC4: External parties (e.g. tourism offices, educational institutions, NGOs) are involved in tourism village development	0,977				
STC5: Communication between tourism village stakeholders run well	0,956				
STC6: There are clear duties and roles in managing tourism village for each party	0,975				
Government policy support		0,903	0,926	0,926	0,677
GPS1: Local government has clear policies to support tourism villages	0,714				
GPS2: Local government supports tourism villages development through financial assistance	0,781				
GPS3: Local government facilitates training or mentoring for tourism actors and the community	0,849				
GPS4: Local government actively collaborates with the tourism department or other related parties	0,773				
GPS5: Village regulations (perdes/peraturan desa) support environmental and cultural preservation	0,842				
GPS6: Local government promote tourism villages through various media or official activities.	0,956				
Community empowerment		0,950	0,952	0,961	0,803
CE1: The community is involved in planning the tourism village program	0,854				
CE2: The community is involved in decision-making regarding the management of tourist villages.	0,866				
CE3: The community receive training or mentoring for capacity development in the tourism sector.	0,931				
CE4: The local community has equal opportunities involving tourism businesses.	0,898				
CE5: There are direct benefits from tourism villages existence	0,845				
CE6: The community has a sense of ownership of the tourism village.	0,974				
Sustainability of tourism village		0,941	0,943	0,954	0,775
STV1: Tourism in this village provide long-term economic benefits	0,863				

Construct/Measurement items	λ	α	rho_A	CR	AVE
STV2: The tourism villages development considers environment effect	0,858				
STV3: The tourism villages development supports the preservation of local culture.	0,862				
STV4: The tourism villages management considers long-term benefit for future generations	0,884				
STV5: The number of tourists stable or increase annually	0,838				
STV6: This tourism village has a clear long-term development plan.	0,971				

4.3 Structural model evaluation

The structural model evaluation consists of a multicollinearity test (VIF) with the symptom ideally close to 3 or lower, somehow < 5 are acceptable [77]; no multicollinearity in this study (see Table 4). We also assess the model predictive power includes the coefficient of determination (R^2), with a rule of thumb range from 0 to 1 (larger are greater); effect size (f^2), with values 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 depict small-large; RMSE with value comparison – a lower value of PLS-SEM_RMSE to LM_RMSE or PLS-SEM_MAE to LM_MAE indicate high predictive power; and hypothesis testing [77]. Further, this study has moderate and strong R^2 values (community empowerment 0.689 and sustainability of tourism village 0,750); the predictor constructs explain 68.9% and 76.1% of the variance. The f^2 values are small to large effects; we present the values in Table 4. Lastly, the RMSE showed high predictive power (see Appendix 2).

Table 3
Discriminant validity

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)						
Community Empowerment						
Government Policy Support	0,651					
Local Entrepreneurship	0,722	0,547				
Social Capital	0,816	0,713	0,627			
Stakeholder Collaboration	0,650	0,721	0,700	0,680		
Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,851	0,697	0,741	0,813	0,734	1000

Furthermore, we present the hypothesised relationships, path coefficients, and t-statistics or p-values using the bootstrapping technique. We use a one-tailed test with a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$), and the decision-making criteria are H_0 rejected (H_1 is accepted) if the t-statistic > 1.645 and the path

coefficient is positive, or equivalent to a one-tailed p -value < 0.05 , which means the exogenous variable has a significant positive effect on the endogenous variable [79].

Table 4
Results of collinearity statistics (VIF) and model predictive power

Community Empowerment → Sustainability of Tourism Village	VIF	f-square
	3,186	0,166
Government Policy Support → Community Empowerment	2,225	0,020
Government Policy Support → Sustainability of Tourism Village	2,269	0,014
Local Entrepreneurship → Community Empowerment	2,034	0,188
Local Entrepreneurship → Sustainability of Tourism Village	2,417	0,052
Social Capital → Community Empowerment	2,207	0,342
Social Capital → Sustainability of Tourism Village	2,962	0,066
Stakeholder Collaboration → Community Empowerment	2,609	0,000
Stakeholder Collaboration → Sustainability of Tourism Village	2,609	0,033
	R-square	R-square adjusted
Community Empowerment	0,686	0,682
Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,750	0,745

As presented in Table 4, seven of nine hypotheses are supported. Social capital ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < 0.000$) and local entrepreneurship ($\beta = 0.178$, $p < 0.017$) significantly influenced sustainability of the tourism village. Similarly, Social capital ($\beta = 0.487$, $p < 0.000$) and local entrepreneurship ($\beta = 0.347$, $p < 0.000$) significantly influenced community empowerment. Stakeholder collaboration ($\beta = 0.146$, $p < 0.007$) significantly influenced sustainability of the tourism village but did not significantly affect community empowerment ($\beta = -0.005$, $p < 0.937$). In contrast, government policy support ($\beta = 0.090$, $p < 0.071$) was not statistically significant for sustainability of the tourism village; it significantly influenced community empowerment ($\beta = 0.117$, $p < 0.034$). Further, community empowerment ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.000$) had a strong positive effect on sustainability of the tourism village.

