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Women's Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development

The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Resilience in Semarang

Fitri Lukiastuti [1], **Himawan Arif Sutanto** [1], **Norhalimah Idris** [2], **Rieke Retnosary** [3]

[1] Universitas BPD, Semarang, Indonesia Universitas BPD, Semarang, Indonesia Universitas BPD, Semarang, Indonesia

[2] University of Technology Malaysia, Johor Bahru, Malaysia

[3] Universitas Buana Perjuangan Karawang, Karawang, Indonesia

fitrilukiastuti@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines how women's empowerment contributes to the advancement of sustainable tourism development, with entrepreneurial resilience as a mediating variable among women-owned tourism small and medium-sized enterprises. Grounded in empowerment theory and resilience theory, this study explores how economic empowerment, social empowerment, and political empowerment shape sustainable outcomes. Primary data were collected from 150 female entrepreneurs active in the tourism industry in Semarang, Indonesia, and then analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results indicate that all empowerment dimensions significantly strengthen entrepreneurial resilience directly. Economic empowerment has a direct positive impact on sustainable tourism development, while social and political empowerment do not have a direct impact on sustainable tourism development. Nevertheless, entrepreneurial resilience emerges as a meaningful determinant of sustainable tourism development and serves as a mediating pathway between the empowerment dimensions and sustainability outcomes. More specifically, entrepreneurial resilience acts as a partial mediator in the relationship involving economic and political empowerment, whereas entrepreneurial resilience acts as a full mediator in the relationship involving social empowerment. Overall, these findings confirm that empowerment alone is not sufficient to achieve sustainability, unless it is directed toward developing adaptive entrepreneurial capacity. This study enriches the existing body of knowledge by integrating perspectives on empowerment and resilience into a more integrated conceptual framework for examining sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: women's empowerment; entrepreneurial resilience; sustainable tourism development; empowerment theory; resilience theory.

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1. Introduction

Tourism has progressively emerged as a strategically vital sector for economic advancement, particularly within developing economies where tourism-driven activities generate employment, nurture local entrepreneurial ventures, and reinforce regional competitiveness (Köseoglu, 2025). Beyond its economic dimensions, tourism carries considerable significance in fostering inclusive development by extending opportunities to marginalized populations — women among them — to engage in economically productive pursuits (Panda, 2025).

Entrepreneurs in the tourism industry play a vital role in shaping the local economy, enhancing visitor experiences, and driving innovation. Tourism entrepreneurship involves identifying and capitalizing on opportunities by developing new products, services, and business models that meet the ever-evolving demands of travelers (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021). As a sector characterized by dynamism, cultural integration, and experience-based consumption, tourism presents a unique environment in which entrepreneurs must continually adapt to trends, technologies, and consumer expectations (Gössling & Reinhold, 2025). More specifically, entrepreneurs in the tourism sector contribute to economic resilience, the preservation of cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism practices, while facing challenges such as seasonality and shifts in market demand (Hajarrahmah et al., 2024; Nag & Mishra, 2024).

In this entrepreneurial landscape, women entrepreneurs have emerged as key contributors to tourism development, particularly in rural and remote areas (Hall, 2004). Women's entrepreneurship has garnered increasing attention in the literature due to its role in promoting economic diversification, social empowerment, and sustainable rural tourism (Gupta et al., 2024). Nevertheless, women remain an underutilized resource in economic development, with many facing barriers related to gender bias, limited access to financing, and inadequate policy support (Pettersson et al., 2017). Furthermore, while most research on women entrepreneurs has focused on gender-based comparisons with male entrepreneurs, there is a critical gap in understanding their unique roles in shaping tourism policies and development frameworks (Pettersson et al., 2017; Orhan & Scott, 2001).

According to Kimbu et al. (2020), women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector are not merely business owners; they actively contribute to the co-creation of tourism policies and strategies by integrating local knowledge, community engagement, and innovative business models. Their involvement is particularly relevant in small island nations and rural areas, where tourism serves as a key economic pillar (Filimonau et al., 2024). Women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have played a vital role in revitalizing local economies, promoting cultural heritage, and fostering sustainable tourism practices (OECD, 2024).

Across numerous developing nations, women maintain active involvement in tourism-affiliated micro and small enterprises, spanning handicraft production, culinary ventures, accommodation services, and guiding activities. These enterprises not only augment household income but also serve as pillars of community-based economic development and social sustainability.

