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# Residents' Support for Tourism: An Empowerment Perspective with Mediating Roles of Attitudes and Trust in Organisations

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**Abstract**

While resident empowerment has been considered a crucial factor in predicting their support for tourism, the complex empowerment process is still underexplored. This research studies how residents' attitudes and trust in tourism organisations influence the relationship between empowerment and support for tourism while considering empowerment as a higher-order construct. Data were collected from 334 residents at coastal tourist destinations in Karnataka, India. A convenience sampling technique was employed. The responses were analysed employing PLS-SEM and a disjoint two-stage approach using SmartPLS 4 software. The findings confirm both direct and indirect positive relations between empowerment and support for tourism. The results show that residents' attitude towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations partially mediates the relationship between empowerment and support for tourism development. In addition, the study also validates the higher-order nature of empowerment, providing a better understanding of the empowerment process. This study provides a novel view of the empowerment process with residents' attitudes towards tourism and trust in organisations as mediators. This provides a new perspective for tourism developers on empowering residents and gaining their support. The results enhance the theoretical understanding of the empowerment process and offer novel insights to tourism developers and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Empowerment; trust; attitudes; PLS-SEM; higher-order construct

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## Introduction

Residents' support plays an essential role in the tourism development process due to its contribution to a destination's financial and social development (Malik et al., 2024). Without their support, successfully developing a destination can be challenging, as tourists may feel unwelcome by residents (Woosnam et al., 2024). In addition, tourists would like to experience the local traditions and livelihood rather than just a mere visit to a destination (Schlesinger et al., 2024). Giampiccoli & Saayman (2018) highlight the importance of local participation in mitigating tourism's negative impacts in their study. Additionally, such engagements foster a favourable outlook towards tourism (Ahmed & Dar, 2024). Resident empowerment (RE) has played a major role in gaining their support for tourism development (SFTD) (Castillo-Vizuete et al., 2024). The empowerment is a concept that evolved from community psychology and was defined by Rapaport (1987:122) as a mechanism by which the "people, organisations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs". Empowerment is a complex process (Park et al., 2024). In tourism, it is defined by Aghazamani & Hunt (2017:335) as "A multidimensional, context-dependent, and dynamic process that provides humans, individually or collectively, with greater agency, freedom, and capacity to improve their quality of life as a function of engagement with the phenomenon of tourism". For tourism developers, understanding the empowerment process is essential to achieve sustainable tourism development (Park et al., 2024). RE leads to a positive attitude towards tourism and supporting behaviour for tourism development (Ahn & Bessiere, 2022). Over the years, research on residents' attitudes toward tourism has become a popular area of study. The RE is considered one of the key factors in determining their attitude, particularly observed among residents who do not gain any direct economic benefits (Maruyama et al., 2017). Since government organisations play a direct role in tourism development-related decisions, it is important to gain residents' trust in these actors (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016). The residents' trust in tourism organisations will result in positive behaviours, thus gaining their SFTD (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). While Nunkoo & Ramkissoon (2012) found a positive relationship between empowerment and trust, others, like Nunkoo & Smith (2013), have found a negative relationship. Therefore, there is a need for further empirical research in the tourism context to fully understand the relationship between residents' empowerment, trust and SFTD (Tichaawa et al., 2023). Although studies focus on residents' attitudes towards tourism and their trust in tourism organisations, there remains an empirical scarcity in understanding these relationships. Focusing on these gaps would provide stronger insights into the multidimensional nature of the RE process. Many studies on empowerment to date have focused on new dimensions or frameworks, empowerment processes or the antecedents and outcomes. Studies examining the higher-order nature of empowerment are scarce (Peterson, 2014). Based on these gaps, this study was conducted with two objectives: a) To understand the comprehensive relationship between RE and SFTD by testing the mediating effects of residents' attitudes towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations, and b) To empirically investigate empowerment as a higher-order construct with psychological, political and social dimensions to understand the complex empowerment process.

