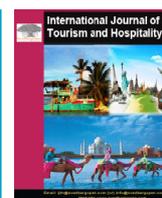




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Research Paper

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The Impact of Women's Empowerment on Sustainable Tourism Development in Bangladesh: Mediating Role of Tourism Involvement

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between women's empowerment, tourism involvement, and sustainable tourism development in Bangladesh. The study aims to understand how empowering women in the tourism industry contributes to the overall sustainability of the sector. The methodology employed in this research project involves collecting data through surveys and interviews conducted with women working in various tourism-related sectors in Bangladesh. Statistical analysis, including mediation analysis, will be used to examine the mediating role of tourism involvement in the relationship between women's empowerment and sustainable tourism development. The findings of this research project will provide insights into the positive impact of women's empowerment on sustainable tourism development, as well as the role of tourism involvement as a mediator in this relationship. The study's originality lies in its focus on Bangladesh and its specific context, contributing to the limited existing literature on the topic. The results will be valuable for policymakers, tourism organizations, and stakeholders seeking to promote women's empowerment and sustainable tourism practices in Bangladesh and similar contexts. This research project presents a unique perspective by focusing on the specific context of Bangladesh, shedding light on the often overlooked dynamics of women's empowerment and its influence on sustainable tourism development within the country.

Keywords: *Women's empowerment, UN SDGs, Sustainable Tourism Development (STD), Tourism involvement, Tourism development*

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1. Introduction

Women's empowerment is becoming an increasingly popular topic of discussion across various academic fields, including economics and development. This study aims to investigate how women's empowerment might contribute to the sustained expansion of the tourist sector. Governmental entities, groups focused on social justice and the environment, and international institutions have all shown their support for efforts to advance sustainable tourism. When it comes to the development and management of tourism, it is essential to consider environmental, sociocultural, and any other

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pertinent elements. The potential of tourism to emancipate women and contribute to sustainable tourism development is investigated in this paper.

Studies on empowerment have been conducted at length in various fields, shedding light on the concept's relevance in gender policy. On the other hand, there are signs that its early influence on a wide variety of social groups and communities is being watered down to make society more egalitarian. Previous studies, such as the one that was carried out by Boserup (1970), have focused their attention on the role of empowerment in industrial growth, bringing attention to gender problems in both policy and research. Although women contribute significantly to the agricultural and industrial sectors, their representation in unionized and regulated industries remains low.

In the 1990s, a substantial amount of study was carried out on women's productivity, leadership abilities, and social learning abilities. This research highlighted the necessity of an integrated approach that sees empowerment as a dynamic and sociocultural process. Specifically, the research found that women were more likely to be community leaders. Since that time, a significant number of studies have been conducted on a variety of subjects about the empowerment of women, including gender discrimination, the evolution of gender roles, political engagement, and income differences depending on gender. The topic of women's empowerment has been prevalent in national, regional, and international conversations across a wide range of fields, including the tourist industry. Women's empowerment has been acknowledged by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a critical aim within its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. This demonstrates the significant effect women's empowerment has on the rapidly expanding global tourism sector. According to the UNWTO (2008), women make up a significant share of the labor in the tourist industry, perhaps between 60 and 70 percent of the entire employment.

2. Objectives

- To study women's participation in the tourism industry.
- To examine the factors encouraging the growth of women in the tourism industry.
- To analyze the opportunity and limitations for working women in tourism in Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

Data collection is an essential part of any research paper. Primary data has been collected through online surveys. The online survey captures people's views and ideas on Women's Empowerment in Sustainable Tourism Development in Bangladesh.

3.1. Measures

Every variable used in this investigation came from pre-existing scales that had been checked and verified at some point. The multidimensional scale established by Boley and McGehee (2014) was used to measure women's empowerment. This scale consists of three dimensions: psychological empowerment (five items), social empowerment (three items), and political empowerment (four items). The level of engagement in tourism was evaluated using a scale that was taken from the work done by Suhartanto *et al.* (2018). This scale consisted of six different elements. Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) was evaluated based on a 6-item scale modified from Nicholas *et al.* (2009) work. On a Likert scale of five points, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement with each statement by selecting one of the extremes.

3.2. Data Collection and Sampling

Women working in Bangladesh's restaurants, airports, hotels, and travel agencies were given survey questionnaires to fill out and return. In order to get in touch with the participants, personal connections were made via various social media channels. A total of 250 questionnaires were handed out to those who may fill out the survey. Following the removal of any surveys that were either incomplete or otherwise unsuitable, the remaining sample consisted of 219 valid and complete replies. A response rate of 87% was achieved as a consequence of this. It required the participants to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the statements that covered the primary concepts investigated in the research.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Building

4.1.1. Women's Empowerment for Tourism Involvement

It is essential to adopt a multidimensional conception of empowerment to acquire a better knowledge of women's empowerment in tourism. This means including psychological, political, and social components of empowerment into one's understanding of empowerment. This research expands on the work done by Boley and McGehee (2014). It employs a multidimensional approach to investigate the influence women's empowerment has on Sustainable Tourist Development (STD). From a psychological point of view, empowerment entails incorporating the following four fundamental concepts: meaning, competence, effect, and self-determination. In the context of women's empowerment, these concepts are connected with the ideals of the person and their capacity to contribute to the responsibilities of the business successfully.