As observed by Mohanty and Leena Hota (2026), the subject of women's participation in tourism entrepreneurship has drawn growing scholarly interest in recent decades. Academic inquiry has consistently underscored the indispensable role that women entrepreneurs occupy within local tourism ecosystems — preserving cultural traditions, championing locally produced goods, and deepening community engagement (Omran & Yousafzai, 2025). Yet despite these substantive

contributions, women entrepreneurs routinely encounter entrenched structural impediments, including constrained access to financial capital participation, and socially imposed norms that curtail their economic agency (Ssekiziyivu et al., 2025; James & Onoshakpor, 2026). Such challenges make a compelling case for deliberate efforts to empower women entrepreneurs, thereby strengthening their capacity to engage more actively and productively in shaping tourism development trajectories (Maya et al., 2025).

Women's empowerment is broadly acknowledged as a foundational determinant of inclusive and sustainable development. Within the entrepreneurship literature, empowerment is generally understood as the process by which individuals obtain broader access to resources, cultivate meaningful capabilities, and secure the autonomy to make consequential decisions concerning their lives and enterprises (Hossain et al., 2024). Scholars have conceptualized empowerment as a multidimensional construct encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions. Economic empowerment pertains to women's access to financial resources, productive assets, and income-generating opportunities. Social empowerment concerns women's engagement in social networks, participation in community life, and acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills. Political empowerment, in turn, captures women's involvement in decision-making arenas and their capacity to shape the policies and institutional structures bearing on their entrepreneurial activities (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

Within the tourism sector, empowerment initiatives have frequently been linked to sustainable tourism development. Women entrepreneurs who are genuinely empowered tend to be more inclined to integrate sustainable practices into their business operations, contribute to the diversification of local economies, and champion environmentally responsible forms of tourism. In recognition of this, numerous governments and development agencies have designed and rolled out empowerment programs directed at broadening women's engagement in tourism entrepreneurship. Such programs commonly encompass vocational training, microfinance accessibility, business mentoring, and institutional support mechanisms tailored to women-owned enterprises (Scheyvens, 2000).

Notwithstanding the growing scholarly focus on women's empowerment within tourism research, the bulk of existing studies (Prasad, 2024; Setyawan et al., 2026) have concentrated predominantly on direct relationships between empowerment and development outcomes — including business performance, community involvement, and tourism sustainability. While these investigations yield valuable insights, they frequently leave unexamined the internal entrepreneurial capacities through which empowered individuals convert available resources and opportunities into enduring sustainable business practices. In practice, empowerment alone may prove insufficient to guarantee long-term entrepreneurial viability. Entrepreneurs must equally possess the capacity to navigate shifting market conditions, surmount structural constraints, and respond with agility to the uncertainties that characterize tourism markets (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025).

One entrepreneurial capability that has attracted mounting scholarly interest is entrepreneurial resilience (Hokmabadi et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial resilience denotes the capacity of entrepreneurs to anticipate emerging challenges, adjust to adverse circumstances, and recover from disruptions while preserving the continuity and growth trajectory of their businesses (Pennetta et al., 2025). Entrepreneurs who possess resilience are inherently better positioned to contend with volatile market demand, financial pressures, competitive intensity, and unforeseen external shocks

(Awotunde, 2025). Within the tourism industry specifically, resilience carries heightened importance given that tourism enterprises are acutely susceptible to economic downturns, environmental disruptions, and global phenomena capable of substantially constraining tourist flows and undermining long-term business sustainability (Erol et al., 2026).

Although resilience has received considerable scholarly attention across entrepreneurship and organizational research, its specific relevance to tourism entrepreneurship, and particularly among women-owned small businesses, remains insufficiently explored (Batra & Batra, 2026). Empirical investigation into how women's empowerment translates into sustainable tourism development through the mediating mechanism of entrepreneurial resilience is notably sparse (Sawangchai et al., 2025); (Pramono & Juliana, 2025). The prevailing tendency in prior studies has been to treat empowerment as a direct predictor of sustainability outcomes, without examining the intermediate processes through which empowerment fortifies entrepreneurs' adaptive capacities and informs their strategic responses to business adversity (Wang & Zhang, 2025).