## Literature review

### *Theoretical background*

This study adopted the empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000) to understand the hypothesised relationships. Empowerment can be understood as efforts taken by an individual or a group to enhance one's competency and influence the surroundings, thereby controlling one's destiny (Rappaport, 1981; Zimmerman, 2000). Empowered individuals can become decision-makers and play a crucial role in transforming social mechanisms that contribute to such problems (Rappaport, 1981, 1987). Empowerment has taken the central stage in recent years of tourism-related studies. This increased interest may be mainly due to its role in gaining residents' SFTD. Though scholars have tried to define empowerment in different contexts, in the area of tourism, empowerment is defined by Aghazamani & Hunt (2017:335) as "A multidimensional, context-dependent, and dynamic process that provides humans, individually or collectively, with greater agency, freedom, and capacity to improve their quality of life as a function of engagement with the phenomenon of tourism". This study utilises the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS), developed by Boley & McGehee (2014), a proven measure with several cross-cultural verifications. According to Boley & McGehee (2014), RE comprises three sub-dimensions: psychological, social and political. The psychological dimension of empowerment relates to the enhanced self-esteem of residents due to tourists' recognition of their culture, resources, and traditions (Scheyvens, 1999). The social dimension of empowerment reflects the social cohesion achieved through tourism (Ibid), while the political dimension captures that the residents are fairly represented and have a voice in decision-making activities (Boley & McGehee, 2014).

### *Empowerment as a higher-order construct*

According to Peterson (2014), empowerment can be conceptualised using a hybrid higher-order approach. Zimmerman (1995) presented three components of Psychological empowerment: intrapersonal, interactional and behavioural components. These components merged to form a personality comprised of self-belief, understanding of one's environment and engaging and influencing behaviours. He also noted that all three components are needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of empowerment. Furthermore, Peterson (2014) highlights the multidimensional nature of empowerment by examining the superordinate (reflective) and aggregate (formative) aspects of the empowerment construct. In the superordinate approach, the empowerment construct is considered a reflection of its dimensions, while in the aggregate approach, the empowerment construct is caused by its dimensions. Peterson (2014) recommends hybrid abstraction, which integrates both reflective and formative planes. Therefore, this study conceptualises empowerment as a higher-order construct, and its dimensions are considered lower-order constructs. While the dimensions (lower-order constructs) together cause empowerment in a formative manner, the dimensions themselves are reflectively measured by their respective indicators. According to MacKenzie et al. (2005), there are three criteria for determining whether a construct is reflective or formative. Accordingly, the lower-order construct is to be formative; at first, there should be different antecedents and outcomes of indicators. The second criterion is that they should not have interchangeable concepts and no covariation of dimensions. In this study, the dimensions have unique antecedents and outcomes. For example, psychological empowerment is formed by individual self-esteem and leads to an enhanced state of personal well-being, while social empowerment is caused by community cohesion and leads to enhanced social support. Similarly, political empowerment results from communities' political structures and leads to fair and equal representation. Though these three dimensions collectively shape empowerment, they are distinct from each other and not interchangeable. The third criterion is that these three dimensions are not strongly correlated. For example, a resident may feel an enhanced sense of self-esteem and thereby feel psychologically empowered. However, they may not have a role in the decision-making or be politically empowered. However, the indicators of each of these dimensions are reflective as they are manifestations of the respective dimensions. For example, while the indicator "Tourism makes me proud to be a resident of this community" successfully expresses psychological empowerment, "Tourism makes me feel more connected to my community" represents social empowerment. Similarly, "I feel I have a voice in tourism development decisions in my community" reflects the essence of political empowerment. The above-discussed aspects support the reflective-formative conceptualisation of empowerment in the studied nomological model.

### *Literature review and hypotheses development*

*Resident empowerment and support for tourism*

RE is crucial for fostering SFTD (Moreira dos Santos et al., 2024). Several studies highlight different dimensions and impacts of empowerment on residents' attitudes toward tourism. For example, a study investigating residents' support for tourism behaviour from a psychological perspective revealed that psychological empowerment had a significant positive impact on residents' tourism support behaviour (Song et al., 2024). In addition, Gautam & Bhalla (2024) found that social empowerment also plays a vital role in gaining residents' support for tourism. However, the impact of RE as a higher-order construct is yet to be tested; it can be argued that it will positively influence the residents' SFTD. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H1: RE has a significant positive influence on their SFTD*

