



Factors Influencing Tourist Satisfaction In Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development In Shaanxi Province China

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Abstract

Shaanxi is widely recognized for its rich historical, material, and normative cultural resources in China. However, the sustainable transformation of these resources into satisfying tourism experiences requires stronger integration of cultural preservation, tourism management, support facilities, and development planning. This study examines the factors influencing tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 752 stakeholders in Shaanxi's cultural and tourism sectors, including cultural attraction organizations, tourism organizations, local village heads, government officers, tourists, and supporting facility organizations. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis. The findings show that: (1) respondents perceived Shaanxi's material culture, norm culture, tourism industry, support facilities, and cultural tourism development plans positively; (2) ANOVA results revealed significant differences among stakeholder groups in their perceptions of material culture, norm culture, support facilities, and development planning; and (3) Multiple regression results indicated that material culture, norm culture, tourism management and policy, support facilities, and development plans were all significant positive predictors of tourist satisfaction. Overall, this study provides empirical data on stakeholder perceptions of culture–tourism integration and offers quantitative evidence for promoting sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province.

Keywords: Tourist satisfaction; Sustainable cultural tourism; Cultural heritage; Support facilities; Shaanxi Province; China

1. Introduction

Shaanxi Province is widely recognized as a cradle of Chinese civilization, that is also the reason it is one of the most historically significant regions in China. Located in northwest China, Shaanxi has accumulated rich historical, cultural, and natural resources over more than 3,000 years of recorded history. Around Xi'an city, the province contains major heritage resources such as the the Qin Shi Huang Terracotta Warriors, a collection of life-sized clay soldiers and horses built to guard the tomb of China's first emperor, Hua Shan mountain, Qinling Mountain, and other historical sites that form the Han–Tang cultural circle (Shaanxi Provincial People's Government, 2017). Tourism has become an important pillar of Shaanxi's cultural industry, but its development also faces sustainability challenges. The province has relied heavily on historical heritage, landscape resources, and ticket-based tourism income, which may create long-term risks if visitor growth slows or if cultural resources are not effectively protected (Shaanxi Provincial People's Government, 2026). Therefore, Shaanxi provides a meaningful case for examining how cultural tourism resources can be transformed into sustainable and satisfying tourism experiences.

Cultural tourism refers to tourism activities in which visitors experience tangible and intangible cultural resources, including architectural sites, archaeological remains, monuments, museums, food, performing arts, craftsmanship, local lifestyles, language, rituals, festivals, traditional skills, and community knowledge (UNESCO, 2023). It is not only a leisure activity but also a process of cultural learning, heritage appreciation, and local identity transmission. Sustainable tourism emphasizes the balanced development of tourism, cultural preservation, environmental protection, community benefit, and visitor satisfaction. In the context of Shaanxi Province, sustainable cultural tourism means developing tourism products and services while preserving historical heritage, maintaining cultural authenticity, reducing environmental damage, and improving long-term destination competitiveness. Previous studies indicate that accommodation, preserved environment, authentic culture, local lifestyle, transportation, safety, and catering facilities can influence tourist satisfaction in cultural tourism (Atsız & Akova, 2021; Biswas et al., 2021; Genç & Gülerterkin Genç, 2023).

Despite Shaanxi's strong cultural foundation, its cultural tourism development still faces several problems. Existing studies and the thesis background identify unclear cultural themes, weak target-market positioning, incomplete industrial chains, insufficient coordination among tourism organizations, weak cultural protection awareness, excessive commercialization, and repetitive tourism products as major challenges (Zhang, H., 2025; Yi, L., 2022). Moreover, previous research has discussed cultural tourism development in China, but relatively few studies focus on the current situation of cultural tourism in Shaanxi and the expectations of tourists toward tourism experience in this province. This creates a research gap in understanding how stakeholders perceive Shaanxi's tourism resources, support facilities, cultural attractions, and visitor-oriented services, and how these elements are associated with tourist satisfaction and sustainable tourism development.

