



The Impact of Local Community Attitudes Towards Sustainable Tourism Development on Tourism Development Support

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of local residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development. Conducted in Mersin, a significant destination for Turkish tourism, the study collected survey data from 415 local residents. Various dimensions of sustainable tourism development were considered through a structural model constructed using structural equation modeling. The analysis results indicate that perceived social costs negatively influence tourism development. Additionally, factors positively affecting local residents' support for tourism development include perceived economic benefits, environmental sustainability, maximizing community participation, long-term planning, a community-centered economy, and visitor satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of local residents' attitudes for the sustainable development of tourism destinations.

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INTRODUCTION

This study is grounded in the scientific theory of social exchange to elucidate the impact of local residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development. The social exchange theory proves to be a useful and comprehensive framework for analyzing local attitudes towards sustainable tourism development, as it aids in understanding the process of change among individuals and groups (Ap, 1990; Gursoy, 2004). It has been widely employed in researching local attitudes due to its explanatory power in the perceived benefits and costs of future tourism development (Hadinejad et al., 2019). Based on the social exchange theory, the attitudes of local residents towards sustainable tourism are influenced by perceived benefits and costs arising from tourism (Poudel et al., 2016). Tourism scholars have empirically tested that local support for tourism is more pronounced when perceived benefits (positive impacts) outweigh the costs (negative impacts) (Choi & Murray, 2010; Hsu, Chen & Yang, 2019). Churchill (1979) established seven sub-dimensions to identify local attitudes towards sustainable tourism activities. These sub-dimensions include (1) perceived social costs, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) long-term planning, (4) perceived economic benefits, (5) ensuring visitor satisfaction, (6) a community-centric economy, and (7) maximizing community participation. These sub-dimensions, used in Churchill's (1979) study, are also employed in this research.

In sustainable tourism research, understanding and comprehending the perspectives and priorities of various stakeholders, including tourists, tourism industry practitioners, local communities, and local governments, has become crucial (Prayag et al., 2010; Sirakaya-Turk & Gursoy, 2013). Among all stakeholders, local communities play a significant role. Gursoy et al. (2002) have demonstrated that the attitudes of local communities towards tourism development play a decisive role in the sustainability and success of tourism. Additionally, Jamal and Getz (1995) found that the attitudes of local communities towards tourism significantly impact on the destination's competitiveness and the distribution of tourism revenues. Pekerşen and Kaplan (2023) have identified a significant relationship between the perceptions of local communities regarding the positive economic impacts of tourism and the positive socio-cultural impacts of tourism, especially cultural interactions. Similarly, Çelik and Rasoolimanesh (2023) highlighted that the negative and positive attitudes of residents towards tourism directly influence their cost-benefit attitudes, while Strzelecka et al. (2023) stated that tourism has significant and positive effects on psychological and social empowerment. Moreover, Nelson et al. (1993) indicate that the participation of local communities in decision-making processes is a key indicator of successful sustainable tourism. These studies emphasize that the attitudes of local communities towards tourism are a significant factor affecting tourism development and indicate the need for further research in this area. Therefore, the topic of "The Impact of Local Community Attitudes towards Sustainable Tourism on Supporting Tourism Development" fills a significant gap in the literature, providing a more comprehensive understanding of tourism management and sustainable development.

In past research on sustainable tourism, there has been no clear consensus on the concept's definition, objectives, ideology, and feasibility, which has hindered the transformation from conventional tourism to sustainable tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Strzelecka et al., 2023; Delita et al., 2024). In this context, the question "Does the attitudes of local communities towards sustainable tourism have an impact on supporting tourism development?" has guided the research. Additionally, determining the impact of each dimension of local communities' attitudes towards sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development is among the sub-objectives of this study.

