Community Perceptions and Resident Support for Sustainable Tourism in Uttarakhand Himalayas: The Role of Perceived Benefits, Quality of Life, and Place Attachment

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the attitude of the residents towards sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand, India through understanding the role played by perceived benefits of tourism on resident's support of the tourism sector, mediated by the quality of life and with the effect of place attachment and community participation as the moderator. A quantitative research design was used and the data was gathered from 320 inhabitants of the main tourist destination areas by means of a structured questionnaire. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data.

The results suggest that the perceived economic benefits ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.001$) and the perceived sociocultural benefits ($\beta = 0.196$, $p < 0.001$) significantly positively affect the resident support for tourism to be sustainable, while the environmental sustainability is not significant ($\beta = 0.068$, $p > 0.05$). The three dimensions of benefit are all significant determinants of perceived quality of life, which in turn has a strong direct impact on resident support ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$). Results also indicate that place attachment plays a significant moderating role between quality of life and resident support whereas community participation has no significant moderating effect.

The study makes a contribution to sustainable tourism literature as it incorporates quality of life (QoL) as a mediation mechanism and clarifies the role of emotional attachment in influencing the attitudes of the residents. The results provide useful suggestions for policy makers to facilitate community based and sustainable tourism development in the Himalayan areas.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, resident support, quality of life, place attachment, Uttarakhand, PLS-SEM.

Introduction

Today, as a key economic sector worldwide, tourism is creating employment opportunities, fostering regional development and cultural exchange. Tourism has a variety of effects on the local population, including economic, social, and environmental repercussions. These influences contribute to the creation of the inhabitants' attitude toward the growth of tourism (Stylidis et al., 2014). Tourism is a major sector of GDP and jobs in India and the Himalayan regions like Uttarakhand are experiencing a significant rise in tourist numbers in the last decade. But this expansion has also sparked significant worries about environmental degradation, the phenomenon of over-tourism, and the adverse effects on fragile mountain ecosystems (Nepal, 2009; Gaur, 2025c; Hussain et al., 2024). As ecological disturbances and infrastructure stress become more prevalent in Uttarakhand, so there is a need for the advancement of sustainable tourism practices. In this context; local residents have a vital role for deciding for the accomplishment of tourism development. Residents are not only the beneficiaries of the affects that tourism has, but rather play an active part as stakeholders whose perspectives and opinions influence the actions that are done to ensure the tourist industry's continued viability (Nunkoo et al., 2012; Puzi et al., 2025; Gaur et al., 2025b). This view is supported by recent studies showing that residents' perceptions and emotional connections to their communities significantly influence that offer assistance for sustainable tourism development (Chen et al., 2025; Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). There is a substantial association between the level of assistance provided for tourist expansion and residents' opinions and social elements like community involvement (Apak et al., 2025; Chand & Vivek, 2012). To ensure the tourist industry's continued success over the long term, their assistance is very necessary, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas where community collaboration is very important. Locals' opinions have a direct impact on how many people participate and how successful tourist projects are in the long run. Therefore, their backing is vital for sustainable tourism. (Rasoolimanesh et al. (2017).

Previous research has investigated the economic, sociological, and environmental components of tourism impacts, analysing citizens opinions thoroughly (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Gaur, 2019; Stylidis et al., 2014; Novelli et al., 2020). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they often assume that the level of support from locals is proportionate to how they see the advantages. However, recent studies suggest that this relationship is more complex and is mediated by broader well-being outcomes such as perceived quality of life (Uysal et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2015).

Although the increasing interest in sustainable tourism, three critical gaps remain. To begin, there is a paucity of published material on the subject of quality of life as a moderator between resident support and other factors, particularly in developing and mountain destinations. Second, the integration of psychosocial factors such as place attachment and community participation remains underexplored. Third, empirical evidence from Himalayan regions, such as Uttarakhand, remains scarce despite increasing tourism pressure and ecological vulnerability. Recent evidence from religious tourism destinations also demonstrates that residents often continue to support tourism despite environmental concerns when economic and sociocultural benefits are perceived as substantial (Mondol et al., 2025). Quality of life using as a mediator, this research examines the effect of perceived tourist perks on local support and suggests an integrated framework that includes place attachment and community engagement as moderating elements. Focusing on Uttarakhand, this study sheds light on sustainable tourism development in Himalayan areas.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a significant applied theoretical framework in tourism study that provides a foundation for this research by

understanding residents' attitudes toward tourist development. SET assert that individuals assess the interactions and exchanges by contrasting perceived advantages and costs, leading them to choose activities that produce favourable results (Ap, 1992; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). The residents' have an optimistic mindset toward the growth of tourism in cases when they consider that the benefits of tourist development, in terms of economically, environmentally and socially, outweigh the drawbacks of tourism development (Lisha et al., 2024).