Based on this gap, this study addresses one main question: What is the current situation of tourism from tourists' expectations toward tourism in Shaanxi? Accordingly, the study aims to examine the current situation of tourism in Shaanxi and tourists' behaviors and expectations toward tourism in Shaanxi. The research scope covers cultural concepts, tourism management, visitors' behavior, cultural attraction managers, tourism agencies, accommodation providers, tourists, and local government stakeholders. The study combines aspects of visitors' behavioral factors, government policy on cultural tourism, attitude of tourism industry personnel, visitor satisfaction, sustainability of cultural attractions, and local economic growth. By focusing on these aspects, is this study able to provide empirical evidence for understanding tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept and Theory

According to UNESCO, Cultural tourism refers to tourism activities in which visitors experience tangible and intangible cultural resources (UNESCO, 2017). Tangible cultural resources include architectural sites, archaeological remains, monuments, museums, cultural artefacts, and historical landscapes, while intangible cultural resources include food, performing arts, craftsmanship, language, rituals, festivals, traditional skills, knowledge, and local lifestyles (The People's Government of Shaanxi Province, 2021). In this study, cultural tourism is understood as a form of tourism that connects tourists with the material and symbolic meanings of a destination and allows them to experience the cultural identity of Shaanxi Province.

The cultural industry refers to the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural products and services based on heritage, tradition, arts, folk culture, creativity, and technology (Wang et al., 2020). Cultural industry may include architecture, handicrafts, design, fashion, films, music, performing arts, museums, galleries, media, and other cultural products or services (Shorthose, 2004). In cultural tourism, the cultural industry provides the core content of the visitor experience. Material culture, such as historical buildings, artefacts, food, clothing, and facilities, offers visible cultural resources for tourists, while norm culture reflects social values, beliefs, customs, moral practices, and historical identity (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006).

Tourism industry refers to the collection of organizations and services that provide goods and experiences for tourists, including transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, attractions, tour guide services, tourism activities, and supporting facilities (Industrial Tourism Market Report, 2026). The tourism industry can be understood through four major components: management and policy, demand side or tourists, supply side or service providers, and support facilities. Tourism management involves the planning, organizing, and controlling of tourism resources, personnel, attractions, facilities, budgets, and services. Tourism development refers to the process of improving tourism business standards, strategic planning, infrastructure, tourist attractions, and stakeholder capacity in order to support destination growth.

Sustainable cultural tourism emphasizes the balance between tourism development, cultural preservation, environmental protection, community benefit, and tourist satisfaction (UN Tourism, n.d.). In this perspective, tourism development should not only increase visitor numbers or economic income, but also protect cultural heritage, preserve local identity, reduce environmental impact, and improve the quality of tourist experiences (Sharpley, 2020). For Shaanxi Province, sustainable cultural tourism is especially important because the province has rich historical resources, including the Han–Tang cultural circle, the Qin Shi Huang Terracotta Warriors, historical tombs, Hua Shan, Qinling Mountain, and other cultural and natural landscapes (The People's Government of Shaanxi Province, n.d.). These resources create strong tourism potential, but their long-term value depends on effective management, cultural protection, support facilities, and visitor-oriented development.

Tourist satisfaction is a key outcome of sustainable cultural tourism development. Previous studies suggest that tourist satisfaction can be influenced by cultural attractions, preserved environment, authentic culture, local lifestyle, accommodation, transportation, safety, catering facilities, and service quality (Xu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2024). In cultural tourism destinations, tourists are not only concerned with physical attractions, but also with authenticity, interpretation, accessibility, facilities, and the overall experience of local culture. An example is Wuhu Iron Painting, a traditional

Chinese art form, has evolved through integration with cultural tourism and digital media, demonstrating how intangible cultural heritage can be revitalized and contribute to local economic development and cultural identity preservation (Mina & Hussin, 2024). Therefore, the present study examines how cultural industry factors, tourism industry factors, support facilities, and development planning influence tourist satisfaction in Shaanxi Province.

2.2 Hypothesis Development

Cultural industry is an important foundation of cultural tourism because it provides the material and symbolic resources that shape tourist experiences. Material culture, including historical sites, architecture, artefacts, traditional objects, food, and other physical cultural resources, can increase tourists' interest and emotional connection with a destination. Norm culture, including values, beliefs, customs, historical meaning, and social identity, can strengthen the authenticity and educational value of cultural tourism. Previous research indicates that cultural and heritage places are important factors influencing tourist satisfaction in cultural tourism (Alcocer & López Ruiz, 2020, Mina & Hussin, 2024). In Shaanxi Province, rich material culture and norm culture are expected to enhance tourists' cultural experience and satisfaction. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Cultural industry factors significantly influence tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China.

Tourism industry factors also play an essential role in shaping tourist satisfaction. Tourism management and policy provide the institutional foundation for tourism quality, regulation, coordination, and service standards. The demand side reflects tourists' motivations, preferences, and expectations, while the supply side includes tourism organizations, attractions, tour services, accommodation, food, and other service providers. Support facilities such as transportation, accommodation, catering, tourist centers, language services, and communication systems directly affect the convenience and comfort of tourists. Previous studies suggest that transportation, accommodation, safety, catering facilities, and service quality are closely related to tourist satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).. Therefore, stronger tourism industry conditions are expected to improve tourist satisfaction in Shaanxi's cultural tourism development. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Tourism industry factors significantly influence tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China.