*Resident empowerment and attitude*

While the sociocultural determinants are considered influential factors in forming residents' attitudes, especially among those who do not gain any direct financial benefits from tourism activities (Wang & Pfister, 2008), Boley & McGehee (2014) came

up with a suggestion to combine Social Exchange Theory (SET) with more comprehensive theories (psychological, social and political empowerment) to understand the complex nature of resident attitudes towards tourism. Though academic studies in tourism have taken empowerment as an essential factor for the successful development of the sector, exploring empowerment as a construct concerning resident attitude is vague (Joo et al., 2020). While Castri, D. (2004) considers psychological empowerment as an essential component in tourism, he also believes that social empowerment acts as a major player in uniting people to achieve common goals. On the other hand, the tourism literature closely links political empowerment with power (Látková & Vogt, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). While psychological empowerment fosters pride among residents, social empowerment helps to bring people together to form a unified community, and political empowerment provides access to power (U. Maruyama et al., 2017). Another study showed a positive relationship between residents' attitudes towards the positive impacts of tourism and empowerment (Ranasinghe & Pradeepamali, 2019). Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

*H2: RE has a significant positive impact on their attitude towards tourism development*

*Residents' empowerment and trust*

Trust is a psychological state, as Rousseau et al. (1998:395) noted, "Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another". Trust in organisations involved in governance is vital for successfully executing tourism projects. When residents feel empowered and see tangible benefits from tourism, their trust in local government increases (Nunkoo, 2015; Pagliara et al., 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2024). While the relationship between empowerment and trust is not well-documented in the tourism literature, a positive correlation between these constructs has been validated outside of tourism. For example, studies in various institutions, such as IT and education, have shown that when employees feel empowered, they tend to trust their organisation and leaders more (Moye et al., 2005; V. Singh, 2020). On the premise of this argument, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

*H3: Residents' empowerment positively influences their trust in tourism organisations.*

*Residents' attitude and support for tourism development*

Scholars have examined various theories and aspects to understand the residents' attitudes and their SFTD. For example, according to SET and the Theory of Reasoned Action, residents' support for tourism is significantly influenced by their perceived benefits and costs (Choudhary & Sharma, 2024; Hao et al., 2014; Lança et al., 2024). On the other hand, residents' support will be reduced if they perceive the negative effects of tourism, such as societal disruption and environmental decline (Bertan et al., 2013; Hao et al., 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H4: Residents' attitudes towards tourism development have a significant positive impact on their SFTD.*

*Residents' trust in tourism organisations and their support for tourism development*

Trust plays an essential role in understanding organisations, relationships and tourism development (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016). Simpson (2007) posits that trust is a single component responsible for properly functioning and developing relationships. Tourism planning and development can be facilitated at the community level by building trust in tourism organisations among residents. A community's support for development is affected by its perceived trust in local institutions (Lühiste, 2006). Gursoy et al. (2017) studied the relationship between trust and residents' support in the context of mega events and found that trust indeed affects residents' support significantly. However, Nunkoo & Gursoy (2017) argue that the relationship between residents' trust and their support for tourism is contextual, and in some cases, it may be vital, but not in others. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

*H5: Residents' trust in the tourism organisations positively impacts their SFTD.*

*Trust as a mediator*

Trust in local government organisations and tourism management is crucial for gaining resident SFTD. When residents trust the entities managing tourism, they are more likely to perceive the benefits of tourism positively and support its development (Choudhary & Sharma, 2024; Nunkoo, 2015; Rodrigues et al., 2024). Trust serves as a mediator, enhancing the impact of empowerment on support for tourism. For instance, residents who feel empowered and trust their local government are more likely to support tourism initiatives (Nunkoo, 2015; Rodrigues et al., 2024). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H6: Residents' trust in tourism organisations mediates the relationship between their empowerment and SFTD.*

*Attitude as a mediator*

Empowerment has been considered an influential factor in terms of gaining their support for the development of tourism (Ahn & Bessiere, 2023; Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Khalid et al., 2019; Saleem Wani et al., 2024). There is a chance of higher engagement and support for tourism initiatives among the empowered residents, as they feel they have benefited from such

development. Residents' attitudes towards tourism, shaped by their perceptions of costs and benefits, play a mediating role between empowerment and support for tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H7: Residents' attitudes towards tourism mediate RE and their SFTD.*