On the individual, organizational, and social levels, the goal of the political paradigm known as women's empowerment is to make it possible for women to lead empowered, autonomous, and dignified lives. It includes many facets, including resources, agency, accomplishments, and the rule of law. Accomplishments focus on women's ability to excel and reach their potential, resources refer to the skills and opportunities that are available to women, agency refers to the power that women have to make decisions, and the rule of law emphasizes the importance of legislation that supports women's economic participation, political engagement, and the elimination of discriminatory laws. Resources, agency, accomplishments, and the rule of law all focus on women.

Women's social empowerment is heavily impacted by culture and social practices, which in turn molds their standing and the options available to them within cultures. The strength of culture resides in its capacity to transform social structures in a manner congruent with the principles of human rights. In contrast, the significance of women's social status, their level of participation in social networks, and their total societal effect are determined mainly by social practices.

When the idea of women's empowerment is placed inside the framework of the tourist sector, it quickly becomes evident that a more expansive and interdisciplinary application of the concept is required to encourage greater participation of women within the business. The current body of research often needs to correct the error of misinterpreting kinds of empowerment that include lesser degrees of engagement, such as participation. As a result, further study is required to determine the natural features of empowerment. In addition, women make up the majority of the workers in the tourist sector; nevertheless, they are grossly underrepresented in senior and leadership roles, underlining the need for increased levels of empowerment within the business.

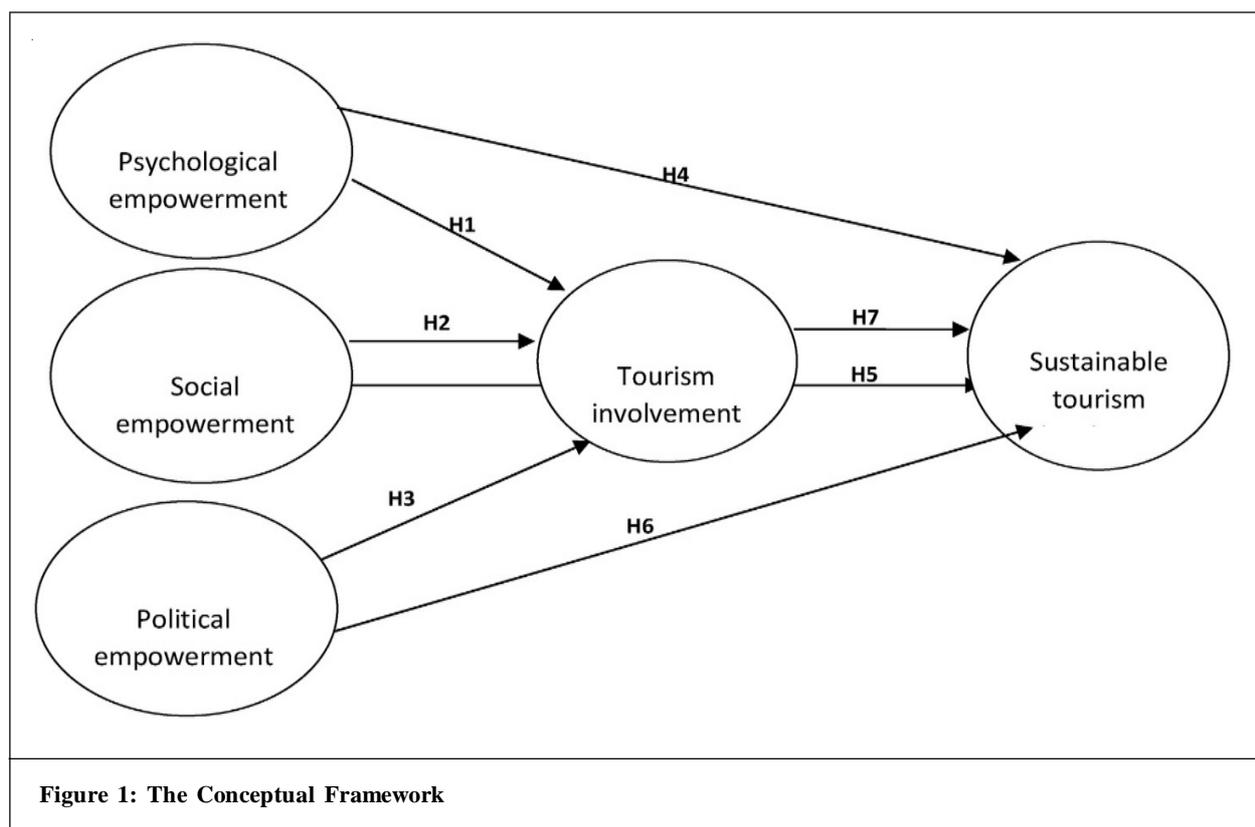
The empowerment model developed by Scheyvens (2000) suggests that women's economic engagement in tourism is affected by the degree to which they feel psychologically, politically, and socially empowered. Women who are psychologically empowered show a more substantial capacity for self-reliance in the formation of their professions in the tourist industry, which results in enhanced performance and the actualization of their full potential. Politically empowered women have a greater chance of holding high positions in the tourist sector, successfully navigating the intricacies and problems posed by the business via the implementation of pro-women laws. Tourism provides socially empowered women with chances for advancement and achievement, which are made possible by cultural norms and societal institutions that support their endeavors.