Tourists' behaviors and expectations are also central to sustainable cultural tourism. Tourist behavior refers to tourists' decision-making, travel interests, preferences, responses, and expectations. In cultural tourism, tourists may expect authentic food, historical learning, cultural performances, local lifestyles, convenient access, meaningful activities, and high-quality services. Tourism industry characteristics such as attractions, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, activities, and auxiliary services can influence how tourists evaluate their travel experience (Su et al., 2020; Cooper et al., 2018). When tourist expectations are met through attractive cultural resources, convenient facilities, and meaningful experiences, tourist satisfaction is likely to increase (Oliver, 1980; Chen & Chen, 2010). Therefore, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H3: H3: Support Facilities significantly influence tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China.

In addition, development planning is closely related to sustainable cultural tourism because it connects cultural resources, tourism services, infrastructure, stakeholder cooperation, and destination management. Effective planning includes clear goals, methods, resources, implementation, and control (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1976; Gunn & Var, 2002). In Shaanxi Province, development planning may improve tourist satisfaction by promoting cultural heritage restoration, diversified tourism products, tourist facilitation, cooperation among organizations, and tourism management. Since sustainable cultural tourism requires coordinated planning between cultural preservation and tourism service improvement, the fourth hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Development planning significantly influences tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China.

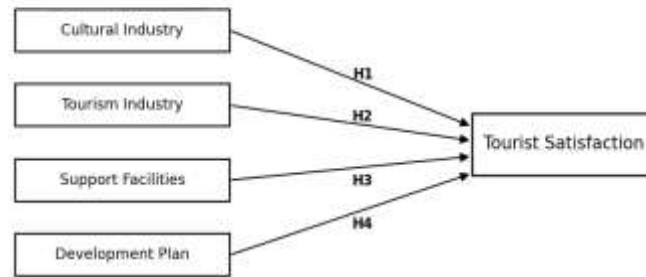


Figure1. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the factors influencing tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China. The quantitative design was appropriate because the study aimed to test the relationships between independent variables and tourist satisfaction through statistical analysis. Based on the conceptual framework, the independent variables were Cultural Industry, Tourism Industry, Support Facilities, and Development Plan, while Tourist Satisfaction was the dependent variable.

The scope of the study was limited to cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China. The content scope focused on cultural industry, tourism industry, support facilities, development planning, and tourist satisfaction. The population scope covered stakeholders related to cultural and tourism activities, including tourists, tourism agencies, accommodation providers, cultural attraction managers, local government officers, and supporting facility organizations. The study was conducted during September–December 2023.

3.2 Data Collection

The population of this study consisted of stakeholders in the cultural and tourism industries of Shaanxi Province. According to the thesis data, the total population included cultural industry organizations and tourism industry organizations in Shaanxi Province. The sample size was determined by using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The final sample consisted of 752 respondents, including 368 respondents from the cultural industry and 384 respondents from the tourism industry.

Convenience sampling was used to select respondents who were directly related to cultural tourism in Shaanxi Province. The respondents were required to meet the following criteria: they had to be stakeholders in Shaanxi's cultural or tourism sector, they had to provide or receive at least one cultural or tourism service in Shaanxi Province, and they had to be willing to provide information for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed both in paper form and online through platforms such as WeChat and online survey links. Data collection was conducted in Shaanxi Province from October to November 2023. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the study and the confidential use of their responses.

3.3 Data Analysis

Before statistical analysis, the collected data were screened and cleaned. The researcher checked the completeness of responses, verified whether respondents met the selection criteria, and excluded incomplete or invalid questionnaires. Only valid and complete responses were retained for analysis.

The questionnaire was assessed for validity and reliability before the formal data collection. Content validity was examined through the Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC), reviewed by five experts from academic, public, and private sectors. Items with an IOC value of 0.70 or above were considered acceptable. Items that did not meet the required standard were revised or removed.

A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents in Shaanxi Province to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, following the commonly accepted reliability standard in social science research.