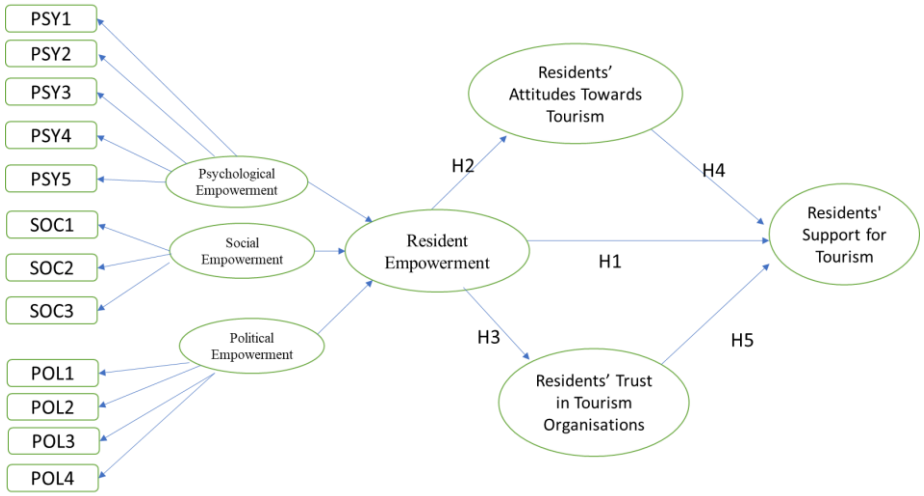


**Figure 1: Conceptual model**

## Methodology

The scales for this study were adopted from the previous studies. RE, comprising three sub-dimensions (psychological, social, and political), was adopted from Boley & McGehee (2014). The psychological sub-dimension had five items, while social and political empowerment had three and four items, respectively. The residents' attitude towards tourism comprises four items, adopted from Shen et al. (2019). Residents' trust towards the government actors was measured using five items (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Finally, the dependent variable, SFTD, was adopted from Nicholas et al. (2009). This scale had six items. With the assistance of dual language experts, the questionnaire was translated into the local language, Kannada. The survey instrument was first pilot-tested with 33 respondents before its utilisation to confirm its clarity and readability. The Cronbach's alpha was found to be above the required level of 0.7, confirming satisfactory content reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, no changes were made in the questionnaire. The final questionnaire had 27 items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. (1 being Strongly Disagree and 5 being Strongly Agree, except for residents' trust in tourism organisations, where 1 being strongly un-trustful and 5 being strongly trustful). This study followed a quantitative research design. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The online survey questionnaire was distributed to known residents of the region, who were asked to share it further with their friends and family in the area. Additionally, the physical questionnaire was distributed to the resident entrepreneurs. The researchers visited the beachside business owners and were requested to participate. Once their consent was obtained, they were asked to fill out the questionnaire. A total of 368 responses were collected. A thorough review of the data was performed, and responses with missing or incomplete values were removed. After cleaning the data, a final count of 334 usable data points was utilised for the analysis.

The maximum number of respondents was from the young age group of 20-30 (46.7%), followed by 64 (19.2%) from the 30-40 age group and 63 (18.9%) from the 40-50 age group. While 38 (11.4%) respondents were from the 50-60 age group, the number of respondents above 60 was only 13 (3.9%). The male respondents (195-58.4%) held a significant share, while the female respondents were 139 (41.6%). The highest number of respondents (157 – 47%) were undergraduate students, followed by those with either a metric or less education (96 – 26.7%), postgraduates (67 – 20.1%), and very few with doctorate degrees (12 – 3.6%). Merely 2 (0.6%) of respondents mentioned other education qualifications. Regarding occupation, 132 (39.5%) of respondents were employed. While 93 respondents (27.8%) were self-employed, 61 (18.3%) were students. There were 17 (5.1%) of homemakers, and 31 (9.3%) were unemployed. This study adopted a widely used statistical method of Harman's signal factor test to verify if a single factor in the given data set leads to high variance (more than 50%) in the studied model (Baumgartner et al., 2021). In this study, the unidimensional factor recorded only 34.82% of the variance, well below the required limit. Therefore, there remains no concern for common method bias. Also, this study utilised online and offline survey methods to maintain the respondents' anonymity, which has helped us further overcome CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2024). The data were examined using the partial least squares (PLS) regression technique, utilising SmartPLS version 4 software**.** This study followed the disjoint two-stage approach to analyse the reflective-formative model (Becker et al., 2023). The two-stage approach is a better method to achieve accurate statistical results, especially while analysing the path from composite construct to endogenous and also from exogenous to second-order constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2019). The measurement model was examined without RE's higher-order construct (HOC). The structural model was tested, including latent variables calculated during the first stage as the indicators of HOC, using the bootstrapping technique with 5000 resamples following the suggestions by Hair et al.(2017) to achieve more robust results.