SET has been effectively utilised in previous tourism research in order to get an understanding of the people' support for the tourism development. The research has also revealed that perceived gains are one of the most critical factors that determine favourable attitudes toward tourism (Stylidis et al., 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). But a recent study indicates that exchange relations are not the only factors that explain residents' responses. Psychological and emotional aspects like quality of life, place attachment and community participation are also important in the interpretation and assessment of tourism impacts (Uysal et al., 2016; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Vivek, 2021; Aleshinloye et al., 2024). The Social Exchange Theory is expanded upon in this study by adding quality of life as a mechanism of mediating and place attachment and community participation as moderating variables. This integrated approach helps to better understand, how the positive perk of tourism is converted into resident willingness to aided for sustainable tourism development in the circumstances for Uttarakhand.

2.2 Perceived Tourism Benefits

Economically, sociocultural, a nd environmentally, tourism is a net positive. The economic, sociocultural, and environmental implications of tourism can affect the residents' perception and attitude toward the development of tourism (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Especially in developing regions, Economic factors including employment and income are frequently the most noticeable and influential in shaping resident attitudes (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Sociocultural advantages are associated with cultural preservation, community pride and social cohesion and bolster local identities (Stylidis et al., 2014). Environmental sustainability is a measure of conservation action and protecting the environment, especially in sensitive areas like mountain regions (Nepal, 2009). These are dimensions that have been explored, but their relative importance can change in the different contexts, particularly in areas with an extreme reliance on tourism economy. The results of studies conducted in emerging destinations have shown that the economic and social dimensions have more influence on local residents' attitudes towards tourism than the environmental dimension (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Wang et al., 2022).

2.3 The quality of life in Tourism Context

Quality of life (QoL) has become a key concept in the tourism literature and is a construct that captures residents' overall feelings of well-being and satisfaction with their living environment. Moreover, the latest study shows that the empowerment of residents and their participation in tourism may have favourable effects on quality of life, and consequently, on the support for the advancement of sustainable tourism (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). Tourism can impact QoL through infrastructure development, income generation, and access to services (Woo et al., 2015). The growth of tourism has the ability to enhance the citizens' quality of life by significantly improving their well-being, income, and infrastructure (Godovykh et al., 2025). It has also been demonstrated that community-based tourism has a favourable impact on the quality of life of local residents and provides support for the expansion of tourism in rural regions (Wani et al., 2023). Research that was conducted not too long ago suggests that quality of life (QoL) has the ability to act as a mediator between the impacts of tourism and the support produced by locals. This is due to the fact that individuals are more likely to support tourism if it improves their general well-being (Uysal et al., 2016). This indicates that it is necessary to move past direct relationships and look at indirect pathways.

2.4 Placing Attachment and Community Participation

The term "place attachment" refers to the psychological attachment that residents feel towards their locality and how it affects their perception of the impacts of tourism (Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Aleshinloye et al., 2024). place attachment has emerged as one of the most crucial constructs in the tourism industry as it can be used to account for behaviours intents, destination responsibility, sustainability mindsets, and enthusiasm for tourism growth on the part of both locals and tourists (Dwyer et al., 2019). Appraisals, both emotional and cognitive, play an invaluable part in place attachment and pro-environmental behavior (Huang et al., 2025; Uysal & Sirgy, 2023). When locals have strong feelings for a destination, they are more willing to endorse tourism that respects their beliefs and does not do harm to the environment (Obradović Strålman et al., 2025). Place attachment fosters residents' pro-tourism behaviors and consolidates place identity (Hu et al., 2019). Community participation indicates how community involved in the planning and strategic judgment process for tourism. Local participation is crucial for effective tourism governance, as it fosters transparency, trust, and the sustainability of the destination (Bichler, 2021; Gaur, 2025a). When it comes to defining the amount of support that residents have for the growth of tourism, is one of the most important factors that plays a part in the level of engagement of the community.; a higher level of participation results in increased trust and acceptance of tourist development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Through participation, transparency, trust and sense of ownership can positively affect support (Ho-Mai et al., 2025). Empowerment approaches are based on the premise that individuals with higher levels of social, psychological, and political empowerment are more likely to be supportive of sustainable tourism projects (Neuts et al., 2021; Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). But in many developing situations, participation may be superficial and consequently less effective. By empowering local stakeholders, their involvement in Dis increased and the perception is positively formed (Shafieisabet & Haratifard, 2020).

2.5 Research Gap

Sustainable tourism literature is growing, yet there are still many significant gaps. First, studies examined the indirect links between perceived benefits and resident support, mediated by the quality of life, especially in developing and mountain destinations.

Secondly, the interplay between psychosocial factors (place attachment and community participation) has not been adequately combined in a single framework. Place attachment, community attachment, and emotional solidarity are critical factors influencing citizens' support for tourism and should be integrated into sustainable tourism frameworks (Moghavvemi et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2025). Thirdly, some empirical research on sustainable tourism in the Himalayan areas, particularly Uttarakhand, have been done, however they remain restricted.

To fill such voids, this study creating a complete framework to investigate how residents' perceptions of tourist benefits affect their willingness to support the industry, incorporating place attachment and community engagement as moderating variables, with quality of life serving as a mediator (Lisha et al., 2024).

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Based upon the theoretical outline presented in the preceding section aims to propose a holistic framework for the investigation of local human beings support for sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand. Psychosocial characteristics and quality of life serve as moderators in this paradigm, which is centred on the Social Exchange Theory.