The cleaned quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe respondents' demographic

characteristics and the general level of each research variable. One-way ANOVA was used to examine whether stakeholder groups differed significantly in their perceptions of cultural tourism factors. Multiple Regression Analysis was then used to test the influence of Cultural Industry, Tourism Industry, Support Facilities, and Development Plan on Tourist Satisfaction.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

This study followed standard ethical principles for social science research. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the research purpose before answering the questionnaire. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were protected throughout the research process. The collected data were used only for academic purposes, and no personal identifying information was disclosed in the analysis or reporting. The study also received institutional ethical approval by the under approval number No. 2567/024 and valid for two years from May 24, 2024, affiliated with National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand.

4. Empirical Analysis

This section presents the quantitative findings, including respondents' demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics of the main research variables, stakeholder-group differences, and regression results for testing the factors influencing tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 752)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	53%
	Female	47%
Age	≤ 30 years	24%
	31–40 years	38%
	41–50 years	26%
	> 50 years	12%
Education	Lower than college degree	8%
	College/Bachelor's degree	56%
	Master's degree	28%
	Doctoral degree	8%
Occupation	Cultural attraction organizations	20%
	Tourism attraction organizations	25%
	Local village heads	10%
	Government officers	18%
	Tourists	20%
	Supporting facility organizations	7%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 752 respondents. The sample was relatively balanced in terms of gender, with 53% male and 47% female respondents. Most respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years, accounting for 38% of the sample, followed by those aged 41–50 years. In terms of education, more than half of the respondents held a college or bachelor's degree, while 28% had a master's degree. The occupational distribution shows that the respondents came from different stakeholder groups, including tourism attraction organizations, cultural attraction organizations, tourists, government officers, local village heads, and supporting facility organizations. This indicates that the sample covered both supply-side and demand-side stakeholders in Shaanxi's cultural tourism sector.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Cultural Industry	4.2	0.64	High
Tourism Industry	3.94	0.7	Moderate to High

Support Facilities	3.89	0.7	Moderate
Development Plan	3.94	0.68	High

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the main research variables. Cultural Industry received the highest mean score ($M = 4.20$, $S.D. = 0.64$), indicating that respondents had a highly positive perception of Shaanxi's cultural resources and cultural tourism foundation. Tourism Industry also showed a moderate-to-high level ($M = 3.94$, $S.D. = 0.70$), suggesting generally favorable perceptions of tourism management, demand-side conditions, and supply-side services. Support Facilities recorded a moderate level ($M = 3.89$, $S.D. = 0.70$), indicating that transportation, accommodation, food services, and language services were viewed as acceptable but still requiring improvement. Development Plan was rated high ($M = 3.94$, $S.D. = 0.68$), suggesting that respondents recognized the importance and presence of planning efforts for cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province.

Table 3. ANOVA Results by Stakeholder Group

Framework Variable	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cultural Industry	4.32	0.002	Significant difference
Tourism Industry	2.15	0.072	Not significant
Support Facilities	3.69	0.006	Significant difference
Development Plan	2.98	0.019	Significant difference

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results comparing stakeholder-group perceptions of the main framework variables. The results show significant differences among stakeholder groups in Cultural Industry ($F = 4.32$, $p = 0.002$), Support Facilities ($F = 3.69$, $p = 0.006$), and Development Plan ($F = 2.98$, $p = 0.019$). These findings suggest that different stakeholder groups had different perceptions of Shaanxi's cultural resources, support facilities, and development planning. However, the difference in Tourism Industry was not statistically significant ($F = 2.15$, $p = 0.072$), indicating that stakeholders held relatively similar views on tourism industry conditions. Overall, the ANOVA results show that stakeholder perspectives vary across several important dimensions of sustainable cultural tourism development.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results for Tourist Satisfaction

Hypothesis	Variable	β	t	p	Interpretation
H1	Cultural Industry	0.32	6.71	$p < 0.001$	Significant positive predictor
H2	Tourism Industry	0.12	2.56	0.011	Significant positive predictor
H3	Support Facilities	0.21	3.85	$p < 0.001$	Significant positive predictor
H4	Development Plan	0.27	5.12	$p < 0.001$	Significant positive predictor
Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.61$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.60$; $F = 103.7$; $p < 0.001$.					

Table 4 presents the multiple regression results for testing the factors influencing tourist satisfaction. The results show that all four framework variables were significant positive predictors of tourist satisfaction. Cultural Industry had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 6.71$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that cultural resources play a central role in shaping tourist satisfaction. Development Plan was also a strong predictor ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 5.12$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that effective planning contributes to better tourist experiences. Support Facilities had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.21$, $t = 3.85$, $p < 0.001$), showing that convenient infrastructure and services improve satisfaction. Tourism Industry also significantly influenced tourist satisfaction ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 2.56$, $p = 0.011$), although its effect was relatively smaller. The model explained 61% of the variance in tourist satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.61$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.60$), and the overall model was statistically significant ($F = 103.7$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H1, H2, H3, and H4 were all supported.