Mersin, located in the south of Turkey with a coastline along the Mediterranean, stands out as a region encompassing various vital sectors such as tourism, agriculture, trade, and a significant port. With its historical and cultural richness, beautiful beaches, and natural attractions, Mersin holds substantial potential in terms of tourism. It is ranked among the top 10 cities in Turkey in both tourist arrivals and tourism revenues (Mersin Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2023). The city is home to historical and cultural treasures, including Soli Pompeiopolis Ancient City, Anamurium Ancient City, Kızkalesi, the city center of Tarsus, and numerous other ancient ruins. Moreover, the city's Mediterranean climate and warm summers make Mersin an attractive destination for tourists. Therefore, the opinions of local residents in Mersin about tourism are crucial, influencing factors such as the kind of experience the destination will offer to tourists, the effects of tourism activities, and the relationship between the local economy and tourism. Hence, determining the impact of local residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development in Mersin is considered to make a significant contribution to both the sustainable tourism development of Mersin and the overall development of tourism in Turkey. Furthermore, the importance of this study is underscored by its aim to provide insights and recommendations for future research and practical recommendations for accommodation businesses.

The Conceptual Framework

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory explores how interactions between individuals, group dynamics, and societal structures change over time. One of the key pioneers of this theory is Kurt Lewin, who sought to understand how social change occurs through his research in social psychology. Lewin's conceptual model proposes that change occurs in three stages: freezing the current state, implementing the change, and refreezing the new state (Lewin, 1947). Additionally, Muzafer Sherif is another significant figure in Social Exchange Theory. Sherif's classic study, "Changes in Attitudes Towards Norms Due to Autographic Suggestions," demonstrates how social interactions influence individuals' behaviors. This study examines how individuals form norms within groups and how these norms can change (Sarup, 1992). Another important contributor to Social Exchange Theory is Stanley Milgram. Milgram's studies on obedience and authority clearly illustrate how social interactions can influence individual behavior. His experiments investigate how individuals obey authority figures and the extent to which this obedience can go (Reicher & Haslam, 2013). All of these studies support the fundamental principles of Social Exchange Theory. This theory provides a significant framework in various fields of the social sciences, particularly in areas such as social movements, cultural changes, and societal norms.

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is an approach aimed at ensuring the sustainability of tourism activities by minimizing harm to natural and cultural environments, enhancing the socio-economic well-being of local communities, and meeting the needs of future generations (UNWTO, 2005). In this context, the primary goal of sustainable tourism is to minimize the negative impacts of the tourism sector while maximizing its positive effects and maintaining environmental and social balance in the long term (Hall, 2010). Sustainable tourism requires a balanced approach to addressing environmental, economic, and social dimensions within the tourism sector (Dredge & Jamal, 2015). Within this framework, it is crucial for tourism activities to conserve natural resources, contribute to the local economy, and preserve and support local cultures (Font, 2002). The involvement of local communities is also critical

to implementing this concept. Local communities should participate in the planning, management, and sharing of the benefits of tourism activities (Scheyvens, 2002). The attitudes and participation of local communities towards tourism are significant factors in the success of sustainable tourism (Gursoy & Jurowski, 2002). In this regard, successful implementation of sustainable tourism requires multi-stakeholder collaboration and long-term planning (Gössling et al., 2012). A comprehensive approach should be adopted to assess and manage the impacts of tourism activities (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Local attitudes play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainable development of tourism. It is emphasized that the attitudes of the local community towards sustainable tourism are a determining factor, and neglecting them may lead to long-term failures. Therefore, the attitude and support of the local community must be taken into account for the success of tourism development. Additionally, it is underscored that continuous examination, planning, analysis, and management of the attitudes of the local community regarding sustainable tourism development are necessary (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Koçoğlu et al., 2020). Indeed, studies indicate significant relationships between the attitudes of the local community towards sustainable tourism development and their supportive behaviors.

Pekershen and Kaplan (2023) aimed to determine the perceptions of the local community in the Muğla/Akyaka district regarding tourism development. The results of the research show that the local community in Akyaka generally has a positive outlook on tourism development. Furthermore, the study found a significant relationship between the local community's perceptions of the positive economic impacts of tourism and the positive socio-cultural effects, including cultural interactions. Gohori and van der Merwe (2024) examined the tourism potential involving indigenous knowledge systems in rural communities in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe. According to the research findings, tourism development includes indigenous knowledge systems in rural communities in Zimbabwe's Manicaland Province. The results highlight the recognition of traditional leaders, adherence to local traditions and protocols, and respect for sacred places. Based on the prominent findings of the study, it is understood that local knowledge systems play a crucial role in tourism and their preservation and evaluation are critical for tourism development.