Beyond this gap, research situated at the intersection of empowerment, resilience, and sustainability within the specific context of tourism SMEs in urban destinations remains scarce. Urban tourism settings present distinctive characteristics that diverge considerably from those encountered in rural contexts. Urban tourism markets are typically defined by heightened competitive pressure, fluid consumer preferences, and rapidly evolving market dynamics (Nilsson, 2020; Li & Wu, 2025). Small tourism enterprises operating in urban environments must therefore continuously recalibrate their offerings in response to shifting demand while sustaining service quality and business longevity (Zhao et al., 2024). For women entrepreneurs in particular, these demands can become considerably more intricate given the compounding effect of economic, social, and institutional constraints that simultaneously bear upon their entrepreneurial endeavors (Majumdar et al., 2023).

In light of these challenges, developing a clearer understanding of how empowerment fosters entrepreneurial resilience among women-owned tourism SMEs becomes indispensable for advancing sustainable tourism development. When resilience is meaningfully cultivated, empowered women entrepreneurs may grow considerably more capable of navigating uncertainty, sustaining the operational continuity of their businesses, and making enduring contributions to long-term tourism sustainability. Nevertheless, empirical evidence substantiating this relationship remains thin, particularly within developing country contexts where tourism SMEs occupy a pivotal role in driving local economic development.

To address these lacunae in the literature, this study investigates the relationship between women's empowerment and sustainable tourism development by incorporating entrepreneurial resilience as a mediating variable. More specifically, it examines how economic empowerment, social empowerment, and political empowerment each shape entrepreneurial resilience and, through that pathway, contribute to sustainable tourism development among women-owned tourism SMEs. By drawing simultaneously on empowerment and resilience perspectives, this research aspires to furnish a richer and more complete account of how empowerment can be translated into sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes within the tourism sector.

This study makes several distinct contributions to the existing body of scholarship. First, it extends prior work on women's empowerment in tourism by

foregrounding entrepreneurial resilience as a consequential mediating mechanism connecting empowerment to sustainable tourism outcomes. Second, it draws attention to the multidimensional character of empowerment and its capacity to strengthen entrepreneurial capabilities among women-owned tourism SMEs. Third, the study generates empirical evidence from an urban tourism destination context — a setting that has received comparatively limited treatment in the extant literature. Finally, the findings yield actionable insights for policymakers, tourism development agencies, and local governments seeking to design more effective empowerment programs — ones that move beyond merely expanding women's access to resources, but also deliberately cultivate their adaptive capacities, entrepreneurial resilience, and long-term capability to sustain viable businesses within the increasingly dynamic and competitive landscape of urban tourism.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empowerment Theory

Rappaport (1987) conceptualized empowerment as a process through which individuals acquire the capacity to control resources, expand their competencies, and exert influence over decisions that bear directly on their lives. Kabeer (1999) further articulated empowerment as comprising three interconnected components: resources, agency, and achievements. In her account, women's empowerment ought to be understood as a dynamic process entailing expanded access to both material and social resources, the enhanced ability to exercise independent decision-making, and the realization of desired outcomes through the purposeful deployment of those resources.

At its core, women's empowerment involves securing a voice, achieving mobility, and establishing a visible presence in public life. While women may empower themselves by asserting varying degrees of control over different facets of their daily existence, empowerment also implies the necessity of engaging with, or transforming, prevailing power structures (Kabeer, 2012). Within entrepreneurial contexts, empowerment equips women with access to economic resources, social networks, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, collectively enhancing their capacity to operate and grow a business (Assaf, 2024).

2.2. Women in Entrepreneurship and Resilience

Women are increasingly being acknowledged as integral actors within the entrepreneurial landscape. Historically, entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated domain; however, over recent decades, a growing number of women have entered the business sphere, making substantive contributions across diverse sectors including technology, education, retail, and tourism. The entrepreneurial activities of women carry considerable weight in driving economic development and hold particular significance for community advancement and broader economic progress (Zafar et al., 2024). Women entrepreneurs also engage extensively in innovation by introducing novel ideas, products, and services that generate employment and expand economic opportunity. Their work frequently gravitates towards addressing social challenges, thereby fostering a more holistic form of economic development (Carrasco-Santos et al., 2024).