## Results

### *Construct reliability and validity*

The convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs forming the outer model was assessed using a measurement model. The convergent validity is tested using outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Cronbach Alpha (Hair et al., 2017). The factor loadings were above the acceptable level of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019), CR was above 0.7, AVE values were above 0.5, and the Cronbach alpha was also well above 0.7 (Table 1). These values are well within the recommended threshold limits, indicating that all the indicators of each construct are indeed measuring the underlying concepts (Edeh et al., 2023). Further, the discriminant validity for the outer model was tested by the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 2 below, all the values are under the required threshold limit of 0.85, confirming the discriminant validity. The SRMR value for the estimated model was 0.082, which is the acceptable limit (Henseler et al., 2016), confirming the model fit.

**Table 1: Convergent validity**

| Construct | Items | Outer Loadings | Cronbach Alpha | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards tourism | ATTD1 | 0.722 | 0.846 | 0.846 | 0.688 |
| | ATTD2 | 0.883 | | | |
| | ATTD3 | 0.882 | | | |
| | ATTD4 | 0.819 | | | |
| Political Empowerment | POL1 | 0.651 | 0.843 | 0.866 | 0.688 |
| | POL2 | 0.894 | | | |
| | POL3 | 0.878 | | | |
| | POL4 | 0.872 | | | |
| Psychological Empowerment | PSY1 | 0.846 | 0.864 | 0.872 | 0.648 |
| | PSY2 | 0.850 | | | |
| | PSY3 | 0.739 | | | |
| | PSY4 | 0.813 | | | |
| | PSY5 | 0.771 | | | |
| Social Empowerment | SOC1 | 0.793 | 0.773 | 0.780 | 0.684 |
| | SOC2 | 0.841 | | | |
| | SOC3 | 0.847 | | | |
| Trust in tourism organisations | TRU1 | 0.880 | 0.871 | 0.887 | 0.661 |
| | TRU2 | 0.808 | | | |
| | TRU3 | 0.823 | | | |
| | TRU4 | 0.821 | | | |
| | TRU5 | 0.726 | | | |
| Support for tourism development | SUP1 | 0.594 | 0.833 | 0.835 | 0.548 |
| | SUP2 | 0.747 | | | |
| | SUP3 | 0.785 | | | |
| | SUP4 | 0.780 | | | |
| | SUP5 | 0.784 | | | |
| | SUP6 | 0.733 | | | |

ATT= Attitude Towards Tourism, POL =Political Empowerment, PSY=Psychological Empowerment, SOC=Social Empowerment, TRU=Trust in Government Organisations, and SUP=support for Tourism Development, CR=Composte Reliability, AVE=Average Variance Extracted

**Table 2: Discriminant validity**

| | ATT | POLEM | PSY | SOCEMP | SUP | TRUST |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ATT | | | | | | |
| POLEM | 0.614 | | | | | |
| PSY | 0.636 | 0.461 | | | | |
| SOCEMP | 0.713 | 0.686 | 0.777 | | | |
| SUP | 0.701 | 0.499 | 0.631 | 0.563 | | |
| TRUST | 0.347 | 0.274 | 0.298 | 0.285 | 0.501 | |

ATT= Attitude Towards Tourism, POL =Political Empowerment, PSY=Psychological Empowerment, SOC=Social Empowerment, TRU=Trust in Tourism Organisations, and SUP=Support for Tourism Development. In addition, the formative constructs are evaluated through weights, t-values and the variation inflation factor (VIF) (Sarstedt et al., 2020). According to Table 3, the VIF values were well below the required level of 5 (Akinwande et al., 2015). The higher-order construct is further validated by outer weights, which were above the threshold level of 0.1 (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, the validity of HOC is established.