Residents' opinions of their psychological, political, and social empowerment are favorably impacted when they have a better understanding of tourism, which eventually influences their participation in tourism development. This is especially true for women's viewpoints. As shown in Figure 1 of the study project, these arguments ultimately lead to the creation of hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: The level of psychological empowerment experienced by women positively influences their engagement in tourism activities.

Hypothesis 2: Women's political empowerment positively affects their participation in tourism.

Hypothesis 3: Women's social empowerment positively impacts their involvement in tourism-related activities.



Hypothesis 4: Women's psychological empowerment positively influences sustainable tourism development.

Hypothesis 5: Women's political empowerment has a beneficial impact on the development of sustainable tourism.

Hypothesis 6: Women's social empowerment contributes to the favorable development of sustainable tourism.

Hypothesis 7: The involvement of women in the tourist industry has a beneficial effect on the growth of the industry over the long run.

4.1.2. Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Tourism Development

According to Boley and McGehee (2014) and Scheyvens (2000), when visitors recognize the one-of-a-kind worth of a community's culture and natural resources, it boosts the dignity and self-esteem of the women in that community, which ultimately results in psychological empowerment. This kind of empowerment is beneficial to the local community because it helps boost and maintain the members' sense of self-worth. In their research on the growth of ecotourism in the Amazon, Stronza and Gordillo (2008) underlined the importance of increased self-esteem as a non-economic advantage. In addition to this, Scheyvens (2000) highlighted that culturally sensitive ecotourism encourages psychological empowerment and that women play a vital role in preserving traditional elements. Although there has only been a small amount of research done on gender disparities in the tourism industry (Besculides *et al.*, 2002; Medina, 2003; Stronza and Gordillo, 2008), Moswete and Lacey (2015) have proposed that steps be taken to boost women's self-esteem in tourism development activities. These steps could include making products in tourist destinations more accessible. On the other hand, psychological disempowerment happens when women feel inferior due to growth or lack of control over the path it takes, which results in their estrangement from the community (Boley *et al.*, 2017; Scheyvens, 2000). This may be traced back to a need for more control over the development's direction.

According to Boley and McGehee (2014), Ramos and Prideaux (2014), and Scheyvens (2000), the notion of "social empowerment" refers to the way in which participation in tourist activities may enhance women's feelings of belonging and their capacity to work together with others in their community. According to research by Gil Arroyo *et al.* (2019), some communities benefit from tourist initiatives and organizations that strengthen community cohesion and improve people's overall quality of life. On the other hand, social disempowerment happens when power dynamics inside a destination generate pressure, which then leads to poor results of tourism's beneficial benefits (Boley *et al.*, 2017). This may happen when tourism needs to be managed properly. Moswete and Lacey (2015) present an illustration of the positive social empowerment that may occur for women as a result of working in the tourism industry, which broadens

their social networks with visitors. On the other hand, research conducted in the Amazon by Stronza and Gordillo (2008) illustrates the detrimental influence that tourism has on social empowerment, especially in indigenous communities that are battling to keep their traditions alive. Alarcon and Cole (2019) and Boley *et al.* (2017) propose doing further research in order to address gender-based conceptions of social empowerment. This is because such research may help tourists and local communities in developed and developing nations.

According to Madrigal (1993), political empowerment in the tourism industry is concerned with power relations as well as the representation of women's opinions in tourist development. Scheyvens (2000) says that political empowerment in tourism takes place when all people, including women, are equally represented and have the chance to express their concerns in the development and planning processes within their communities (Boley and McGehee, 2014; Scheyvens, 2000). This allows women to have a voice in decisions about their communities' future (Boley and McGehee, 2014). According to Boley *et al.* (2017), the significance of the engagement of local people, especially women, at all stages of the development of tourism is emphasized. These stages range from non-participation to ultimate control. The existing body of research on gender and empowerment in sustainable tourism often focuses on women's access to power positions (Alarcon and Cole, 2019; Boley *et al.*, 2017; Scheyvens, 2000; Tucker and Boonabaana, 2012). Moswete and Lacey (2015) emphasize several good elements of women's political empowerment in cultural tourism. These features include active participation, economic independence, and freedom from conventional family structures. Moswete and Lacey (2015) also highlight some negative aspects of women's political empowerment in cultural tourism. However, there are several barriers that prevent women from achieving empowerment in the tourist business. These barriers include a lack of financial means to launch their initiatives, a restricted potential for revenue, and cultural constraints on involvement and decision-making (Moswete and Lacey, 2009).