Female entrepreneurship is, moreover, intrinsically bound up with women's empowerment. Owning and managing a business affords women financial independence, strengthens their decision-making authority, and positions them to contest entrenched gender role expectations (Shah et al., 2024). Despite the

formidable obstacles that frequently accompany this path, many women exhibit resilience, a defining quality that enables them to navigate and ultimately transcend these barriers (Thomas, 2024). When women achieve entrepreneurial success, they serve as catalysts of inspiration within their communities, generating a broader ripple effect that advances gender equality and stimulates social transformation (Ndaita & Chebet, 2024).

2.3. Economic Empowerment

Drawing on Scheyvens (1999), empowerment framework, economic empowerment through ecotourism is characterized by the generation of durable financial benefits, the equitable distribution of tourism-derived earnings across community households, and tangible signs of material improvement attributable to tourism income. Since that foundational work, an expanding body of scholarship has examined how mainstream and alternative forms of tourism improve residents' material conditions, yielding varied definitions and contextually contingent interpretations of economic empowerment (Bibi, 2017; van der Watt, 2022). In parallel, studies focusing specifically on women's empowerment have increasingly positioned tourism as a potential catalyst for women's economic advancement, giving rise to diverse conceptualizations of the phenomenon. Kabeer (2009) defined women's economic empowerment as women's capacity to attain financial wellbeing and advancement. Smiley (2025) similarly framed it in terms of women's ability to progress financially and exercise meaningful agency over financial decisions. Within tourism scholarship, some researchers invoke women's economic empowerment to describe scenarios in which women enhance their welfare through improved access to productive resource, encompassing employment, income, entrepreneurial pathways, and financial independence (Rodríguez-Vera et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2024), though Gupta et al. (2024) rightly cautioned that such income and employment sources must be reliable to constitute genuine empowerment.

2.4. Social Empowerment

Social empowerment describes conditions in which community cohesion and integrity are affirmed or reinforced through collective activity, manifested in strong community organizations and active participation in communal deliberation (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). More broadly, it encompasses the deepening of community solidarity, the enrichment of environmental awareness, the cultivation of greater respect and recognition within one's community, which may in turn yield expanded personal freedoms, the critical re-examination of gender role stereotypes, improved local access to services and facilities, and sustained support for community maintenance (Scheyvens, 2000). Social empowerment further entails the reduction of income and wealth disparities across social groups, as well as the mitigation of adverse social consequences associated with tourism development, including crime, overcrowding, displacement, and exploitation (Mwamwaja, 2001, as cited in Abdalla et al., 2022).

2.5. Political Empowerment

For a community to achieve genuine political empowerment, its members' voices and priorities must actively shape tourism development from the earliest feasibility assessments through to full implementation; they must be engaged in ongoing monitoring and evaluation; they must hold meaningful roles in decision-making processes; diverse interest groups within the community must be represented both

locally and in wider governance bodies; and the community must retain substantive control over ecotourism initiatives (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). This further encompasses participation across the entire project cycle, the creation of structured channels through which local interests and perspectives can be voiced and genuinely heard, and the role of technical experts and civil society organizations in facilitating the decentralization of power (Mwamwaja, 2001, as cited in Abdalla et al., 2022).

2.6. Entrepreneurial Resilience

Resilience stands among the most defining attributes of a successful entrepreneur. In many respects, entrepreneurship and resilience are inseparable, the entrepreneurial journey is inherently marked by setbacks, given that it demands the pursuit of novel paths where none previously existed. The cultivation of resilience is supported by a constellation of personal qualities and relational resources, including active optimism, decisive action, a strong moral compass, relentless perseverance, and interpersonal support networks. These elements prove especially vital in sustaining entrepreneurs through periods of venture failure. At its essence, resilience is the capacity to endure adversity and recover from complex, disruptive experiences. Resilient individuals draw upon their personal strengths and available support systems to confront challenges and arrive at meaningful solutions (Sachdev, 2023).

2.7. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism places emphasis on safeguarding natural and cultural resources while nurturing awareness of environmental conservation and the maintenance of ecological balance (Sihombing et al., 2024). Within academic discourse, sustainable tourism is a richly contested subject whose definitions span political, cultural, environmental, social, managerial, and governmental dimensions. Conceptually, it has been characterized as tourism that remains economically viable while refraining from depleting the resources upon which the future of tourism depends, most critically, the physical environment and the social fabric of host communities (Swarbrooke, 1999, p. 13, as cited in Swarbrooke, 2023).