**Table 3: Higher-order construct validity**

| Constructs | VIF | Outer Weights | t-values | *p*-values | Outer Loadings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| POL → EMP | 1.406 | 0.400 | 5.375 | 0.000 | 0.757 |
| SOC → EMP | 1.784 | 0.526 | 6.384 | 0.000 | 0.870 |
| PSY → EMP | 2.118 | 0.283 | 2.987 | 0.003 | 0.845 |

POL=Political Empowerment, PSY=Psychological Empowerment, SOC=Social Empowerment, EMP=Resident Empowerment

### *Hypotheses testing*

The structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The structural model analysis used the beta and t-values by bootstrapping with a resample size of 5000. The latent variable scores obtained were introduced as indicators for the higher-order construct (Becker et al., 2023).

*Direct effects*

According to Table 4, RE had a significant positive impact on their SFTD ( β = 0.298, p < 0.001) and attitude towards tourism (β = 0.661, p < 0.001). Thus, H1 and H2 are supported.

Further, results indicate that RE positively impacted their trust towards government organisations (β = 0.308, p < 0.001). Thus, H3 is also supported. Similarly, results indicate that residents' attitudes positively impacted their SFTD (β = 0.334, p < 0.001) and their trust towards government organisations influenced their SFTD (β = 0.242, p < 0.001). Thus, H4 and H5 are also supported.

**Table 4: Direct effects**

| Hypotheses | | β value | SD | t- statistics | *p*- values | Decision | 95% Boot CI | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | LL | UL |
| H1 | EMP → SUP | 0.298 | 0.061 | 4.916 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.178 | 0.415 |
| H2 | EMP → ATT | 0.661 | 0.034 | 19.680 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.594 | 0.727 |
| H3 | EMP →TRU | 0.308 | 0.060 | 5.147 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.196 | 0.431 |
| H4 | ATT → SUP | 0.334 | 0.063 | 5.272 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.210 | 0.456 |
| H5 | TRUST → SUP | 0.242 | 0.048 | 5.005 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.149 | 0.342 |

*Indirect effects*

A mediation analysis was conducted to estimate the mediating effect of residents' attitudes towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations between RE and SFTD. The results shown in Table 5 show a significant total effect between RE and SFTD (β = 0.594, p < 0.005). However, this effect is mediated partially by residents' attitude and trust in tourism organisations, which can be interpreted by a significant total indirect effect (β = 0.296, p < 0.005). In addition, through the specific indirect effects, it is observed that residents' attitude towards tourism shows a slightly stronger mediation (β = 0.221, p < 0.005) than their trust in tourism organisations (β = 0.075, p < 0.005). This supports our hypotheses H6 and H7. However, as the direct effect between RE and SFTD is significant in the presence of mediators, we can conclude that residents' attitudes towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations partially mediate the relationship.

**Table 5: Indirect effects**

| **Path** | | **β value** | **t- statistics** | ***p*- values** | **Decision** | **95% Boot CI** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | **LL** | **UL** |
| Total effect EMP → SUP | | 0.594 | 15.813 | 0.000 | | | |
| Total indirect effect EMP → SUP | | 0.296 | 6.311 | 0.000 | | | |
| **Hypotheses** | | | | | | | |
| H6 | EMP →TRU→ SUP | 0.075 | 3.389 | 0.001 | Yes | 0.039 | 0.126 |
| H7 | EMP → ATT →SUP | 0.221 | 4.970 | 0.000 | Yes | 0.138 | 0.311 |

## Discussion

This study enhanced the academic understanding of the link between RE and SFTD. Specifically, residents' attitudes towards tourism and their trust in tourism organisations as mediators in the context of coastal tourism in Karnataka, India. Empowerment as a higher-order construct was also empirically examined to better understand the complex empowerment process. The hypotheses for the study were developed based on the empowerment theory. All the hypothesised relationships were supported, confirming the relevance of empowerment theory in a tourism context. Firstly, the positive effect of residents' empowerment (Psychological, Social and Political) on their SFTD shows more chances of empowered residents supporting the coastal tourism initiatives. This finding aligns with the previous results of Castillo-Vizuete et al.(2024) and Gautam & Bhalla (2024), who found that there are more chances of residents supporting tourism development when they feel empowered. And as posited by Khaki et al. (2023), residents can make meaningful contributions to tourism development. Secondly, the results show that empowered residents will develop a positive attitude towards tourism and, in turn, affect their SFTD. This finding supports the earlier study by Aleshinloye et al.(2022), where they found that resident attitude reflects their empowerment through tourism. On the other hand, the results also show that RE significantly affects their trust in tourism institutes and, in turn, affects the SFTD. This further confirms the findings by Rodrigues et al.(2024) that trust in tourism organisations is an important factor in gaining residents' SFTD. Third, the outcomes of this research show that residents' attitudes towards tourism and their trust in tourism organisations significantly mediate the relationship between RE and their SFTD. This further strengthens the notion of earlier studies that residents' attitudes (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012) and trust (Nunkoo, 2015) play an essential role in achieving residents' support for tourism. Finally, this study also analyses the integration of psychological, political, and social dimensions into a second-order construct of empowerment. This provides a nuanced empirical approach to studying the complex empowerment process. It further strengthens the empowerment theory conceptualised by Zimmerman (2000) and provides insights into the results of integrated dimensions of empowerment and its effect on resident SFTD.