Tourism activities can have various effects on the local community. While effects such as employment opportunities, cultural and knowledge exchange are considered positive impacts of tourism (Günel, 2013), impacts such as environmental degradation, noise and traffic issues, and price increases can be considered as negative effects of tourism (Bertan, 2009). The local community evaluates tourism activities based on their perceived social impacts. This perception can influence their decision to support or oppose tourism. For instance, environmental costs or concerns about cultural change can create resistance to supporting tourism (Coşar, 2014). The positive contributions of tourism to the local economy and community life can increase the tendency of the local community to support tourism. Consequently, since perceived social costs are believed to play a significant role in influencing the support for tourism development by the local community, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is formulated:

H1: Perceived social costs by the local community negatively impact support for tourism development.

Steel and Rasoolimanesh (2023) conducted a study aiming to determine the potential mediating role of local residents' cost-benefit attitudes between their attitudes and support for tourism development. The researchers found

that the positive and negative attitudes of the local population towards tourism directly influenced the support for tourism, while cost-benefit attitudes had an indirect impact. Similarly, Ningrum et al. (2024) aim to improve the economy of the Bojonegoro community based on sustainable tourism development. The results suggest that sustainable tourism development could be a key driver in enhancing the economy of the Bojonegoro community, considering its long-term positive effects by taking into account economic, social, and environmental aspects.

As emphasized in the study, the implementation of sustainable tourism can create long-term positive effects by not only promoting economic growth but also strengthening the social structure of the community, thereby supporting environmental sustainability. In this context, Hypothesis 2 (H2) is formulated:

H2: The perceived economic benefits by the local population positively influence support for tourism development.

Strzelecka et al. (2023) conducted a study that combines Weber's Formal and Substantive Rationality Theory to examine the connection between nature-based tourism destinations and the perceptions of rural residents regarding their connection with nature and how this connection influences empowerment perceptions and ultimately support for tourism. The results indicate significant and positive effects of the connection with nature on psychological and social empowerment in all three destinations. Gautam (2023) aimed to understand why the local population supports sustainable tourism development. The research findings demonstrate that the emotional closeness of the local population has a positive and meaningful impact on their quality of life, indicating a significant positive effect on support for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is proposed:

H3: The perceived environmental sustainability positively influences support for tourism development.

Manwa (2023) focused on examining local awareness, attitudes, and relationships towards tourism activities in the Maun and Tshabong cities of Botswana. The community members from both regions expressed their support for the growth and development of tourism. Particularly interesting is their tendency to support the development of cultural tourism and ensure meaningful community participation in related activities. These findings provide important insights into understanding the diverse attitudes and awareness of local communities towards tourism activities. Thus, Hypothesis 4 (H4) is developed:

H4: Maximizing community participation positively influences the support of local residents for tourism development.

Nelson et al. (1993) argue that the active participation of the local population in decision-making processes is a key indicator of successful sustainable tourism. Therefore, emphasizing long-term planning is crucial for achieving sustainable tourism and maximizing the positive effects of tourism on the community. H5 hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Long-term planning positively influences the support of local residents for tourism development.

A community-centered economy focuses on addressing the needs of local communities, strengthening the local economy, and supporting sustainability. This approach aims to share the impacts of tourism more fairly and balancedly (Yılmaz, 2014). Considering the positive effects of a community-centered economy on various aspects related to tourism development, Hypothesis 6 (H6) is proposed:

H6: A community-centered economy positively influences the support of local residents for tourism development.