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Economic empowerment denotes individuals' capacity to access and exercise control over financial resources, productive assets, and business opportunities (Showkat et al., 2025). For women entrepreneurs, such access broadens decision-making flexibility, supports investment in business growth, and enables more effective responses to market shifts (Martins et al., 2025). From an empowerment perspective, command over economic resources strengthen personal agency and adaptive capacity, allowing entrepreneurs to manage uncertainty and external pressures more competently. This is especially consequential in SMEs and tourism-related businesses, where exposure to market fluctuations is recurrent (Martins et al., 2025). Economic empowerment contributes meaningfully to entrepreneurial resilience, understood here as the capacity to withstand adversity, adjust to evolving environments, and sustain business performance over time (Rozalinda et al., 2026; Raimi, 2024). Entrepreneurs who are well-resourced economically tend to exhibit greater flexibility, persistence, and innovativeness when confronting crises (Sharma & Rautela, 2022; Hamzah, 2025). Empirical investigations (Odoch et al., 2025; Stowers-Lewis, 2025) corroborate that access to financial capital and economic

opportunity enhances both resilience and the long-term sustainability of women-owned enterprises.

H1: Economic empowerment has a positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience.

3.2. Social Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Social empowerment refers to individuals' capacity to construct networks, engage with communities, and access information through social interaction (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). Within entrepreneurship, social networks furnish critical support by channeling market intelligence, business opportunities, and emotional encouragement. From an empowerment standpoint, robust social relationships improve access to resources, facilitate knowledge exchange, and promote collaboration among stakeholders (Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024 ; Bonuedie & Fombad, 2026). This dimension carries particular weight in tourism SMEs, where partnerships and community involvement are integral to business viability (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025). For women entrepreneurs, social empowerment nurtures confidence, mentorship, and collective learning, all of which enhance problem-solving ability and adaptability. These relational networks equip entrepreneurs to contend with uncertainty and sustain their businesses over time (Uthamaputhran et al., 2024). Empirical research consistently demonstrates that social capital and network participation substantially strengthen entrepreneurial resilience by expanding access to support systems and pools of shared knowledge.

H2: Social empowerment has a positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience.

3.3. Political Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Political empowerment refers to individuals' capacity to engage in decision-making processes and exert influence over policies that shape their economic activities (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). In the tourism sector, participation in such processes affords women entrepreneurs avenues to articulate their interests and concerns within tourism development policy discussions (Stylianou et al., 2025). Through involvement in policy forums and local organizations, women entrepreneurs can gain access to valuable information, government support initiatives, and collaborative opportunities that reinforce their business capacity. This participation also deepens their understanding of the institutional frameworks and policy trajectories that govern the tourism industry.

Political empowerment can additionally bolster women entrepreneurs' self-confidence and confer greater legitimacy upon their business activities (Wójcik-Czerniawska & Grzymała, 2025). When women participate actively in policy deliberations and community governance, they are more likely to be recognized as meaningful stakeholders in tourism development. Such recognition may encourage broader economic participation and stimulate stronger engagement in business decision-making processes. As involvement in governance deepens, women entrepreneurs are expected to develop an enhanced capacity to respond to policy shifts and dynamic market conditions (Gupta et al., 2024). Political empowerment therefore has the potential to strengthen entrepreneurs' adaptive capabilities and support the cultivation of entrepreneurial resilience in managing tourism enterprises.

H3: Political empowerment has a positive effect on entrepreneurial resilience.

3.4. Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development

Economic empowerment denotes individuals' capacity to access and control financial resources, productive assets, and income-generating opportunities (Umeaduma, 2023). In tourism contexts, economically empowered individuals, particularly local communities and women entrepreneurs, are better positioned to participate actively in tourism activities and decision-making processes (Stylianou et al., 2025). This participation enables them to capture economic benefits, reinvest in locally based enterprises, and support community-driven tourism initiatives. Theoretically, economic empowerment strengthens individuals' capacity to direct resources towards sustainable practices, encompassing environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and responsible business conduct (Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025). With sufficient financial capacity, entrepreneurs can invest in environmentally friendly technologies, raise service quality, and pursue long-term strategies consistent with sustainable tourism principles (Rupaveni et al., 2025).

Beyond this, economic empowerment fosters inclusive growth by promoting a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits within local communities (Paki & Koko, 2026). This inclusivity elevates social welfare, narrows economic disparities, and reinforces the long-term viability of tourism destinations. Empirical studies further indicate that access to financial capital and economic opportunity positively shapes the adoption of sustainable practices and strengthens the resilience of tourism enterprises (Chhetri et al., 2026). Economic empowerment is therefore expected to occupy a critical role in advancing sustainable tourism development by enabling individuals to invest in and uphold environmentally, socially, and economically responsible tourism activities.

