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Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Economic, Social, and Environmental Contributions to Tourism Development in South Sulawesi

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Abstract: This study explores how economic, social, and environmental empowerment affects women entrepreneurs in micro-small-medium enterprises (UMKM) in the tourism sector of South Sulawesi and the resulting implications for sustainable tourism development. This study shows sustainability traits, and all hypotheses offer substantial evidence for the connection between women's attributes of sustainability empowerment and sustainable tourism. To assess the hypotheses and ascertain the reliability and validity of this study, quantitative methods of SmartPLS-SEM 4.0. tool and questionnaire surveys from 100 women entrepreneurs are employed. The findings enhance our comprehension of women's empowerment within theory and provide managerial insights for women entrepreneurs aiming to effectively engage visitors in sustainable tourism development in South Sulawesi. The research concludes the need for collaborative efforts between government and communities to empower women in tourism enterprises, fostering sustainable development. Collaboration between government and community is essential for facilitating women's empowerment in tourism enterprises, including cultural attractions and social entrepreneurship. This study highlights several limitations, focusing only on South Sulawesi with a low sample size, and proposes directions for future investigation.

Keywords: Economic Empowerment; Environmental Empowerment; Social Empowerment; South Sulawesi; Tourism Development

JEL Classification: O13; O44; Q01; R58; Z32

Introduction

Tourism is being substantially expanded in every country globally, including Indonesia (Firman et al., 2023; Moslehpour et al., 2023). Significant advancements have transpired in recent decades owing to the considerable potential of the tourist sector for national revenue (Mhlanga & Denhere, 2024). Tourism remains a significant contributor to national foreign exchange revenues and becomes an important part of Indonesia's economy (Rizaldi et al., 2024). South Sulawesi Province possesses significant potential in the tourism sector on the island of Sulawesi (Adams & Sandarupa, 2024). South Sulawesi's primary tourist offerings include marine sites, particularly Tanjung Bira Beach in Bulukumba for marine

tourism, natural tourism in Tana Toraja in the northern region, and eco-tourism in Makassar, the emblem of South Sulawesi tourism. Numerous additional tourism spots attract both domestic and international visitors.

Women are crucial in marketing, managing, and preserving tourism within their communities (Pécot et al., 2024). National statistics reveal that 54% of employees in the tourism business are female (Ni Ketut Sari & Purnamawati, 2024). The Secretary of Kemenparekraf stated that women are fundamental to societal well-being and integral to tourism and the creative economy. Recent data disclosed by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, indicates that female employees in the tourism sector earn 15 percent less than their male counterparts. Consequently, the participation of women in empowerment initiatives is essential to mitigate that disparity (Gressel et al., 2020). The fifth aim of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to empower women to attain gender equality (Gressel et al., 2020; Nassani et al., 2019; Pécot et al., 2024). Tourism is considered a vital sector that can facilitate this achievement. Nassani et al. (2019) assert that tourism may substantially enhance women's empowerment and elevate economic status. Literature on empowerment delineates three primary characteristics utilized to assess sustainable women's empowerment: economic, social, and environmental in tourism industry (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Joo et al., 2020; Pécot et al., 2024; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

Tourism is a phenomenon that significantly influences economic, social, and environmental empowering dimensions (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021; Shafieisabet & Haratifard, 2020). Economic empowerment fosters tourism to generate employment, promote local development, diversify the economy, and elevate income levels and tax revenue (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; El Badriati et al., 2022; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Social empowerment pertains to the interactions among community members and the impact of tourism activities on women's sense of solidarity and their capacity for collaboration within the community, such as social entrepreneurship (Aquino et al., 2022). Environmental empowerment undoubtedly influences the business and ecology of the tourist hamlet (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Sustainable tourism development management must guarantee elevated visitor contentment, deliver meaningful experiences for clients, augment their understanding of sustainability challenges, and promote sustainable tourism practices (Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021; Streimikiene et al., 2021; Yuli, 2024).