Delita et al. (2024) analyzed the attitudes of the Batak Toba Ethnic community in the Simanindo Region towards tourism development, highlighting various challenges faced by the residents in the growth of tourism. Similarly, Wani et al. (2024) aimed to demonstrate the impact of community empowerment on sustainable tourism development and the mediating role of local support. The findings indicate that community empowerment has a positive impact on local support and sustainable tourism development, with local support mediating the relationship between the two variables. In this context, the importance of understanding and managing the positive and negative effects of tourism is emphasized, highlighting the role of the local population. Hence, Hypothesis 7 (H7) is proposed:

H7: Visitor satisfaction positively influences the support of local residents for tourism development.

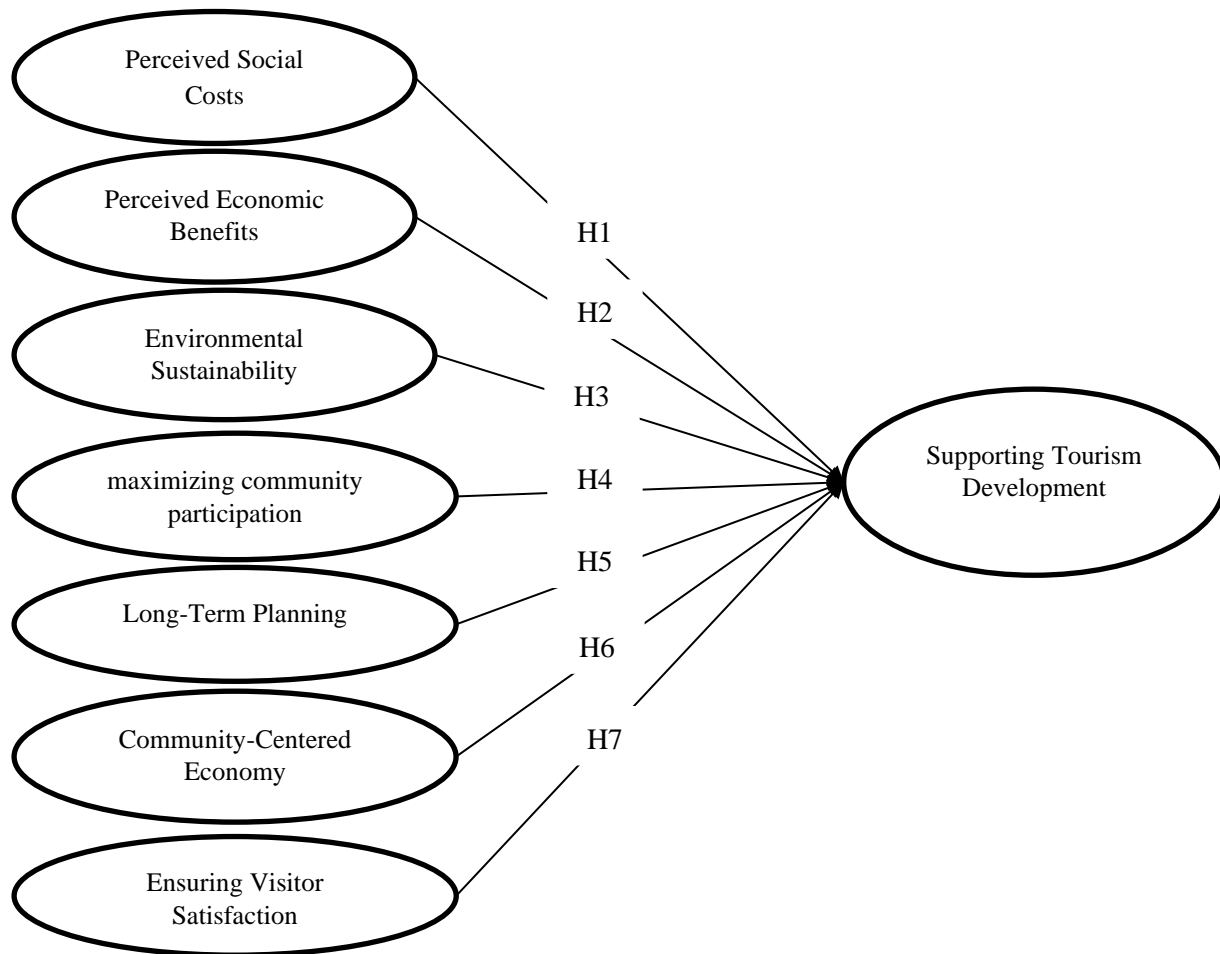


Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

Data Collection and Sampling

The research conducted adopts a quantitative research method and is designed as an explanatory study. Within this scope, the aim is to determine the impact of the attitudes of the local population in Mersin province towards sustainable tourism development on supporting the development of tourism. Mersin province is rich in tourism assets and one of Turkey's important destinations in terms of destination management. Additionally, agriculture holds a significant place in the economy of the province. On the other hand, Mersin, being a major port city in Turkey, places a strong emphasis on trade (Mersin Governorship, 2023). Therefore, the extensive utilization of the natural environment in Mersin, where the economy relies on different sectors, becomes crucial for sustainable development.

These factors played a significant role in selecting Mersin as the research universe. Using convenience sampling, a survey was conducted on individuals aged 18 and above in February between March 2024. Data were collected from participants through face-to-face and online surveys. In total, 415 surveys were utilized in the research. The ethical approval required for the data collection in this study was obtained from the Mersin University Ethics Committee, with the decision/number 26, dated January 29, 2024.

When summarizing the general characteristics of the participants, it was found that 52% were male and 48% were female. The majority of participants fell into the age group of 21-30 (42.9%), and most were university graduates (50.6%). A significant portion of participants were employed in the private sector (43.1%), and the majority earned a monthly income of 10-15 thousand TL (30.8%). Furthermore, 15.9% of participants had received tourism education, while 84.1% had not.

Measures