4.4 Mediation effect

In Fig. 1, community empowerment, as a mediator, links social capital, local entrepreneurship, stakeholder collaboration, and government policy support to sustainability of tourism village. We followed Zhao et al. (2010) evaluation procedure; interval values exclude zero.

Three of four hypotheses were supported: community empowerment significantly mediated social capital ($p < 0.000$, BCa CI [0,096, 0,291]), local entrepreneurship ($p < 0.000$, BCa CI [0,068, 0,203]), and

government support policy ($p < 0.045$, BCa CI [0,007, 0,091]) on sustainability of tourism village. However, it did not have a significant effect on mediating stakeholder collaboration ($p < 0.937$, BCa CI [-0,047, 0,041]). We present supporting data in Appendix 4 & 5.

Table 5
Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses		Beta	T-statistic	P-values	Decision
Direct effect					
H1	Social Capital → Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,221	3,645	0,000	Supported
H2	Social Capital → Community Empowerment	0,487	7,765	0,000	Supported
H3	Local Entrepreneurship → Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,178	2,381	0,017	Supported
H4	Local Entrepreneurship → Community Empowerment	0,347	5,811	0,000	Supported
H5	Stakeholder Collaboration → Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,146	2,721	0,007	Supported
H6	Stakeholder Collaboration → Community Empowerment	-0,005	0,079	0,937	Not Supported
H7	Government Policy Support → Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,090	1,805	0,071	Not Supported
H8	Government Policy Support → Community Empowerment	0,117	2,125	0,034	Supported
H9	Community Empowerment → Sustainability of Tourism Village	0,364	4,859	0,000	Supported

5 Discussion

The present study shows strong explanatory and predictive power for sustainability of tourism villages. This study indicates that variables such as social capital, local entrepreneurship, stakeholder collaboration, government policy support, and community empowerment can predict at least 75.0% of tourism village sustainability. Although each has its own role, these factors are closely related; sustainability goals are more likely to be achieved by linking all factors.

Within the framework of tourism sustainability, its implementation is reflected in social capital through participation, networks, shared norms, conflict prevention, sense of belonging, collective control, and increased adaptability in managing tourism villages. Furthermore, local entrepreneurship significantly impacts this study. The ability to utilise natural resources and cultural authenticity to create valuable tourism products, expand multiple services, and maintain authentic attractions is a key core in these

terms. Local entrepreneurship contributes to economic opportunities and capacity and skills development; it encourages economic diversification, innovation, competitiveness, and resilience [46]. These two variables are the most dominant attributes in boosting the sustainability of tourism villages, both through direct and indirect influence, while also strengthening the role of community empowerment.

Actors' collaboration facilitates the achievement of sustainability goals. Our findings support Mandić et al. (2024), which argues that roles, collaboration, knowledge exchange, and resource mobilisation strengthen sustainability initiatives through collaboration. However, it may not necessarily lead to community empowerment, let alone to distrust of government, unequal power relations, and a lack of organized initiatives [82]. Our findings reaffirm that collaboration among actors does not statistically significantly impact community empowerment, but it has the potential to undermine it. These findings also indicate that actor partnerships within Lombok's rural tourism ecosystem may not be implemented optimally. However, further study is needed to address this issue.

Furthermore, government policy supports on sustainability of tourism villages variable has no statistically significant effect. However, this is statistically significant through the role of community empowerment as a mediator. These findings can be interpreted theoretically as public policies, regulations, facilitation programs, and integrated development and tourism village development planning cannot be carried out in isolation. Policy support for the sustainability of tourism villages should be channeled into an empowerment program. The findings indicate that effective implementation of tourism policies also depends on the level of community awareness of relevant policies. Furthermore, empowerment can build communities' capacity, foster a sense of ownership, and strengthen management control [68].

Community empowerment significantly influenced and was a dominant predictor on sustainability of tourism villages. Beyond its crucial role in supporting sustainability, the construct also partially mediates social capital and local entrepreneurship and fully mediates government support policy in tourism villages. These findings confirm empowerment as a booster mechanism and a bridge to related variables. However, stakeholder collaboration does not statistically support community empowerment; it confirms that community empowerment does not mediate stakeholder collaboration.