The perceived tourism benefits economic, sociocultural and environmental are considered important antecedents that might have direct or indirect consequences on the motivation of residents to support tourism through perceived quality of life as shown in Figure 1 (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006; Yadav at el., 2025). Traditional

models focus on direct tourism relationships; this study looks at the effects of tourism and how they translate into support through the enhancement of citizens' well-being (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2017). In addition, place attachment and community participation are included as moderating variables in the model. These factors take into account the emotional and behavioural aspects of residents' engagement, provide a more complex picture of local people response to the emergence of tourism.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

Determinants of Resident Support for Sustainable Tourism in Uttarakhand

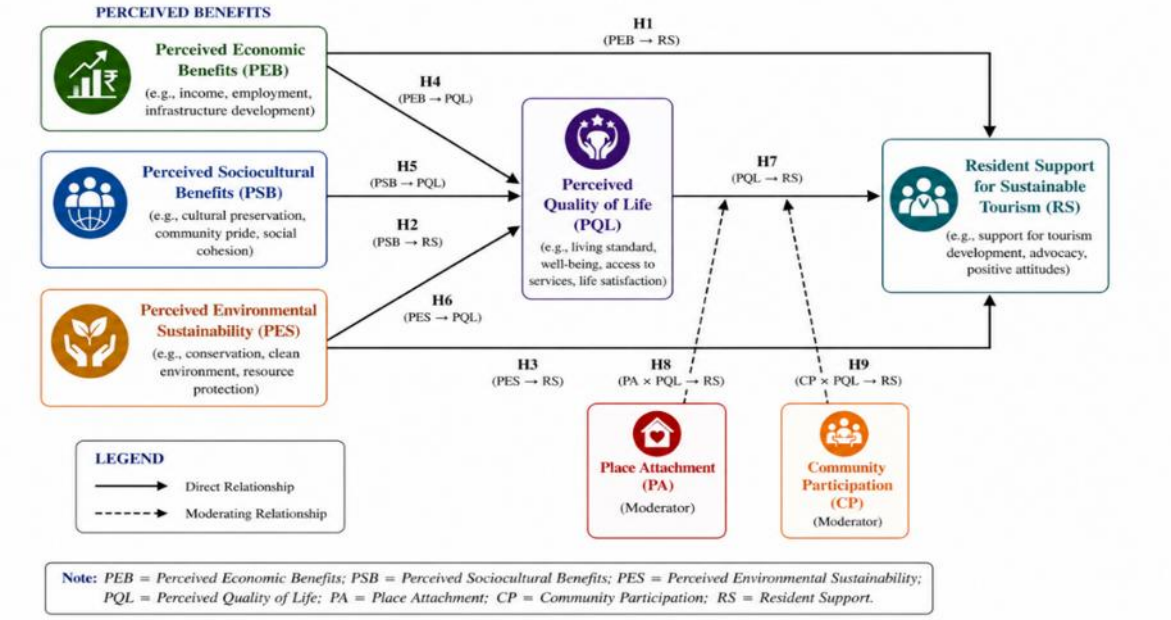

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

3.1 Perceived benefits and resident support.

Residents' perspectives on the outcomes of tourism are known as perceived benefits (khreis et al., 2026). The economic impact is likely the most visible and impactful, particularly in places where tourism performs a crucial part as the economic driver (Agyeiwaah & Zhao, 2024). Improved social cohesion and sense of community are represented by the sociocultural benefits, while the environmental sustainability represents long-term conservation efforts. The following theories are advanced in light of this:

H1: Perceived economic benefits positively influence resident support for sustainable tourism.

H2: Perceived sociocultural benefits positively influence resident support for sustainable tourism.

H3: Perceived environmental sustainability positively influences residents support for sustainable tourism.

3.2 Perceived Benefits and Quality of Life

Residents' quality of life is enhanced by tourism, which improving income levels, infrastructure, social interaction, and environmental conditions. Rather than influencing support directly, these benefits often operate through enhanced well-being.

H4: Perceived economic benefits positively influence residents' quality of life.

H5: Perceived sociocultural benefits positively influence residents' quality of life.

H6: Perceived environmental sustainability positively influences residents' quality of life.

3.3 Quality of Life and Resident Support

The impact on local people quality of life is a dominant metric by which they measure the success of tourist attractions. When tourists

bring positive benefits to locals, they are more inclined to want it to stay.

H7: Perceived quality of life positively influences resident support for sustainable tourism.

3.4 Moderating Effects

As residents' quality of life improves, their place attachment, which is a reflection of their emotional connection to their location, may increase their support for tourism (Ganaie & Ganaie, 2025). Community participation reflects involvement in decision-making processes, which might be efficacy how residents respond to tourism impacts. Previous studies also confirm that place attachment acts as a mediating mechanism linking perceptions and environmentally responsible behaviour (Jiang & Sun, 2021).

H8: Place attachment moderates the relationship between quality of life and resident support, such that the relationship is stronger for residents with higher attachment.

H9: Community participation moderates the relationship between quality of life and resident support.