The survey technique was employed for the collection of research data. In this context, the "Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS)," developed by Sirakaya-Turk and Gursoy (2013), and subjected to cross-cultural validation by Hsu et al. (2020), was used to measure the attitudes of the local population towards sustainable tourism development. The scale consists of seven dimensions, each comprising three statements: perceived social costs (PSC), perceived economic benefits (PEB), environmental sustainability (ES), maximizing community participation (MCP), long-term planning (LTP), a community-centered economy (CCE), and ensuring visitor satisfaction (EVS).

The "Support for Tourism Development" scale by Eusebio et al. (2018) was utilized to measure the intention of the local population to support tourism development. This scale is a single-dimensional scale consisting of five statements. The scales used in the research were rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis Strategy

The research data were analyzed using the SPSS and Amos statistical analysis programs. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined for data distribution, and it was determined that the data fell within the normal distribution range of -2 to +2, as recommended by George & Mallery (2010). A measurement model was constructed to test the validity of the scales, and statistical results related to the structures of the scales were reported. Additionally, convergence and discriminant validity results were provided to assess validity.

Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha values were presented for the reliability levels of the scales. Correlation analysis results were examined to determine relationships between variables. Finally, a path analysis, illustrating the cause-and-effect relationships between variables, was conducted to test hypotheses, and the results were reported. Fit indices were used to check the goodness of fit for the path analysis and measurement model. In this context, the research was evaluated based on criteria such as "the Chi-square/Degrees of Freedom (χ^2/df) ≤ 5 ; the Normed Fit Index (NFI); the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) values $\geq .90$; the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values $\leq .80$," as suggested by Gürbüz (2019) and Meydan and Şeşen (2015).

Results

Within the scope of the research, a measurement model was constructed using factors related to attitudes toward

sustainable tourism development and the intention to support tourism. Goodness-of-fit (GoF) values were examined to determine the appropriateness of the measurement model calculated using the maximum likelihood method. The obtained GoF values ($\chi^2=967.382$, $df=267$, $\chi^2/df=3.623$, $NFI=925$, $IFI=.944$, $TLI=.932$, $CFI=.944$, $RMSEA=.080$, $SRMR=.041$) indicate that the measurement model, consisting of a total of eight dimensions (Table 1), adheres to the standards (Gürbüz, 2019; Meydan and Şeşen, 2015).