6 Implications

6.1 Theoretical implication

The strength of the tourism village framework lies in showing that sustainability is determined by social capital, destination programs, policy support, and stakeholders or institutions that operate through empowerment mechanisms. Theoretically, these findings confirm that the sustainability of community-based destinations is accurately understood as the result of strengthening community capacity and control, and the existence of social networks or local business activities. Stakeholder collaboration

indicates a conceptual distinction between collaboration as a mechanism for coordinating destination governance. This means collaboration improves program coordination and destination performance; however, it may not necessarily increase community control, voice, and capacity if the collaborative design is not sufficiently inclusive. Therefore, community empowerment deserves emphasis as a core mechanism bridging programs and public policy. Empowerment is a mechanism for transferring capacity and policy to the community; through a series of empowerment initiatives, factors such as social capital and entrepreneurship can be strengthened to support sustainability and improve outcomes. Implementing sustainable tourism policies requires an enabling environment fostered by community empowerment. This demonstrates that optimal policy implementation requires human resources who understand the policy's orientation. Furthermore, this study broadens our understanding of the urgent need to empower the community as the main actors in the context of tourism villages.

6.2 Practical implication

Practically, tourism village development programs should focus on increasing community capacity in decision-making and tourism business management, strengthening local institutions (e.g., Pokdarwis/business groups), and strengthening community ownership and control over tourism assets. The significant influence of community empowerment in mediating various related aspects can be a key factor in achieving sustainable rural tourism. Practically, human resource capacity-building programs covering areas such as technical tour-guiding skills, management, foreign languages, and digital capabilities like marketing serve as strategic measures to enhance social capital through empowerment. Furthermore, tourism villages should include more on tourism MSME development programs, training in product design based on local culture, services (homestays/culinary/crafts), support for market access, and mentoring for product innovation. Furthermore, given the vital role of empowerment in mediating government policy support, effective policies should be delivered through empowerment processes. Socialisation programs, skills training, increased independence, and support for facilities and infrastructure can create an ideal climate for implementing sustainable policies. Community understanding of policy orientation is the main factor in successfully implementing sustainable tourism policies. Policies also should strengthen community access to resources, performance-based funding and incentives, ease licensing for community businesses, build human resource capacity, and support basic infrastructure that enhances the tourism experience. Further, cross-actor collaboration should involve community representation in decision-making, clear benefit sharing, and a monitoring system accessible to residents.

7 Conclusion

We provide empirical evidence that the sustainability of tourism villages, especially in East Lombok, is largely determined by an integrated configuration; the high explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.750$) indicates that community capacity, entrepreneurship, policy support, and effective collaborative governance mechanisms are core to village tourism sustainability. Social capital and local entrepreneurship were the most influential determinants of community empowerment and tourism sustainability; strong social

networks, shared norms, community solidarity, and entrepreneurial initiatives based on local potential are essential foundations for building a resilient and adaptive rural tourism system. Stakeholder collaboration and government policy support significantly affect sustainability, underscoring the importance of multi-actor governance and institutional facilitation in developing sustainable tourism villages. Community empowerment serves as a strategic mechanism that transforms social change, entrepreneurial dynamics, and policy support into tangible sustainability outcomes. Thus, empowerment drives outcomes and is a key instrument for strengthening long-term tourism development. Theoretically, we offer an integrative framework that positions community empowerment as a mediating variable in explaining village tourism sustainability. In practical terms, the results of this study imply the need to strengthen social capital, develop local entrepreneurial ecosystems, institutionalise multi-stakeholder collaboration and policy support, and enhance community empowerment to ensure long-term tourism development.

8 Limitation and future research direction

While this study has advanced the understanding of rural tourism sustainability and the role of empowerment in integrating relevant aspects, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The research sampled various tourism villages across the administrative regions of Lombok Island, specifically East, West, Central, and South Lombok Regencies. These study sites share similar economic, social, and cultural characteristics, and the research employed a singular methodological approach. The study's focus on the specific context of Lombok Island, with its uniform setting, limits the generalizability of the findings; research conducted in different settings or utilizing diverse methodologies, including cross-cultural studies, might yield different results. In addition, the demographic focus on tourism stakeholders may not comprehensively capture the views of the general public or those holding neutral perceptions. A gender imbalance primarily reflecting male perspectives may also limit the study's inclusivity. Future research could broaden the understanding of sustainability by examining different administrative regions. Studies employing approaches that emphasize depth of information, longitudinal analysis, or experimental methodology may provide valuable new insights into tourism sustainability.