4.1.3. *Women's Tourism Involvement and Sustainable Tourism Development*

Several academics have acknowledged the multiple benefits that development offers to local communities, including the stimulation of economic growth, the preservation and maintenance of natural resources for the future, and an improvement in the quality of life for the general population (Eagles *et al.*, 2002). As a direct result of this, the leadership of women in the tourist industry has become an essential component of effective long-term management (Sebele, 2010).

According to Scheyvens (2000), the participation of women is an important factor in the development of tourism in a sustainable manner. This is because the participation of women helps to increase the value of a community by maximizing the good benefits of tourism while limiting the negative consequences of tourism. On a global scale, women make up 54% of the workforce in the tourist industry, while other nations, like Estonia and Finland, have female participation rates of over 65%. However, Saudi Arabia has the lowest female involvement rate in the tourist sector, with just 1.5% of women working in the industry (Baum, 2013; Ministry of Tourism, 2020). This number is predicted to reach 30% by the year 2030. As a result, scholars have proposed various solutions, such as the establishment of women's executive networks, to improve women's positions in the tourist industry.

According to Alarcón and Cole (2019), sustainable tourism cannot be reached if gender continues to be an extra aspect in its growth or if the notion of gender is used to repress feminism. Furthermore, if gender continues to be an additional factor in its development, then sustainable tourism cannot be achieved. Even though gender equality is widely acknowledged to be an essential component of the tourist industry, stakeholders often fail to prioritize it in their quest for sustainability. In light of these considerations, the following theory is open to consideration:

4.1.4. *The Mediating Role of Tourism Involvement in the Relationship between Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development*

In Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, we looked at how the three facets of women's empowerment have a direct and positive effect on tourist engagement (in Section 4.1.1) and sustainable tourism development (in Section 4.1.2). In Section 4.1.3, an investigation was conducted to determine how much of an impact women's participation in STDs had. A previous study has shown that participation in tourism may help women's empowerment and their active involvement within their communities (Scheyvens, 2000). This is something that previous researchers have proved. According to Boley *et al.* (2017), women are more likely to engage in tourism when they view it as an avenue for opportunity, which in turn influences the prevalence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Even though these links have been established, an examination of the existing body of literature did not turn up any evidence suggesting the function that women's participation in tourism plays as a mediator in the interaction between the three facets of women's empowerment and the growth of sustainable tourism. Because of this, our research is the first to investigate the connection between the two. On the basis of these several factors, the following proposal was advanced:

5. Women in Tourism Sector

5.1. Women's History in the Travel Industry

The responsibilities of women in the tourist industry have grown to include more than just flight attendants. Historically restricted to lower-level positions, today's tourism industry includes women as Ministers of Tourism, bureaucrats in Government Ministries of Tourism, Chairpersons and Managing Directors of large hotels, Marketing Executives in Aviation Companies, Managers of Travel and Visa Services, and Coordinators of Vacation Packages. It is notable that there are a number of Bangladeshi women working in key roles in the tourist sector abroad. On World Tourist Day in 2007, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) highlighted the good impact women have had on the tourist industry via various channels.

5.2. Opportunities for Women in the Tourism Industry

Several positive outcomes for women are highlighted in the research on tourism and women.

Jobs in the tourism industry tend to be more accessible to women and people of color than in other sectors of the economy.

Local businesses in hospitality, food production, and sightseeing guide services all stand to benefit from more visitors. The flexibility of part-time and shift employment is especially helpful for women who are simultaneously caring for their families.

- Roads, water supply, health facilities, electricity, and communications are just some of the areas that may benefit from tourism growth, which in turn helps local communities and women in particular. When planned and operated responsibly, tourism may boost local economies, create jobs, and increase incomes without negatively impacting the environment.

Abilities that help women advance in the tourism industry

Women in the service industry—including travel, aviation, and hospitality—are often used as representations of a company's brand because of their friendliness and warmth. After the region's natural beauty and cultural legacy, they are often regarded as the "face and brand" of tourism. Having a social, empathetic, and attractive personality, a sense of adaptability and cooperation, promptness and dedication in their tasks, the ability to handle and care for customers, and excellent communication skills have all contributed to the rise of women in the tourism industry.

Inadequate Opportunities for Women in the Tourism Sector, Pt.