Another criterion for the measurement model is that the factor loadings should exceed the threshold of .50 (Hair et al., 2014). It can be observed in Table 1 that the factor loadings are at least .71, exceeding the specified threshold.

Table 1. Measurement Model, Reliability, Mean, and Standard Deviation Values

Factors	Items	Factor Loadings ^a	α	Mean	SD
PSC	PSC1	.92	.92	1.83	.64
	PSC2	.90			
	PSC3	.87			
PEB	PEB1	.91	.94	4.33	.64
	PEB2	.88			
	PEB3	.95			
ES	ES1	.79	.87	432	.56
	ES2	.84			
	ES3	.86			
MCP	MCP1	.71	.89	4.30	.59
	MCP2	.92			
	MCP3	.93			
LTP	LTP1	.92	.93	4.37	.62
	LTP2	.89			
	LTP3	.92			
CCE	CCE1	.89	.91	4.20	.60
	CCE2	.90			
	CCE3	.84			
EVS	EVS1	.89	.92	4.29	.61
	EVS2	.94			
	EVS3	.86			
STD	STD1	.88	.97	4.40	.62
	STD2	.95			
	STD3	.97			
	STD4	.97			
	STD5	.89			
GoF statistics: $\chi^2=967.382$, $df=267$, $\chi^2/df=3.623$, $NFI=925$, $IFI=.944$, $TLI=.932$, $CFI=.944$, $RMSEA=.080$, $SRMR=.041$					

Source: Own Elaboration

Another aspect emphasized regarding validity is the convergence and discriminant validity, addressed through the method proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Evaluation standards for convergence validity are based on Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for factors exceeding .50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gürbüz, 2019). The analysis indicates that AVE values for the factors range between .69 and .88 (Table 2). On the other hand, the composite reliability (CR) should be greater than .70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The analyses show that CR values for the factors range between .87 and .97 (Table 2). Additionally, it is observed that the criterion stating that all CR values should be greater than AVE values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Gürbüz, 2019) is met (Table 2).

For discriminant validity, calculations were made based on the method of Fornell and Larcker (1981). To have discriminant validity, the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlations between the factors. The analysis shows that the calculated square roots of AVE for all factors are greater than the correlations between the factors

(Table 2). Furthermore, for reliability, the criterion that Cronbach’s Alpha values should be greater than .70 (Hair et al., 2014; Pallant, 2017) has been checked. The analyses reveal that Cronbach’s Alpha values for the scales range between .87 and .97 (Table 1). Overall, it is observed that the standards for the validity and reliability of the scales are met.

Table 2. Correlation and Convergent-Discriminant Validity

Factors	R	VE	SV	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	6)	7)	8)
SC (1)	93	80	37	.897*							
EB (2)	94	83	58	.550	.913*						
S (3)	87	69	61	.609	.758	.830*					
CP (4)	89	74	67	.532	.678	.698	.859*				
TP (5)	93	83	67	.494	.719	.738	.816	.908*			
CE (6)	91	77	54	.452	.546	.695	.732	.735	.877*		
VS (7)	92	80	60	.551	.719	.774	.702	.728	.613	.894*	
TD (8)	97	88	62	.591	.742	.778	.771	.787	.692	.745	.936*
Significance of All Correlations: p < .001											
*The square root of the AVE											

In the research, averages for the factors were calculated and presented in Table 1. In this context, it was determined that the average for the perceived social cost factor is low, while the averages for the perceived economic benefit, environmental sustainability, maximizing community participation, long-term planning, a community-centered economy, ensuring visitor satisfaction, and supporting tourism development factors are high. On the other hand, strong relationships among all factors can be observed in Table 2.