H4: Economic empowerment has a positive effect on sustainable tourism development.

3.5. Social Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development

Social empowerment concerns the relational dynamics among community participants and the ways in which tourism activities shape women's sense of solidarity and collective agency (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021). In various community settings, the development of tourism projects and collective organizations reinforces community cohesion and improves the quality of life for local residents (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). Unlike psychological empowerment, social empowerment in tourism contexts operates through the generation of collective pressure within destinations, sometimes producing outcomes that are optimistic in intention yet ambivalent in their social effects (Kimaro, 2022). A constructive illustration of social empowerment for women is offered by Nayak and Nayak (2025), who highlight tourism employment as a vehicle for expanding women's social networks with tourists. A contrasting case is documented by Tamang and Thomas (2025) in India, where local community members encountered difficulties preserving their cultural traditions amid tourism development. Alayed and Alateeg (2025) call for further inquiry into gendered perceptions of social empowerment, emphasizing the value of such inquiry for sustainable tourism and local community development across both developed and developing country contexts.

H5: Social empowerment has a positive effect on sustainable tourism development.

3.6. Political Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development

Political empowerment engages with questions of power relations in tourism development and gives expression to women's perspectives within that domain (Rahman & Emroz, 2023). In tourism, political empowerment is realized when all residents are afforded equal representation and meaningful opportunities to share their concerns regarding tourism development and planning within their communities (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021; Timothy, 2025). Yousafzai and Aljanova (2025) identify several constructive dimensions of women's political empowerment in cultural tourism, including high levels of active participation, economic independence, and liberation from constraining traditional family structures. At the same time, women's empowerment in tourism continues to be impeded by a range of obstacles, including insufficient capital to initiate independent projects, limited earning potential, and cultural barriers to participation in meetings and decision-making forums (Sobaih & Abu Elnasr, 2024; Scheyvens, 2000). A number of recent studies (Elshaer et al., 2021; Sawangchai et al., 2025) have demonstrated that residents' attitudes and perceptions towards empowerment through tourism, including women's empowerment, constitute key prerequisites for sustainable tourism development. A recent cross-country study examining the influence of women's empowerment on tourism development found that all dimensions of women's empowerment significantly, positively, and directly shape tourism development across Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021).

H6: Political empowerment has a positive and significant influence on sustainable tourism development.

3.7. Entrepreneurial Resilience and Sustainable Tourism Development

Resilience shapes how entrepreneurs perceive their surrounding business ecosystem and strengthens their capacity to leverage available resources with greater effectiveness (Uthamaputhran et al., 2026). Entrepreneurial resilience refers to entrepreneurs' ability to absorb shocks, adapt to uncertainty, and recover from disruptions while preserving business continuity and growth trajectories (Hazudin et al., 2025). Given the volatility, seasonality, and susceptibility to external shocks that characterize the tourism sector, resilience is a particularly indispensable quality for sustaining long-term development.

Recent scholarship has underscored that female entrepreneurs exhibit distinctive forms of resilience, frequently shaped by the social, cultural, and structural constraints they navigate. This gendered entrepreneurial resilience enables women not merely to survive crises but to transform adversity into opportunities for innovation and broader social impact (Seyfi et al., 2025). In tourism settings, resilient women entrepreneurs tend to adopt adaptive strategies including service diversification, community engagement, and sustainable resource management.

Research on women's entrepreneurship in tourism further reveals that female-led enterprises frequently prioritize sustainability-oriented values such as cultural preservation, environmental awareness, and community empowerment. Women entrepreneurs function as agents of sustainable change by weaving local knowledge and social responsibility into their business models (Altinay et al., 2026). Their resilience reinforces the capacity to sustain these practices even under adverse conditions. Resilient female entrepreneurs additionally contribute to tourism co-creation and local development, fostering inclusive participation and strengthening

destination sustainability through innovation and adaptive capacity (Stylianou et al., 2025).

H7: Entrepreneurial resilience has a positive and significant effect on sustainable tourism development.