4 Methodology

4.1 Study Area

The present research was undertaken in selected tourism dependent and eco-sensitive areas of Uttarakhand, India situated in the Indian Himalayan belt. Uttarakhand is recognised as one of the most prominent Tourism destinations in India, with its rich biodiversity, cultural heritage and fastest-growing tourism industry (Nepal, 2009; Vivek, 2019; Hussain et al., 2024). Past experiences in Uttarakhand also suggest that tourism offers a potential means for sustainable rural development and livelihood generation to local communities (Maheshwari, 2021).

Information has been gathered from the major tourism destinations, villages around the destinations as well as at the destination of Chopta (Garhwal) and Munsiyari (Kumaon) and from tourism clusters. They were chosen because of their increasing tourist numbers, ecological fragile and reliance of local communities on tourism livelihoods.

4.2 Research Instrument

The key tool that was adapted for this research was a structured questionnaire. There were two parts to the survey. Phase one involved gathering demographic information, while phase two assessed study constructs including community participation, perceived economic benefits, place attachment, sociocultural benefits, environmental sustainability, quality of life, and resident support.

A Likert scale with five points was implemented to evaluate all of the items are concerned, with one representing strong disagreement and five representing strong agreement. The measuring items were revised and tailored from established tourist research.

4.3 Sample size and sampling technique

People who lived in that region and had some tie to tourism had been chosen using a purposive sampling technique. Because an in-depth sampling frame was not available, convenience sampling, which is widely used in tourist research, was also deployed.

Face-to-face surveys were carried out at selected tourism sites and around those sites at the villages, data were collected from June to August 2025.

Response rate, after removing unfinished surveys, was around 91.4%, based on 320 finished replies out of 350 total. This sample size is deemed to be sufficient for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) especially when dealing with models containing multiple constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

4.4 Data analysis tools and techniques

Data evolution was accomplished with the helped of Smart PLS and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). We employ PLS-SEM for our study because it can accommodate research with a predictive nature, research with mediating and moderating variables, and research with data distribution

that is not normal (Hair et al., 2021).

Two separate steps were comprised of the analysis that was carried out. Before anything else, we made sure the measurement model was valid and reliable by looking at factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). An evaluation of the discriminant validity was carried out by utilising both the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criteria in conjunction with one another.

The second step was to assess the structural model's ability to test the hypothesised link. Bootstrapping, which included 5000 re-samples, were used to determine the path coefficients, t-values, and p-values, respectively. According to Jamil et al. (2025), the explanatory strength of the model was evaluated using R^2 values, and its predictive relevance was measured using Q^2. We also used effect sizes (f^2) to examine the relationships.

Moderation effects of place attachment and community participation were tested using interaction terms with PLS-SEM.

4.5 Measurement of Constructs

Measurement items were adapted from existing literature reviews on sustainable tourism and residents' perceptions were appropriately alter for the context of Uttarakhand. Multiple indicators were used to operationalise each construct, to provide a comprehensive assessment of residents' perceptions and to reflect the multidimensional nature of impacts of tourism on community. (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Stylidis et al., 2014). A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strongly disagreement and 5 denoting strongly agreement, was used to rate each item. This scale is widely used in the tourism and social science studies, providing consistency, reliability and ease of response (Hair et al., 2021). Constructs were perceived economic benefits, perceived sociocultural benefits, perceived environmental sustainability, place attachment, community participation and resident support. The measurement scale was developed to encompass cognitive and affective aspects of residents' perceptions. Perceived benefit constructs include tangible and intangible outcomes from tourism, and perceived quality of life is residents' overall well-being and satisfaction (Woo et al., 2015; Uysal et al., 2016). Place attachment is the emotional connection people feel to their area, while community participation is how much they participate in decision-making processes related to tourism (Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Aleshinloye et al., 2024; Ho-Mai et al., 2025). Resident support is an outcome variable that indicates the residents' preparedness to support sustainable tourism development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). The detailed measurement scale (constructs, operational definitions, item statements, codes, and sources) is shown in Table1

Table 1: Measurement Of Constructs

Constructs	Operational Definition Used in Present Study	Items	Code	Sources
Economic Benefits (PEB)	The extent to which tourism contributes to income generation, employment, and economic development of local communities.	Tourism increases local income	PEB1	(Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020)
		Tourism creates employment opportunities	PEB2	

		Local businesses benefit from tourism	PEB3	
		Infrastructure development improves	PEB4	
Sociocultural Benefits (PSB)	The extent to which tourism contributes to cultural preservation, identity, and social cohesion.	Tourism helps preserve culture	PSB1	Stylidis et al. (2014)
		Tourism enhances community pride	PSB2	
		Cultural identity is strengthened	PSB3	
		Social interaction increases	PSB4	
Environmental Sustainability (PES)	The extent to which tourism contributes to environmental conservation and ecological balance.	Tourism promotes conservation	PES1	Uysal et al. (2016)
		Natural resources are protected	PES2	
		Environmental awareness increases	PES3	
		Tourism reduces environmental degradation	PES4	