5. Discussion

The empirical findings indicate that Cultural Industry, Tourism Industry, Support Facilities, and Development Plan all significantly influence tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province. Among these factors, Cultural Industry showed the strongest effect on tourist satisfaction, suggesting that Shaanxi's historical sites, material culture, symbolic meanings, traditions, and cultural identity remain the most important sources of tourist experience. Development Plan was the second strongest predictor, indicating that planning quality, tourism facilitation, technology use, management standards, and staff training also contribute substantially to tourist satisfaction. Support Facilities also had a significant positive effect, showing that transportation, accommodation, catering, language services, and tourist information systems are necessary for transforming cultural resources into comfortable travel experiences. Tourism Industry had a smaller but still significant effect, implying that tourism management, policy support, and service coordination provide an important institutional foundation, although they may be less visible to tourists than cultural attractions or facilities.

These findings are consistent with previous research on cultural and heritage tourism. Heritage studies show that cultural resources, destination image, authenticity, and aesthetic experience can significantly enhance tourist satisfaction at heritage destinations (Huete Alcocer & López Ruiz, 2020; Genç & GülerTekin-Genç, 2022). Similarly, Chen and Chen (2010) found that experience quality and perceived value are important determinants of satisfaction among heritage tourists, while Su et al. (2020) confirmed that travel motivation, visitor engagement, destination image, and on-site experience shape satisfaction in heritage tourism. The significant role of Support Facilities and Tourism Industry is also supported by service quality and destination competitiveness literature, which emphasizes that service reliability, accessibility, accommodation, safety, catering, and supporting infrastructure affect tourist evaluations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). In addition, tourism planning literature suggests that effective development planning requires clear goals, resources, implementation, and control, which explains why Development Plan positively contributes to tourist satisfaction (Gunn & Var, 2002). The finding also aligns with recent research showing that cultural tourism integration and digital transformation can help traditional cultural resources maintain relevance and support local cultural identity (Mina & Hussin, 2024).

Critically, the results suggest that sustainable cultural tourism in Shaanxi should not rely only on the abundance of cultural heritage resources. Although Cultural Industry had the strongest effect on tourist satisfaction, cultural resources alone cannot ensure long-term destination sustainability unless they are supported by effective spatial planning, environmental management, accessible facilities, and professional tourism services. From a sustainable tourism planning perspective, heritage destinations must balance visitor satisfaction with cultural preservation, resource protection, infrastructure capacity, and environmental carrying capacity (GSTC, 2019; Mao & Huang, 2026). The relatively smaller effect of Tourism Industry may indicate that tourists often regard management and policy systems as background conditions, but these systems remain essential for regulating tourism growth, reducing pressure on heritage sites, and coordinating service standards. The significant ANOVA differences further imply that stakeholder groups experience Shaanxi's cultural tourism system differently, particularly in relation to cultural resources, support facilities, and development planning. Therefore, future tourism development should avoid a one-size-fits-all model and adopt a more integrated planning approach that considers stakeholder coordination, service quality gaps, environmental protection, and balanced development between major heritage attractions and less-developed areas. Overall, the findings show that tourist satisfaction in Shaanxi is produced through the interaction of cultural value, environmental and spatial planning, service convenience, tourism governance, and sustainable development strategies rather than through heritage resources alone.

6. Conclusion

The empirical analysis from 752 valid questionnaire responses provides evidence on the factors influencing tourist satisfaction in sustainable cultural tourism development in Shaanxi Province, China. The main results are as follows. First, Cultural Industry had the strongest positive effect on tourist satisfaction. Second, Tourism Industry significantly influenced tourist satisfaction. Third, Support Facilities had a significant positive effect. Fourth, Development Plan significantly influenced tourist satisfaction. Overall, the study shows that tourist satisfaction in Shaanxi's sustainable cultural tourism development depends on the combined effects of cultural resources, tourism services, support facilities, development planning, environmental protection, and sustainable destination management.

This study has several limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling may limit the representativeness of the sample. Second, as this study mainly relied on quantitative questionnaire data from Shaanxi Province, future research could adopt a mixed-methods design by combining surveys with interviews or case studies to gain deeper insights into tourists' experiences and stakeholder perspectives across different cultural tourism destinations. Future research could examine additional factors such as digital tourism, cultural authenticity, destination image, community participation, environmental sustainability, and green tourism management.

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