Engagement of the local community in tourism planning and management is essential for fostering sustainable tourism, with community empowerment representing the highest level of participation that facilitates the effective implementation of sustainable practices in the destination area (Firman et al., 2023; Khalid et al., 2019; Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). Tahiri et al. (2022) discovered that sustainable tourism can conserve biodiversity, safeguard cultural heritage, and empower local populations. This research indicates that the efficacy of sustainable tourism is contingent upon various factors, including the degree of local community engagement, effective planning and management, and the comprehension and endorsement from tourists and the tourism sector regarding the

principles and implementation of sustainable tourism (Khalid et al., 2019; Wondirad & Ewnetu, 2019). This research objective aims to examine the impact of women's empowerment in economic, social, and environmental dimensions on the advancement of sustainable tourism within the tourism sector of South Sulawesi Province (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

Research Method

This research employs a quantitative methodology. *Quantitative Research Method* is a research approach grounded in positivist philosophy, used to investigate specific samples, typically utilizing purposive sampling techniques, data collection through research instruments, and quantitative data analysis to evaluate the formulated hypothesis (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). The utilized data type is primary data, collected using procedures such as interviews, documentation, and the distribution of questionnaires both physically and via Google Forms. The study's population comprised women operating firms in the tourism sector, totaling 100 respondents. A minimum sample size of 5-10 times the most significant number of structural paths is recommended for PLS-SEM analyses. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling. This method selects samples based on specific criteria to ensure that the produced data accurately represents the researched population, such as by selecting respondents from diverse tourism-related sectors such as hospitality, retail, and cultural enterprises.

The criteria for respondents are women who own businesses associated with the tourism sector, including hotels, cafes, souvenir stores, and any enterprises directly or indirectly linked to tourism in South Sulawesi Province. Primary data collection was conducted utilizing questionnaires as the principal instrument. However, the questionnaire was validated by experts' feedback, and modifications were made, as shown in Table 1.

The Likert scale serves as an evaluative tool to gauge the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of people or groups concerning the social phenomena under investigation. In the Likert scale, the measured parameters are delineated as indicators of the posed questions. Each instrument component employing the Likert scale encompasses a spectrum of attitudes from highly positive to highly negative, which are subsequently responded to and evaluated by the participants.

The author employed a data-gathering strategy in this study by disseminating questionnaires to participants. A questionnaire is a data collection method that provides respondents with written questions to complete or react to. This tool employs a Likert scale format, a prevalent interval scale utilized in questionnaire development. The Likert scale is classified as an interval scale due to the hierarchical preference levels, where "Strongly Agree" denotes a greater preference than "Agree," and "Agree" surpasses "Neutral." Strongly Agree is assigned a value of 5, Agree a value of 4, Neutral a value of 3, Disagree a value of 2, and Strongly Disagree a value of 1. This study used the PLS-SEM methodology (Sarstedt et al., 2022). This research employs a model of influence relationships. Consequently, the hypothesis is evaluated by employing SEM analysis

procedures utilizing SmartPLS software 4.0. to assess the research design outlined in **Error! Reference source not found.** (Ringle et al., 2022).