Quality of Life (PQL)	The extent to which tourism improves residents' well-being and living standards.	Tourism improves living standards	PQL1	Woo et al. (2015)
		Access to services improves	PQL2	
		Overall well-being increases	PQL3	
Place Attachment (PA)	Emotional bond between residents and their locality.	I feel emotionally attached to this place	PA1	Woosnam et al. (2018)
		I feel proud of my community	PA2	
		I have a strong sense of belonging	PA3	
Community Participation (CP)	The extent to which residents are involved in tourism decision-making and activities.	I participate in tourism activities	CP1	(Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020)
		Community is involved in planning	CP2	
		Residents are consulted in decisions	CP3	
Resident Support (RS)	The willingness of residents to support sustainable tourism development.	I support sustainable tourism development	RS1	Nunkoo et al., 2012)
		I support	RS2	

		tourism policies		
		I promote tourism in my area	RS3	

5. Results

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 presented the demographic traits of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	61.9
	Female	122	38.1
Age Group	18 to 29 years	84	26.3
	30 to 39 years	112	35.0
	40 to 49 years	76	23.8
	Above 50 years	48	15.0
Education Level	Primary	52	16.3
	Secondary	96	30.0
	Graduate	118	36.9
	Postgraduate	54	16.9
Occupation	Tourism-related	104	32.5
	Agriculture	86	26.9
	Business	58	18.1
	Others	72	22.5
Monthly Income (INR)	Below 15,000	92	28.8
	15,000–30,000	118	36.9
	30,000–50,000	68	21.3
	Above 50,000	42	13.1
Years of Residence	Less Than 5 years	36	11.3
	5 to 10 years	64	20.0
	10 to 20 years	98	30.6
	Greater Than 20 years	122	38.1
Tourism Involvement	Direct	138	43.1
	Indirect	102	31.9
	Not involved	80	25.0
Village Type	Eco-tourism	172	53.8
	Traditional	148	46.3

Males make up the vast majority of the sample, according to the demographic profile, this gender disparity in participation is common in rural economies in the Himalayas, where males are inclined to be engaged in activities pertaining to tourism (Ho-Mai et al., 2025; Vujko et al., 2025). The respondents mostly are in the economically-active age group (82-101 years), to suggest that the results mirror the reaction of those actively involved in generating a living.

When looking at the educational distribution, it is seen that the awareness level among the residents is relatively moderate, and that a considerable majority of residents have graduate-level qualifications. The occupational pattern shows that people are dependent on both tourism and farming and this is one of the features of the rural economy of Uttarakhand (Nepal, 2009).

In addition, a significant percentage of long-term residents increase the quality of the responses because of their extensive experience in the region of tourism development.

5.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Following the recommendations of PLS-SEM, the validity and reliability of the constructs were assessed by determining the measurement model (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3: Measurement Model Results

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
PEB	4	0.815 to 0.842	0.861	0.902	0.697
PSB	4	0.824 to 0.856	0.874	0.910	0.716
PES	4	0.807 to 0.861	0.889	0.919	0.693
PQL	3	0.861 to 0.884	0.895	0.927	0.761
PA	3	0.848 to 0.871	0.882	0.915	0.729
CP	3	0.826 to 0.845	0.869	0.906	0.707
RS	3	0.872 to 0.889	0.903	0.932	0.774

Qin et al., (2021) stated that "The reliability and validity of measurement model are satisfactory." All factors have loadings above 0.70 which is recommended for strong indicator reliability. The internal consistency is shown by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores that are more than 0.70 (Jamil et al.,2025). Furthermore, the AVE values are above 0.50, which demonstrates convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021). suggesting that the results are reflective of the opinions of those actively involved in making a living.

5.3 Discriminant Validity

Table 4: Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	PEB	PSB	PES	PQL	PA	CP	RS
PEB	0.835						
PSB	0.612	0.846					
PES	0.598	0.635	0.833				
PQL	0.655	0.671	0.649	0.872			
PA	0.542	0.588	0.563	0.701	0.854		
CP	0.521	0.567	0.548	0.689	0.664	0.841	
RS	0.662	0.648	0.631	0.745	0.702	0.684	0.880

Each construct is deemed to have discriminant validity when its square root of AVE is more elevated the correlations with other components. This shows that each construct is unique and ismeasuring a different aspect of residents' views therefore assuring the robustness of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2021; Koppa et al., 2026)

Table 5: Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	PEB	PSB	PES	PQL	PA	CP	RS
PEB	—						
PSB	0.721	—					
PES	0.694	0.738	—				
PQL	0.781	0.794	0.756	—			
PA	0.648	0.683	0.659	0.812	—		
CP	0.622	0.671	0.643	0.798	0.742	—	
RS	0.783	0.771	0.728	0.846	0.815	0.791	—

All constructs have an adequate degree of discriminant validity, according to the HTMT results. Constructs are empirically distinct and measure various conceptual processes if their values for HTMT are beneath the suggested threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value was reported between perceived quality of life and resident support (HTMT = 0.846) which is within acceptable limits. This suggests that the measured concept is stable, and one could even say that the measurement model's discriminant validity is satisfied. (Hair et al., 2021).