For the analysis of the model developed in the research, a path analysis was conducted using the Amos statistical analysis program. It is observed that the goodness-of-fit (GoF) values of the model, calculated for the testing of developed hypotheses, meet the standards ($\chi^2=948.285$, $df=268$, $\chi^2/df=3.538$, $NFI=926$, $IFI=.946$, $TLI=.934$, $CFI=.946$, $RMSEA=.078$, $SRMR=.035$) (Gürbüz, 2019; Meydan and Şeşen, 2015). The results of the path analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Path Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Relations	Path coefficients	P	C.R.	Decision
H ₁	PSC→STD	-.101	.005	-2.799*	Supported
H ₂	PEB→STD	.163	.001	3.239*	Supported
H ₃	ES→STD	.145	.028	2.194*	Supported
H ₄	MCP→STD	.189	***	3.457*	Supported
H ₅	LTP→STD	.195	.001	3.221*	Supported
H ₆	CCE→STD	.104	.033	2.131*	Supported
H ₇	EVS→STD	.122	.018	2.361*	Supported
GoF statistics: $\chi^2=948.285$, $df=268$, $\chi^2/df=3.538$, $NFI=926$, $IFI=.946$, $TLI=.934$, $CFI=.946$, $RMSEA=.078$, $SRMR=.035$					

According to the analysis results, it is observed that the perceived social cost has a negative effect of -.101 on the intention to support tourism development (Table 3). Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is supported. On the other hand, perceived economic benefit has a positive effect of .163, environmental sustainability has a positive effect of .145, maximizing community participation has a positive effect of .189, long-term planning has a positive effect of .195, a community-centered economy has a positive effect of .104, and ensuring visitor satisfaction has a positive effect of .122 on the intention to support tourism development. Consequently, Hypotheses 2 (H2), 3 (H3), 4 (H4), 5 (H5), 6 (H6), and 7 (H7) are supported. Additionally, when all independent factors are included, it is found that 75.8% of the intention to support tourism development is explained. In general, it can be stated that all hypotheses developed

within the scope of the research are supported, and the proposed model is accepted.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study examines the impact of the local population's attitudes toward sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development. Designed within the framework of social exchange theory, the study assesses the attitudes of the local population in Mersin, considering seven sub-dimensions as outlined by Churchill (1979). These dimensions include perceived social costs, environmental sustainability, long-term planning, perceived economic benefits, ensuring visitor satisfaction, a community-centered economy, and maximizing community participation. Additionally, the research tests the levels of support for tourism development in each of these dimensions.

The research findings indicate that the attitudes of the local population toward sustainable tourism have an impact on supporting tourism development. These results align with studies evaluating the attitudes of the local population toward sustainable tourism (Hsu et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2010; Sirakaya-Turk & Gursoy, 2013). Furthermore, it is identified that the dimension of perceived social costs, a component of the local population's attitudes toward sustainable tourism, negatively affects support for tourism development. These findings are consistent with studies by Pekerşen and Kaplan (2023) and Gohori and van der Merwe (2024). Hence, it can be concluded that as the perceived social costs increase, the levels of support for tourism development decrease.

Lastly, it is determined that each dimension forming the local population's attitudes toward sustainable tourism (environmental sustainability, long-term planning, perceived economic benefits, ensuring visitor satisfaction, a community-centered economy, and maximizing community participation) has a positive impact on supporting tourism development. These results support similar studies in the literature (Akyol, 2021; Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2023; Nelson et al., 1993; Wani et al., 2024). Consequently, based on these findings, it can be asserted that as the local population's attitudes toward sustainable tourism increase, the levels of support for tourism development will also increase, indicating a positive and strong relationship between the two variables.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical contributions of the conducted research to the literature can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the study supports the reliability and validity of the Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS) (Hsu et al., 2020; Sirakaya-Turk & Gursoy, 2013) and the Tourism Support Scale (Eusébio et al., 2018), which were utilized within the research. This endorsement contributes to affirming the effectiveness of these scales in assessing attitudes toward sustainable tourism and supporting tourism development.