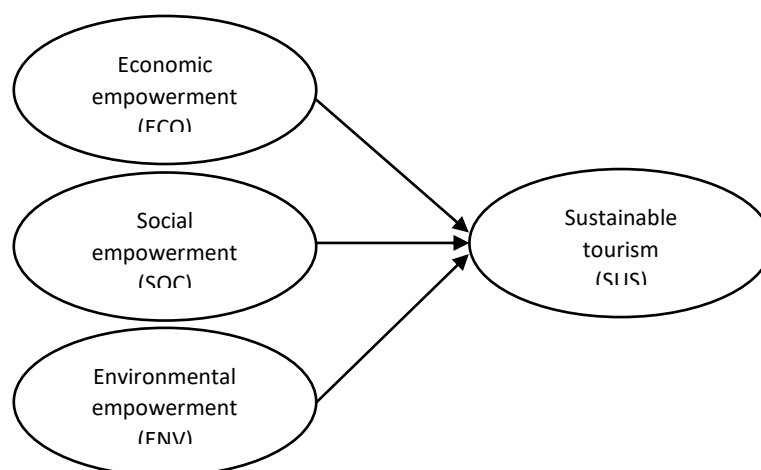


Figure 1 Research design

Table 1 Research items

Aspects	Items
Economic empowerment (ECO)	Tourism provides a fair wage for women in my community. Tourism allows me to enhance my revenue as a female entrepreneur in my area. It is simple for me to receive business cash to grow a tourism firm. Tourism allows me to sustain myself and my family financially.
Social empowerment (SOC)	Tourism in my area helps me feel more connected to the community and broadens my knowledge. Tourism in my area encourages a desire to learn with the community. Tourism in my area allows me to learn about and understand business operations.
Environmental empowerment (ENV)	I am committed to maintaining the cleanliness of my tourist area. The government in my area encourages me to keep tourist attractions clean by avoiding using or decreasing the use of plastic. I constantly take the initiative to remind visitors (tourists) to keep the environment clean by discarding waste in its proper area. The government supports community contributions, particularly from women, to improve the sustainability of the tourism environment in my area.
Sustainable tourism (SUS)	I support sustainable tourism development programs prioritizing women's empowerment in my area. To mitigate the negative environmental impacts of tourism, I adopt government-issued environmental standards/regulations. My active participation in cultural interactions between residents and visitors demonstrates my commitment to fostering the local wisdom of my area's culture. I am willing to work with the government and the community to plan tourist development in my area.

This research incorporates aspects and applications of women's empowerment concerning tourism development from the viewpoint of the female population. This research highlights economic, social, and environmental empowerment towards a significant relationship to sustainable tourism, as referenced in prior studies. As seen in Table 1, the economic aspect contained four items from (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). The social element overviewed three items (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). The environmental aspect examined four items from (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). The sustainable tourism perspective assessed four items (Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

Result and Discussion

In the research of Dash and Paul (2021), the instrument's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α), composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) as metrics. Cronbach's alpha and CR values reached the customary criterion of 0.70. In contrast, the AVE values exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.50, indicating satisfactory CR when above 0.70. All measurement items had outer loadings above 0.50, indicating that the indices meet or exceed the required minimum values (see Table 2). Furthermore, the heterotrait – monotrait ratio (HTMT) values ranged from 0.401 to 0.861, and each variable's AVE was higher than its correlations with other variables, as shown in the Fornell–Larcker criterion in

Table 3. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT are the main ways to check the discriminant validity of variance-based structural equation models, like partial least squares.

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Overview

Aspects	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
ECO	ECO1	0.904	0.761	0.840	0.576
	ECO2	0.866			
	ECO3	0.616			
	ECO4	0.599			
SOC	SOC1	0.852	0.824	0.894	0.738
	SOC2	0.930			
	SOC3	0.818			
ENV	ENV1	0.649	0.725	0.829	0.549
	ENV2	0.767			
	ENV3	0.825			
	ENV4	0.712			
SUS	SUS1	0.708	0.733	0.833	0.556
	SUS2	0.715			
	SUS3	0.767			
	SUS4	0.789			

Table 3 Discriminant validity matrix – Fornell-Larcker & HTMT

	ECO	ENV	SOC	SUS
ECO	0.759	0.401	0.629	0.601

ENV	0.307	0.741	<i>0.861</i>	<i>0.837</i>
SOC	0.519	0.657	0.859	<i>0.847</i>
SUS	0.492	0.616	0.680	0.746

The preliminary round of model assessment focused on resolving any collinearity concerns. All predictor constructs' variance inflation factor (VIF) values were significantly below the 3.3 threshold, signifying that collinearity was not an issue in this investigation (Hair et al., 2022). The importance of the proposed correlations was assessed using the bootstrapping method using 5000 subsamples. The path coefficients were analyzed to evaluate the proposed hypothesis. The analysis revealed statistically significant positive correlations between ECO and SUS ($\beta=0.205$, $p<0.046$), SOC and SUS ($\beta=0.370$, $p<0.000$), and ENV and SUS ($\beta=0.310$, $p<0.000$). This result encapsulated the correlations and bootstrapping path coefficients in Table 5. The model's predictive performance was evaluated using Cohen's criteria for the coefficient of determination (R^2) (Cohen, 2013). This illustrates that the model exhibited significant predictive accuracy, with R^2 values of 0.544 for SUS. Additionally, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI) were used to evaluate the absolute fit of the model (see Table 4). According to Henseler et al. (2015), the SRMR score of 0.103 met the threshold, indicating that a score between 0 - 0.08 signifies a good model fit. Meanwhile, the NFI score 0.653 (close to 1) also met the threshold.