5.4 Structural Model Results

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	PEB → RS	0.218	4.112	Less than 0.001	Supported
H2	PSB → RS	0.196	3.874	Less than 0.001	Supported
H3	PES → RS	0.068	1.352	0.176	❌ Not Supported
H4	PEB → PQL	0.321	6.215	Less than0.001	Supported
H5	PSB → PQL	0.298	5.874	<0.001	Supported
H6	PES → PQL	0.276	5.432	<0.001	Supported
H7	PQL → RS	0.354	6.988	<0.001	Supported
H8	PA × PQL → RS	0.142	2.765	0.006	Supported
H9	CP × PQL → RS	0.081	1.421	0.155	❌ Not Supported

According to the structural model, resident support is significantly influenced positively by perceived economic advantages ($\beta = 0.218$, $p<0.001$) and sociocultural benefits ($\beta = 0.196$, $p<0.001$), which lend credence to hypotheses 1 & 2. This indicates that residents will accept tourism if economic benefits and sociocultural enhancements are felt. But there is no significant influence of environmental sustainability on resident support ($\beta = 0.068$, $p > 0.05$) thus H3 is eliminated. This demonstrates that the environment may not directly impact the attitude of residents in the study context, perhaps due to the economic gains being given more consideration. The three benefit dimensions have a weighty impact on perceived quality of life (H4–H6), thus support the idea that tourism also has an influence on residents' well-being. In addition, perceived quality of life also significantly positively influences the variable of resident support ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7. Quality of life is a key channel via which the positive effects of tourism on locals' support may be shown, according to the mediation inquiry. The moderation analysis shows that place attachment significantly

moderates the interplay between quality of life and resident support (β = 0.142, p < 0.01), thereby validating H8. This conclude that community participation lacks a significant Moderating effect (β = 0.081, p > 0.05) which means that H9 is rejected.

5.5 Mediation Analysis

Table 7: Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation Analysis)

Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	t-value	p-value	Result
PEB → PQL → RS	0.114	3.267	0.001	Supported
PSB → PQL → RS	0.105	2.954	0.003	Supported
PES → PQL → RS	0.098	2.611	0.009	Supported

The consequence of mediation research showed that perceived quality of life is a very important mediation between tourism benefits and resident support. The indirect paths of perceived economic benefits (β = 0.114, p < 0.01), sociocultural benefits (β = 0.105, p < 0.01), and environmental sustainability (β = 0.098, p < 0.01) to resident support in terms of quality of life are statistically significant. These results illustrate that the impact of tourism benefits not only to residents' but also indirectly affect by improving their well-being. The findings support the view that the psychological pathway through which tourism impacts manifest in the form of assist for sustainable tourism development is quality of life, found in prior studies (Woo et al., 2015; Uysal et al., 2016; Gannon et al., 2021; Uysal & Sirgy, 2023).

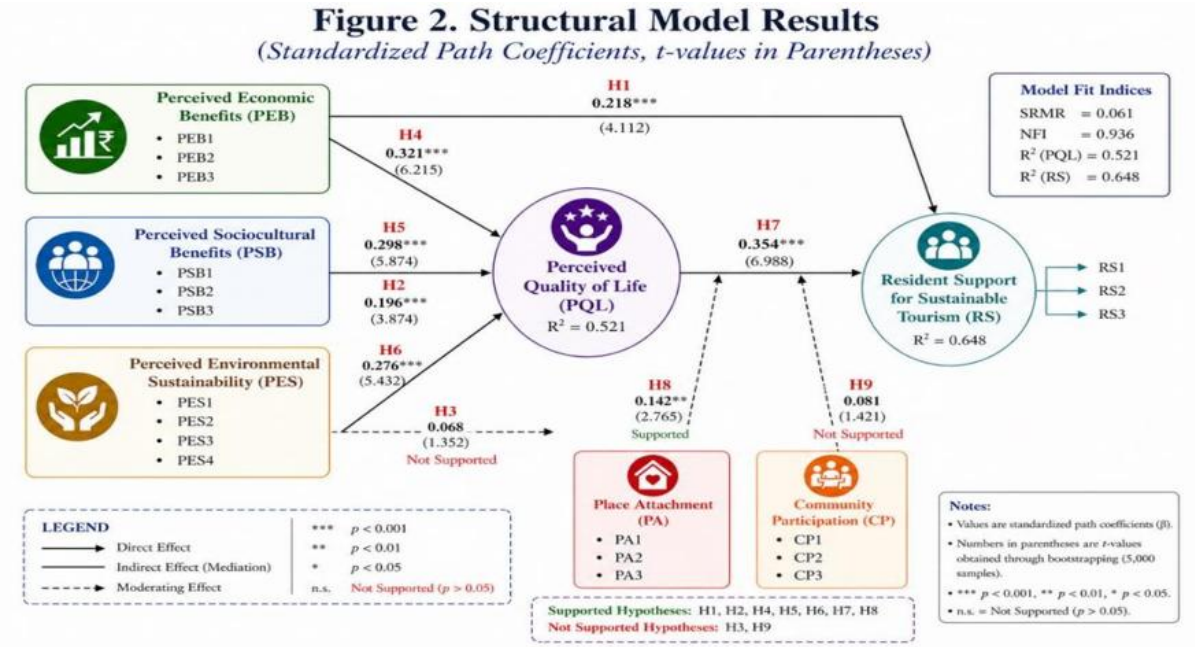

Figure 2 presents the findings of the structural model analysis performed using the PLS-SEM technique. It provides standardised path coefficient (the β values), level of significance and hypothesis testing results are all supplied. The outcomes indicating that perceived economic benefits (H1) and perceived sociocultural benefits (H2) are significant positive factors in residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism. Environmental sustainability (H3), however, is not significantly related, indicating that environmental issues might not directly impact resident support in the research scenario. In addition, the three