Several obstacles prevent women from having full involvement in the tourist business, despite attempts to enhance their standing:

- (a) Sexual Harassment and Sex Tourism: Trips arranged for commercial sexual interactions (sex tourism) have resulted in major problems such as the spread of illnesses and violence against women. The sexual exploitation of women and the resulting objectification of women in the prostitution business are harmful to society.
- (b) Insufficient Publicity and Availability of Tourism-related Academic Opportunities: Women face barriers to entering the tourist sector due to a lack of education and tools. The government and non-profits have made an effort to educate the public and give training.
- (c) Although the government has made investments in tourist marketing and infrastructure development, there is a dearth of resources for tourism education, which restricts advancement possibilities for women.
- (d) Negative Depiction of Women's Image: Tourism advertisements often feature stereotypical and sexist portrayals of women, suggesting that female visitors should adhere to narrow beauty standards and put up with unwanted advances from male patrons.
- (e) The pervasive masculine culture within the tourist industry is one of the barriers to women's progress in the field, in part because of the underrepresentation of women in senior managerial jobs.

UNWTO's Efforts to Increase Women's Economic Independence Via Tourism 5.5%

- (a) Women's Empowerment Principles: The United Nations Global Compact and UNIFEM developed the "Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business" to help companies advance gender equality.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Women have teamed together to create a joint action plan to advance gender equality in the tourism industry.

6. Data Analysis and Results

6.1. Data Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values were used to evaluate the reliability of the research dimensions, and Microsoft Excel was used to compile descriptive statistics of the respondents, run independent sample t-tests, and do all of the above. Due to the intricacy of the conceived model, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Smart PLS were used to investigate its structural features. The data were checked for normality, multicollinearity, and linearity, and any outliers were eliminated or explained away.

6.2. Respondent Demographics

Ninety-two point six percent of respondents were young adults (ages 21-30), whereas 5.47% were middle-aged (ages 31-44). 24% were married, and 75.5 were single. The majority of responders were women who work in hotels and restaurants (47.48%), followed by women who work in airports (13.24%) and then travel brokers (39.26%). There was a high level education among the respondents; 82.64% had at least a bachelor's degree and 15.98% had at least a high school diploma. In terms of monthly income, 41.09% of women earned less than 6000 BDT, while 26.02% earned more than 15000 BDT (Table 1).

6.2.1. Measurement Model

SmartPLS was employed to evaluate the study measurement model's validity and reliability.

All items have Cronbach's alpha and CR scores higher than the suggested level of 0.80 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), suggesting strong internal reliability. In addition, as can be shown in Table 2, all of the factor loadings for the items are over 0.7, with t-values more than 34.90 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

The items used to assess the dimensions of the research are positively and significantly related, as shown in Figure 2. This verifies convergent validity. Further confirming convergent validity is the fact that all AVE scores for all dimensions are higher than the recommended criterion of 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

We take a look at two methods for determining discriminant validity that are often advocated. First, it is important that the cross-correlations between rows and columns, as well as the square root of the AVE for each dimension, be larger than the cross-correlations between columns. Second, for discriminant validity, Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014) recommend that the AVE be higher than the Maximum Shared Value (MSV) for each dimension. Discriminant validity at the item level is supported by Table 2, which shows that AVE scores are higher than the MSV, and Table 3, which shows that all items load more strongly on their respective factor than on any other component. In other words, the findings show that the measurement model is both reliable and valid.

Discriminant validity based on Fornell-Larcker criterion analysis.

In order to investigate the potential causal links between the various study variables, Structural Equation Modeling

Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics

Groups	N=219	%	Groups	N=219	%
Age			Monthly income		
Under 20	4	1.8	Under 6000	90	41.09
21-30	203	92.69	6001-9000	22	10.04
31-44	12	5.47	9001-12,000	24	10.95
>44	0	0	12,001-15,000	26	11.87
Marital status			Over 15,000	57	26.02
Married	53	24.20	Hotels	40	18.26
Unmarried	166	75.79	Airports	29	13.24
Education level			Restaurants	64	29.22
Less than high school degree	3	1.36	Travel agents	86	39.26
High school degree	35	15.98			
University graduate	181	82.64			