Table 4 Model Fit

Items	Value
SRMR	0.103
NFI	0.653

Table 5 Path coefficients

	Original	Mean	STDEV	T statistics	P values	R-square	Remarks
ECO -> SUS	0.205	0.199	0.103	1.991	0.046	0.544	Positive
SOC -> SUS	0.370	0.372	0.101	3.672	0.000		Positive
ENV -> SUS	0.310	0.331	0.086	3.592	0.000		Positive

The recent study's key findings contribute to the research theoretically and practically. This study contributes to the impact of economic, social, and environmental empowerment on women tourist entrepreneurs in the South Sulawesi tourism sector, particularly within micro-small-medium enterprises (UMKM), and its implications for sustainable tourism. Theoretically implications, this study reveals sustainability characteristics. It demonstrates that all hypotheses significantly support the relationship between women's economic, social, and environmental empowerment features and sustainable tourism (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). From an economic perspective, women in South Sulawesi have assessed that sustainable tourism offers equitable compensation, increases revenue, facilitates business liquidity, and ensures financial sustainability. From a social perspective, women in South Sulawesi have found that sustainable tourism fosters community connectivity and knowledge, stimulates a desire for learning among residents, and provides an

opportunity to comprehend business operations. From an environmental perspective, women in South Sulawesi are committed to ensuring that sustainable tourism preserves the cleanliness of the region.

This study highlights the crucial influence of women's economic, social, and environmental empowerment on the progress of sustainable tourism in UMKM in South Sulawesi (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021; Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Women entrepreneurs view sustainable tourism to achieve fair financial returns, increased revenue, and improved business liquidity (Elshaer et al., 2021; Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). The results align with previous research indicating that women in similar circumstances benefit from increased financial independence and organizational stability (Rughoobur-Seetah et al., 2023). This study illustrates how the involvement of women in sustainable tourism in South Sulawesi contributes to strengthening regional economic resilience, particularly in rural areas, by fostering tourism diversification. This study highlights women's significant role in fostering community connectivity, promoting knowledge exchange, and enhancing learning within local communities. This creates a network of empowerment beyond individual businesses, strengthening the community's capacity to engage in and benefit from sustainable tourism.

Women in South Sulawesi are firmly committed to preserving the region's natural resources through eco-friendly practices and promoting sustainable tourism. This is consistent with other studies suggesting that women embrace sustainable practices, especially within the interconnected areas of tourism and environmental conservation (Gutierrez, 2024). This study clearly highlights that women entrepreneurs in South Sulawesi adopt environmentally sustainable business practices and promote these values within their communities, encouraging greater environmental responsibility. The results highlight that enhancing women's roles in the tourism industry promotes a holistic strategy, merging financial achievement with social and environmental responsibility, securing sustainable growth, and preserving ecological health.

In managerial contributions, the women advocate for maintaining the cleanliness of tourist attractions by minimizing plastic usage, a stance supported by the local government. Additionally, they remind visitors to dispose of waste appropriately and encourage community contributions, particularly from women, to enhance the sustainability of the tourism environment in the area. The research indicates that sustainable tourism development initiatives predominantly focus on women's empowerment. Collaboration between government and community is essential for facilitating women's empowerment in tourism enterprises, including cultural attractions and social entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

These findings enhance the scholarly grasp of women's empowerment and provide practical implications for women entrepreneurs aiming to effectively engage tourists in sustainable tourism development in South Sulawesi. Psychological empowerment is recommended for future studies to enhance women entrepreneurs' contribution to the

behavioral scope. Contribution to government and community is key in facilitating women's entrepreneurship and enhancing tourism development. However, this research also acknowledges several limitations. The sample population is restricted. The examination of empowerment dimensions within the tourism sector in South Sulawesi is constrained. Ultimately, quantitative methodologies constrained the responses from the participants. This investigation reveals multiple deficiencies; future studies must implement several modifications. A larger sample size for location is crucial to analyze a broader range of behaviors and to expand the study area beyond South Sulawesi's tourism since numerous other provinces in Sulawesi might be examined to generalize the findings.

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