dimensions of perceived benefits all contribute significantly to perceived quality of life (H4–H6), and it is strongly positively related to resident support (H7). The model's mediator of quality of life is therefore supported. With regard to the Jia et al., (2023) the finding revealed that "place attachment (H8) has a substantial moderating the association between quality of life and resident assistance, implying that the more attached to the area, the more supportive inhabitants would be towards tourist growth."The moderating impact of community involvement, however, is not statistically significant (H9). Overall, the structural model shows good explanatory power and supports the proposed relationships with economic benefits, quality of life and emotional commitment having an important role in the way in which residents' support is formed.

5.6 Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

Table 8: Effect Size (f^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Relationship	f^2	Effect Size	Q^2
PEB → RS	0.042	Small	—
PSB → RS	0.038	Small	—
PES → RS	0.012	Weak	—
PEB → PQL	0.156	Medium	0.312
PSB → PQL	0.142	Medium	0.312
PES → PQL	0.128	Medium	0.312
PQL → RS	0.221	Medium	0.401

The effect of size analysis indicates that perceived quality of life has the strongest significance on resident support ($f^2 = 0.221$), highlighting its central responsibility in the model. Quality of life is moderately affected by economic, sociocultural, and environmental benefits, suggesting that these factors all contribute to the well-being of residents.

Q^2 values exceed zero, signifying the model's predictive significance. This signifies that the model possesses sufficient predictive capacity in explaining resident support for sustainable tourism. 5.7 Model Fit and Predictive Power

Table 9: Model Summary

Indicator	Value
R^2 (PQL)	0.521
R^2 (RS)	0.648
SRMR	0.061
NFI	0.936

A large portion of the variance in resident support has been explained by the model, accounting for 64.8% of it ($R^2 = 0.648$). Also, this model explains 52.1% of the variation in QoL. The SRMR value (0.061) shows a good fit of the model to the data; thus, the proposed model is able to represent the observed data as per the Hair et al., (2021) guidelines.

6 Discussion

This study's outcomes provide critical insights into the elements affecting residents' aids for

sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand.

The results support and confirm the Social Exchange Theory regarding the evaluation of the locals, which mainly depends on perceived benefits, but also on well-being and psychosocial factors to a substantial portion.

6.1 The economic and sociocultural benefits

The findings suggest that perceived economic gains are the major significant aspects in residents' support. This discovery is in line with the economics of the Himalayan regions, where livelihood options are scarce, raising the demand for income from the touristic sector. In this case, tourism is a vital means to earn a living and income, providing an incentive for the locals to promote tourism. This is compatible with the theory of Social Exchange which states that people would back up actions that bring them a clear benefit (Ho-Mai et al., 2025). Also, previous research shows that perceived positive tourism effects and the attitudes of residents toward tourism growth significantly affect residents' support (Hossain & Rahman, 2021; Qin et al., 2021). Likewise, the sociocultural benefits greatly influence the support of residents in the area, indicating that tourism can help preserve the area cultural heritage, feeling of pride and belonging and strengthen social bonds. Tourism is significant in the state of Uttarakhand in sustaining the cultural values due to the fact that cultural traditions and local identity are an integral part of the lives of the residents. This conclusion is in agreement with the findings of prior research that have stated the significance of sociocultural outcomes in relation to the attitudes of residents (Stylidis et al., 2014).

6.2 Limited Role of Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has no direct significant impact on resident support, contrary to expectations. This finding indicates that the residents might give preference to immediate economic and social welfare instead of long-term environmental considerations. The same was found in nature-based tourism destination where local residents still favoured tourism despite challenging environmental issues based on the livelihoods opportunities it brings (Han et al., 2023). Environmental consciousness can only be converted into support for behavior if it is connected with economic results in developing and resource dependent regions. This outcome underscores the need for a disconnect between the concept of sustainability and local perceptions. There is a focus on the environmental protection issues in tourism policy, but it can be seen that the advantages are not immediate and direct from the residents' perspective. Consistent with earlier research in the field of tourist development, this study's findings support the recommendations made by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2015) and (2017).