## Conclusion

This research examined the role of RE in gaining SFTD mediated by residents' attitudes towards tourism and their trust in tourism organisations. It confirms that empowering the residents can help in gaining their SFTD. By including residents' attitudes and trust as mediators, this study helps understand how empowerment transforms into supporting behaviour for tourism development. The results show that empowered residents develop a positive attitude and showcase trust in tourism organisations. Thus, they are provided with a sense of control, which is further reflected in their supporting behaviour towards tourism. Therefore, this study helps clarify the complex nature of the empowerment process. In addition, the study used a

nuanced methodological contribution by considering empowerment as a higher-order construct. This approach provides a better understanding of the complex nature of empowerment. And the results empirically validate the higher-order nature of empowerment, which helps in the theoretical progression of the empowerment concept. This study demonstrates that RE, as an integration of its dimensions (psychological, political, and social), has a positive effect on residents' SFTD. This aligns with the suggestions provided by Peterson(2014), which state that there is a need to conceptualise empowerment with different degrees of abstraction. This study offers a new perspective to investigate the complex empowerment process. The study adds to the growing body of literature and validates the higher-order nature of empowerment. Through the disjoint two-stage approach, this study validates the reflective-formative nature of empowerment. This further strengthens the multi-dimensional nature of empowerment as argued by earlier studies (Scheyvens, 1999). The modelling approach used in the study helps in understanding that while the dimensions of empowerment remain distinct, together they interact to create a construct that significantly affects supporting behaviour. This study further strengthens the empowerment theory by validating the multi-dimensional nature of empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). Also, empowerment is positively linked to residents' attitudes towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations. This provides a theoretical mechanism to better understand how the residents' behaviour is formed through empowerment. Though empowerment theory is used in various fields, it has not been explored much in tourism (Eluwole et al., 2022). Thus, this study further explores the empowerment theory in tourism research.

In a realistic world, this research helps understand the significance of residents in successfully developing tourism. It helps tourism developers, authorities, and stakeholders, especially in an emerging coastal tourism destination, to know how to harness residents' SFTD. The study found that residents' attitude towards tourism and trust in tourism organisations successfully mediates the association between RE and SFTD. It shows the importance of developing strategies focusing on residents' involvement and participation in destination governance. Further, it highlights the need to build trust among the residents and empower them. The study shows that an empowered resident needs to feel that the local authorities are trustworthy and develop a positive attitude towards tourism. Such residents may develop a positive behaviour towards tourism and exhibit support. This might require the developers to have a transparent policy and communication, involving residents in development plans and ensuring that the benefits reach the locals. In addition, the validation of empowerment as a multi-dimensional concept highlights the need to focus on all dimensions rather than focusing on any one at a time. For example, involving residents in the decision-making process would not be enough unless they also feel a sense of pride and cultural safety. This confirms the need for a holistic development process while developing destinations.

## Limitations and future recommendations

Though this study offers valuable academic and practical insights, several limitations exist. First, the contextual limitation. The study was limited to the coastal tourism locations of Karnataka state. This should be considered while inferring the findings of this study. In future, similar studies could be conducted in other contexts and cultural backgrounds to validate the findings. Second, this study included three dimensions of psychological, political and social empowerment. Future researchers could further consider other dimensions, such as economic, cultural, and environmental, while studying the higher-order nature of empowerment. Third, the study adopted a cross-sectional design. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to understand how residents' trust in tourism organisations develops over time and its effect on their behaviour. Finally, future studies can explore factors like willingness to participate and community attachment in the empowerment process.

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