Furthermore, the research presents a detailed model aiming to uncover the impact of local residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism (including environmental sustainability, long-term planning, perceived economic benefits, ensuring visitor satisfaction, a community-centered economy, and maximizing community participation) on supporting tourism development. In the context of social exchange theory, the study contributes significantly to the tourism literature by exploring the inclination of local residents to support tourism based on the perceived benefits and costs associated with tourism. It is noteworthy that the existing literature often focuses on the attitudes of local residents toward sustainable tourism development (Delita et al., 2024; Koçoğlu et al., 2020; Pekerşen and Kaplan, 2023). However, this study provides a distinct perspective by thoroughly examining the impact of local residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development on their supportive behavior towards tourism, encompassing all

dimensions in detail.

Practical Implications

In regions with diverse economies based on different sectors, focusing on sustainable development and long-term planning is crucial. Particularly in the tourism sector, where the primary attractions are heavily related to the environment, sustainability becomes essential. On the other hand, for the continuity of local residents' living spaces, strategic planning is essential, emphasizing the importance of considering the opinions and desires of the local population. Therefore, this study analyzes the impact of the local population's attitudes towards sustainable tourism on supporting tourism development. It is concluded that the perceived benefits and costs of tourism activities shape attitudes and, consequently, influence the intention to support tourism development, highlighting the critical role of obtaining local support in ensuring sustainable development in regional tourism.

In light of the research findings, several recommendations are proposed that concern both the local population and other stakeholders:

- Increase local participation in tourism activities by involving the local population in decision-making processes related to tourism. Organize community meetings and workshops to gather the opinions of the local people. Moreover, value the ideas of the local population in the planning and implementation of tourism projects.
- Create awareness and provide education to the local population about the importance and advantages of sustainable tourism. Promote awareness regarding the preservation of environmental and cultural values. Emphasize the positive impacts of sustainable tourism on the local economy, job opportunities, and overall quality of life.
- Ensure a fair distribution of tourism revenues within the community. Strengthen the local economy by providing support to local businesses and entrepreneurs. Additionally, contribute to improving the living conditions of the local population by investing in social projects collaboratively with the community.
- Fulfill environmental responsibilities by adopting sustainable environmental practices. Optimize energy and water consumption, provide support to local projects for natural resource conservation, and develop effective policies and practices for waste management.
- Show respect for the local culture by making efforts to preserve and promote it. Inform tourists about respecting local traditions and support cultural events to encourage the coexistence of local culture with sustainable tourism.
- Enhance communication with the local population by maintaining regular contact and evaluating feedback. Establish collaborations between tourism businesses, local residents, and local governments to support sustainable tourism.

Limitations and Future Research

The conducted study focused on the local population's attitude towards sustainable tourism development and the support for tourism development. The research data were collected from individuals living in Mersin within a cross-sectional timeframe. Therefore, conducting the study in different cities or regions might yield different results. Additionally, a quantitative approach was adopted in the research, and the data were collected and analyzed through

survey methods. In future studies, to obtain in-depth knowledge about sustainable tourism development and support for tourism development, the utilization of interview techniques could be beneficial. Furthermore, examining the attitudes towards sustainable tourism development and support for tourism development among individuals who derive income from tourism and those who do not could be a noteworthy topic for investigation.

Declaration

All authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. The ethical approval required for the data collection in this study was obtained from the Mersin University Ethics Committee, with the decision/number 26, dated January 29, 2024.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission

T.C.
MERSİN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ETİK KURULU
ONAY BELGESİ



Öđr. Gör. Dr. Yunus DOĐAN'ın **Yerel Halkın Sürdürülebilir Turizme Yönelik Tutumlarının Turizm Gelişimini Destekleme Üzerindeki Etkisi** adlı çalışması kurulumuz tarafından incelenmiş ve;

Etik yönden uygun bulunmuştur.

Etik yönden geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Etik yönden uygun bulunmamıştır.



Mersin Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu Kararı	
Başvuru Formunun Etik Kurula Ulaştığı Tarih	25.12.2023
Etik Kurul Karar Toplantı Tarihi ve Karar No	29.01.2024 tarih ve 26 sayılı karar
Yer	Mersin Üniversitesi, Uđur Oral Kültür Merkezi
Katılımcılar	Formda imzası bulunan üyelerimiz toplantıya katılmıştır.