6.3 Mediating Role of Quality of Life

An important finding of this research is quality of life is a core dimension of the mediating process. Agyeiwaah and Zhao (2024) findings "aligns with the recent empirical support of the critical pathways between tourism involvement, empowerment and residents' support for sustainable tourism development which reveals that the quality of life plays a central role in this relationship." The outcomes reveal that perceived benefits positively affect people's quality of life and immensely highly impact on their attitudes towards tourism. This suggests that the citizens value tourism, not only for the direct benefits that it brings, but also for its effect on their overall welfare. The residents' satisfaction and well-being are essential in determining their sustainable behaviour in outcome to tourism development (Serić et al., 2024). Infrastructure, services and income improvements improve the living standard, which in turn helps to build positive attitudes to tourism, in the Uttarakhand. This supports the recent research focusing on importance of wellbeing in the tourism field (Uysal et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2015). Residents' emotional well-being, happiness, and self-development have also been found to be significant aspects in aid for tourism growth (Wang et al., 2021).

6.4 Moderating role of Place attachment

Çevik, (2020); Agboola et al., (2024) results show that "Place Attachment has a optimistic relation with resident support and enhances the bond between quality of life and resident support."

Recent study by Barbosa et al. 2024; Chen et al., 2025, revealed place attachment reinforced positive tourist experiences and led to sustainable tourism support among the locals. Those who have strong feelings of emotional attachments to their neighbourhood are most likely to embrace tourism that contributes to their well-being. This indicates that emotional connection is a major facet in the formation of tourism attitude and it is more important in culturally and ecologically important areas like Uttarakhand. This discovery adds to past studies, which highlight the need to incorporate

motional aspects into tourism models (Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018; Aleshinloye et al., 2024). This is aligned with prior research that indicating the significant role of place

attachment on sustainable tourism development support (Aytekin et al., 2023).

6.5 Insignificant Role of Community Participation

The findings demonstrate that there is no moderating effect of community participation support among residents and between residents' quality of life. This signifies that the mechanisms of participation in the study area might be restricted/symbolic. Residents may not perceive themselves as actively participating in decisions about tourism, hence the impact of engagement on views might be minimal. Della Lucia & Giudici, (2021) claims that "this discovery points to the importance of setting up more inclusive and effective participation arrangements aimed at promoting the genuine engagement of local communities in the planning and governance of tourism at the level of the locality."

7 Conclusion

This research set out to investigating the factors shaping residents' perceptions through sustainable tourism and their opinion towards sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand by combining perceived tourism benefits, quality of life, and psychosocial factors in a single model. According to the results shows that resident support is affected by the economic and sociocultural benefits to a great extent while environmental sustainability has no direct impact. This implies that people in the Himalayan areas are more concerned about their livelihood and social effects in the short term than about environmental concerns in the long term.

The research emphasises the link between tourist perks and inhabitants' amounts of support, and also emphasises the perceived quality of life as a significant mediator. Further, the association between the amplitude is reinforced by place attachment, indicating the need for emotional ties to be a critical moderator in the formation of attitudes towards tourism, while community participation does not demonstrate a significant moderating effect.

As a whole, the study offers empirical evidence from a Himalayan context and helps to gain insight setting that sheds light on how locals perceive and react to sustainable tourist growth.

8 Theoretical Contributions

The field of sustainable tourism has benefited greatly from this study's findings. Firstly, Vinerean et al., (2021) argues that, "it builds on the concepts of Social Exchange Theory by introducing the idea of quality of life, which shows that support of residents depends not only on perceived benefits, but as well as broader outcomes of well-being."

Second, both psychosocial factors (place attachment and community participation) are included within the same conceptual model, allowing a more holistic view of resident behaviour. The importance of place attachment was identified underlining the significance of emotional aspects in tourism.

Third, the study adds value to the limited literature on sustainable tourism in Himalayan regions, especially Uttarakhand, providing context specific inputs into sustainable tourism development in ecologically fragile areas.

9 Practical Implications

There are a lot of recommendations for policymakers and tourism stakeholders in this study's outcomes. To begin with, strategies for tourism development should be geared towards

the economic benefit that the tourist brings to the area: jobs, support local businesses, infrastructure, etc. Second, attempts to improve the citizens' quality of life by also advancement in the public services, healthcare and transportation facilities, since well-being is an important determinant of tourism support, should be made.

Thirdly, it is important that policies makers should reinforce awareness programs concerning the environment, to close the gap between principles of sustainability and perceptions of residents. Fourth, community engagement procedures should be enhanced so that, communities may actively, rather than only symbolically, participate in tourist planning and decision-making. Last, tourism policies should foster community-based and culturally appropriate tourism practices, safeguard the local identity and promote sustainable development.

10 Limitations and Future Directions

This research, despite the fact that it can make contributions, also has a number of drawbacks. For starter, the study does not allow a look at changes in residents' perceptions over the time because it is cross-sectional. Long-lasting approach could be used to capture the changing attitudes in future studies.

Second, the study covered only select areas of Uttarakhand and the results, therefore, may not be generalizable. Comparative analysis of different regions/countries may be done in future studies.

Third, the data in the study is self-reported and therefore, may be subject to response prejudice. Future study might involve qualitative and mixed methods to provide a more detailed analysis.

Further research can also be conducted to find out even more about resident support for sustainable tourism by including other variables like trust in governance, sustainability awareness or perceived risks.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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