Declarations

Ethnic approval and consent to participate

This study involves 282 human participants, particularly stakeholders of tourism villages. Before completing the survey, participants were informed of the research objective, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study. The study instrument underwent ethical review by the Universitas Hamzanwadi Ethics Committee (Number: 160/UH/LL/2025) and received approval and recommendation. All study procedures were performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from all participants of this study.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

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Author Contribution

Conceptualization, A.R and M.F.; methodology, A.R and M.F.; software, M.F.; validation, X.X., Y.Y. and Z.Z.; formal analysis, A.R and M.F.; investigation, A.R and M.F. and N.B.; resources, A.R and M.F. and N.B.; data curation, A.R and M.A.S.; writing—original draft preparation, A.R and M.F.; writing—review and editing, N.B and M.A.S.; visualization, N.B and M.A.S.; supervision, M.F.; project administration, N.B and M.A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The data used and analyzed in this study will be available from the corresponding author upon request.

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Figures

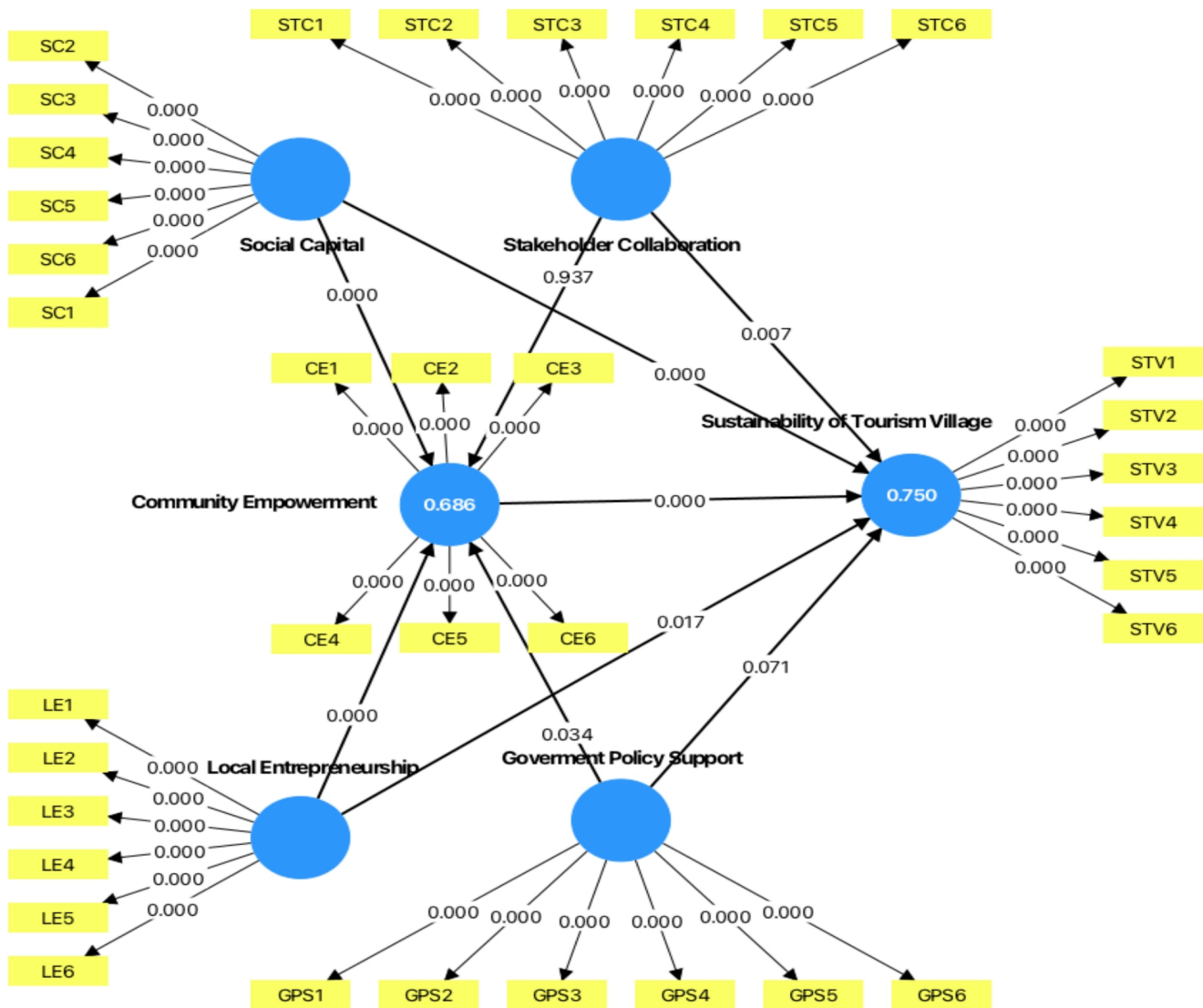


Figure 1

Path diagram (path coefficient dan t-statistic)

Supplementary Files

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