Table 2: Results of First-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis- M and Standard Deviation			
Factors and Items	Std. Loading	M	SD
Psychological empowerment (Boley and McGehee, 2014) (a = 1.880, rho_A= 0.893, CR = 0.916, AVE = 0.687)			
Tourism in Bangladesh makes me proud to be a Bangladeshi resident	0.764	4.239	1.040
Tourism in Bangladesh makes me feel special because people travel to see my county's unique features	0.882	4.229	1.028
Tourism in Bangladesh makes me want to tell others about what we have to offer in Bangladesh	0.858	4.055	0.989
Tourism in Bangladesh reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors	0.838	4.362	0.963
Tourism in Bangladesh makes me want to work to keep Bangladesh County special	0.797	4.101	1.057
Social empowerment (Boley and McGehee, 2014) (a = 2.880, rho_A= 0.817, CR = 0.891, AVE = 0.732)			
Tourism in Bangladesh makes me feel more connected to my community	0.867	4.197	0.964
Tourism in Bangladesh fosters a sense of 'community spirit' within me	0.837	3.986	1.056
Tourism in Bangladesh provides ways for me to get involved in my community	0.862	4.124	0.981
Political empowerment (Boley and McGehee, 2014) (a = 0.880, rho_A= 0.885, CR = 0.917, AVE = 0.735)			
I feel like I have a voice in Bangladesh tourism development decisions	0.858	3.950	1.122
I feel like I have access to the decision-making the process when it comes to tourism in Bangladesh	0.817	3.844	1.106
I feel like my vote makes a difference in how tourism is developed in Bangladesh	0.879,	3.812,	1.082
I feel like I have an outlet to share my concerns about tourism development in Bangladesh	0.874	3.872	1.080
Tourism involvement (Suhartanto et al., 2018) (a = 4.880, rho_A=0.785, CR = 0.831, AVE = 0.507)			
I am pleased to be involved in tourism activities.	0.826	4.197	0.945
I consider tourism activities to be important	0.804	4.339	0.906
I get upset when participation in tourism activity is poor.	0.696	4.317	1.016
I am feeling a bit lost when making choices from a variety of tourism activities.	0.742,	3.826,	1.026
Choosing a tourism activity is rather complicated.	0.412	3.725	1.116
Sustainable tourism development (Nicholas et al., 2009) (a = 3.880, rho_A=0.891, C.R. = 0.914, AVE = 0.641)			
I participate in the development of community-based sustainable tourism initiatives	0.724,	4.032,	1.029
I participate in sustainable tourism-related plans and development	0.775	4.073	1.006
I adopt the Regulatory environmental standards to reduce the negative impacts of tourism	0.792	4.028	1.053
I participate in cultural exchanges between local residents and visitors	0.860	3.922	1.074
I cooperate with tourism planning and development initiatives	0.828	4.046	1.022
I participate in the promotion of "environmental education and Conservation"	0.817	4.028	1.045

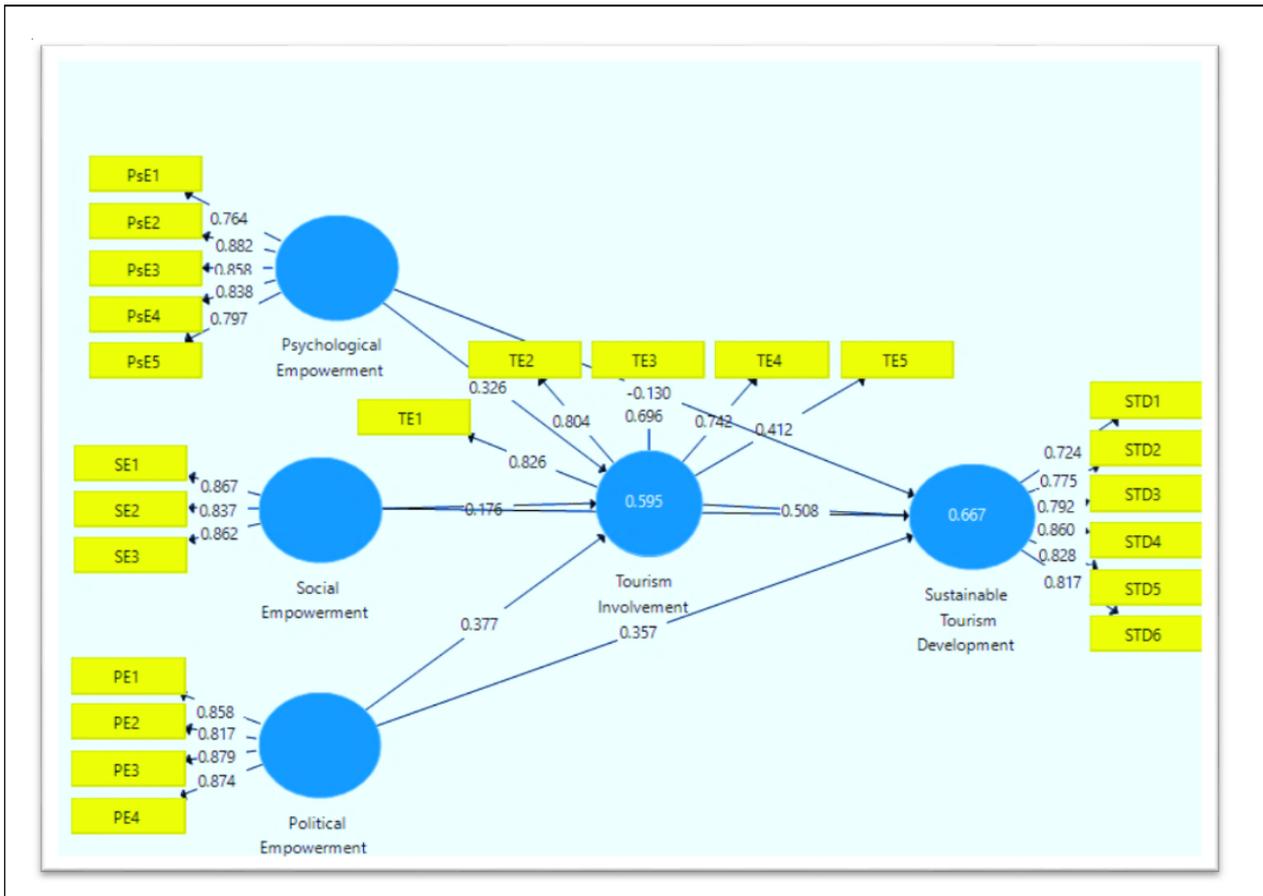


Figure 2: The Research Structural Model

Model Fit: (SRMR: .073, d-ULS:1.478, d-G:.756, Chi- square: 916.147, NFI:.749)

Note: CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

(SEM) was combined with maximum likelihood estimation and applied to the structural model for analysis. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an effective approach since it enables the simultaneous performance of a thorough study of linkages. Referring to Table 4, the fit indices for the structural model show that there is a high level of agreement between the model and the data (SRMR:.073, d-ULS: 1.478, d-G:.756, chi-square: 916.147, NFI:.749).

Table 4 illustrates the associations, both direct and indirect, that can be drawn between the different study variables. According to the findings, women’s psychological empowerment has a positive and significant link with participation in tourism ($= 0.326, t\text{-value} = 4.146, p < 0.001$), which provides evidence in favor of *Hypothesis 1*. However, the association between psychological empowerment and the growth of sustainable tourism was found to be modest, positive, but insignificant ($= -0.130, t\text{-value} = 1.570, p > 0.05$), which indicates that *Hypothesis 4* was not validated.

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Sustainable Tourism Development	0.712				
2-Psychological Empowerment	0.801	0.763			
3-Social Empowerment	0.856	0.608	0.671		
4-Political Empowerment	0.829	0.815	0.553	0.687	
5-Tourism Involvement	0.857	0.579	0.609	0.718	0.672

Note: Diagonal numbers embody the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) for the related factor.

Table 3 (Cont.)					
Cross Loadings					
	Political Empowerment	Psychological Empowerment	Social Empowerment	Sustainable Development Tourism	Tourism Involvement
PE1	0.858	0.562	0.615	0.679	0.600
PE2	0.817	0.463	0.453	0.540	0.484
PE3	0.879	0.459	0.503	0.622	0.601
PE4	0.874	0.496	0.504	0.611	0.610
PsE1	0.474	0.764	0.591	0.415	0.436
PsE2	0.517	0.882	0.679	0.433	0.544
PsE3	0.487	0.858	0.672	0.415	0.557
PsE4	0.525	0.838	0.707	0.552	0.641
PsE5	0.397	0.797	0.708	0.451	0.632
SE1	0.501	0.789	0.867	0.533	0.567
SE2	0.512	0.660	0.837	0.517	0.596
SE3	0.550	0.641	0.862	0.509	0.557
STD1	0.435	0.427	0.438	0.724	0.607
STD2	0.551	0.394	0.471	0.775	0.590
STD3	0.499	0.512	0.571	0.792	0.635
STD4	0.681	0.441	0.534	0.860	0.639
STD5	0.671	0.429	0.438	0.828	0.614
STD6	0.584	0.457	0.464	0.817	0.583
TE1	0.633	0.596	0.568	0.654	0.826
TE2	0.545	0.577	0.505	0.593	0.804
TE3	0.337	0.413	0.431	0.573	0.696
TE4	0.500	0.533	0.543	0.509	0.742
TE5	0.310	0.242	0.289	0.338	0.412
Political Empowerment					
Psychological Empowerment	0.654				
Social Empowerment	0.714	0.952			

Table 3 (Cont.)					
Cross Loadings					
	Political Empowerment	Psychological Empowerment	Social Empowerment	Sustainable Development Tourism	Involvement Involvement
Sustainable Tourism Development	0.804	0.619	0.714		
Tourism Involvement	0.814	0.817	0.853	0.937	

Table 4: Results of the Research Hypotheses					
Hypotheses		Results of the Research Model			
		Beta(β)	C-R(T-Value)	P-value	Hypotheses Result
H1	Psychological Empowerment → Tourism Involvement	0.326	4.146	0.000	Supported
H2	Social Empowerment → Tourism Involvement	0.176	2.005	0.045	Supported
H3	Political Empowerment → Tourism Involvement	0.377	5.074	0.000	Supported
H4	Psychological Empowerment → Sustainable Tourism Development	-0.130	1.570	0.117	Not Supported
H5	Social Empowerment → Sustainable Tourism Development	0.156	1.969	0.049	Supported
H6	Political Empowerment → Sustainable Tourism Development	0.357	4.775	0.000	Supported
H7	Tourism involvement → Sustainable Tourism Development	0.508	7.306	0.000	Supported

In addition, it was discovered that women's political empowerment had positive and significant impacts on tourism engagement ($\beta = 0.377$, t -value $\beta = 5.074$, $p < 0.001$) and sustainable tourism development involvement ($\beta = 0.357$, t -value = 4.775 , $p < 0.001$), which confirmed *Hypotheses 3* and *6*, respectively. These findings were based on the fact that the correlation between women's political empowerment and tourism involvement was found to be positive and significant. In a similar vein, the impact of social empowerment on tourist engagement was significant, as well as positive (t -value = 2.005 , $p < 0.001$), which provides support for *Hypothesis 2*. Additionally, social empowerment displayed a positive and significant link with sustainable tourism growth ($\beta = 0.156$, t -value = 1.969 , $p < 0.001$), which led to the approval of *Hypothesis 5*.

In conclusion, it was discovered that engagement in tourism has a good and substantial influence on the development of sustainable tourism ($\beta = 0.508$, t -value = 7.306 , $p < 0.001$), which confirms *Hypothesis 7*.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the emphasis of this study has been on the emancipation of women via the industry of tourism, as well as the direct and indirect impacts of this empowerment on the growth of environmentally responsible tourism. In order to evaluate women's empowerment brought about by tourism, the research uses a multidimensional empowerment scale that takes into account psychological, social, and political aspects of empowerment.

The findings, which complement the findings of earlier research in the context of Saudi Arabia (KSA), indicate that tourism is a mechanism through which women in the nation might gain more autonomy. The degree to which women feel psychologically and politically empowered is positively and significantly correlated with the amount of time and money they spend participating in tourism-related activities. This conclusion is consistent with findings from earlier studies that imply locals' psychological and political empowerment may impact their participation in tourism, especially the participation of women.

On the other hand, the direct influence of women's psychological empowerment on the growth of sustainable tourism is tenuous at best, although good, and mostly inconsequential. This might be linked to the cultural and socioeconomic backdrop of Bangladesh, where males dominate society, and women may encounter minimal community support if they want to engage in the tourist industry. The empowerment of women in society, which is heavily impacted by culture and social practices, has a less significant effect on the growth of sustainable tourism. However, inadequate social empowerment among women does not necessarily nullify the good effects of positive empowerment; rather, it may inhibit cooperation within the community and perpetuate gender inequities.

According to the findings, participation in tourism acts as a partial mediator of the link between psychological and political empowerment on the one hand and the growth of environmentally responsible tourism on the other. In addition, there is complete mediation present in the connection between social empowerment and the growth of sustainable tourism. According to this evidence, sustainable tourism development cannot be completed to its full potential without the social empowerment of women and their active participation in the tourist development process.

These results have consequences for the decision-makers in charge of tourist strategy, particularly in underdeveloped nations like Bangladesh. In addition to concentrating on women's political empowerment, policymakers should also give thought to women's social empowerment and the integration of women into their local communities. For the sake of promoting tourist growth and attaining sustainability, it is vital to raise awareness among local populations about the significance of women's participation in the tourism industry. Additionally, it is essential to address problems of cultural values and gender inequality. Hotels and other businesses in the tourism industry should take active steps to integrate women into their local communities, work to foster a sense of community spirit, and ensure that women have equal access to chances for professional progression and leadership roles.

To comprehend women's empowerment via tourism, academics need to embrace a multidimensional approach to empowerment. This is vital since women's empowerment may take many forms. This research sheds light on the connections that exist between the empowerment of women, women's engagement in the tourist industry, and the growth of sustainable tourism. In the future, further study may investigate the many aspects that might work as mediators or moderators to guarantee the sustainability of tourism, particularly in nations where the tourist industry is still in its formative phases of growth. In addition, the research highlights the importance of women's empowerment and their participation in tourism development as a means of contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations.

In general, the findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of women's engagement in the travel and tourist business by drawing attention to the possibilities available to women in the field as well as the obstacles they confront there. It highlights the need for not just empowerment in name but also the implementation of social protection

measures, including insurance, workplace safety, and gender justice, in order to solve the challenges and downsides that were highlighted in the study. The government of Bangladesh has been working on expanding opportunities for women to participate in the tourism industry and creating a more secure and pleasant environment for visitors from all over the world, as well as tourists from Bangladesh.

Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests associated with the research project.

Ethical Approval

This research project has been reviewed and the procedures have been deemed to be in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and have been deemed to be acceptable for the conduct of research involving human subjects. The rights and well-being of participants respected and protected throughout the study.

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