3.8. Effect of Economic Empowerment on Sustainable Tourism Development Mediated by Entrepreneurial Resilience

Economic empowerment equips individuals, particularly local communities and women entrepreneurs, with access to financial resources, capital, and business opportunities that sustain tourism activities. This access enhances their capacity to invest in business development, embrace innovative practices, and strengthen operational performance within the tourism sector (Firman & Maichal, 2025). Theoretically, economic empowerment fortifies entrepreneurial resilience by supplying the financial stability and resource flexibility necessary to cope with uncertainty, market volatility, and external disruptions. Entrepreneurs with adequate economic foundations are better positioned to sustain operations, recalibrate strategies, and recover from crises, all of which are essential in the highly dynamic tourism industry (Suherman et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurial resilience, in turn, plays a pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism development. Resilient entrepreneurs are more capable of maintaining long-term business continuity, driving innovation, and implementing sustainable practices that reconcile economic, social, and environmental objectives. Sustainable entrepreneurship and robust collaboration within tourism ecosystems further support the realization of sustainability goals (Zeng et al., 2024). Empirical evidence also indicates that empowerment in tourism contexts contributes significantly to sustainability outcomes, as empowered entrepreneurs engage more actively in value creation, community development, and the long-term viability of tourism destinations (Firman & Maichal, 2025). Economic empowerment therefore not only directly supports tourism development but also indirectly reinforces sustainable tourism through the cultivation of entrepreneurial resilience.

H8: Effect of economic empowerment on sustainable tourism development is mediated by entrepreneurial resilience.

3.9. Effect of Social Empowerment on Sustainable Tourism Development Mediated by Entrepreneurial Resilience

Recent scholarship emphasizes that social empowerment plays a critical role in advancing sustainable tourism by nurturing community participation and inclusivity. Research demonstrates that social empowerment strengthens governance mechanisms, facilitates the integration of local wisdom, and builds human resource capacity, all of which contribute meaningfully to sustainable tourism outcomes (Lionanda, 2023; Fitriaty et al., 2025). Social empowerment also deepens social cohesion, trust, and shared values within communities, constituting essential dimensions of social capital that underpin long-term tourism sustainability (Prayitno et al., 2024).

The relationship between social empowerment and sustainable tourism development, however, is rarely purely direct. It is increasingly understood as operating through the mediating influence of entrepreneurial resilience, which reflects entrepreneurs' capacity to adapt, innovate, and endure within dynamic and uncertain environments. Entrepreneurial resilience constitutes a critical capability in

tourism sectors that are acutely vulnerable to external shocks including economic crises, public health emergencies, and environmental disruptions.

Empirical and theoretical evidence positions resilience as a bridging mechanism between empowerment and sustainability. Resilient entrepreneurs are better equipped to harness social networks, respond to market changes, and sustain business operations over extended periods. Resilience has been identified as a dynamic capability enabling adaptation, recovery, and long-term survival, all of which are foundational to sustainable enterprise performance (Salwan et al., 2025). In tourism-based SMEs, relational capital and community support, both of which are products of social empowerment, substantially enhance resilience and business sustainability (Suherman et al., 2024).

Social empowerment further cultivates entrepreneurial resilience by providing access to knowledge, emotional support, and collaborative opportunity. Through robust social networks and community engagement, entrepreneurs can exchange experiences, co-create innovations, and build adaptive capacities. This is consistent with the social entrepreneurship literature, which highlights the generative role of social interaction and innovation in driving inclusive and sustainable development (Raman et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial resilience, in turn, contributes to sustainable tourism development by ensuring that tourism enterprises remain viable while balancing economic, social, and environmental imperatives. Sustainable tourism demands not only economic performance but also the preservation of cultural heritage, environmental protection, and community wellbeing. Resilient entrepreneurs are more adept at integrating these dimensions into their business strategies, thereby advancing the triple bottom line of sustainability.

Community-based tourism research further indicates that empowerment-driven entrepreneurial activity, particularly among local and women entrepreneurs, generates measurable improvements in economic independence, social welfare, and environmental sustainability (Wijayanti et al., 2025). This demonstrates that when social empowerment strengthens entrepreneurial resilience, it simultaneously reinforces sustainable tourism outcomes.

H9: Effect of social empowerment on sustainable tourism development is mediated by entrepreneurial resilience.

3.10. Effect of Political Empowerment on Sustainable Tourism Development Mediated by Entrepreneurial Resilience

Political empowerment refers to individuals' and communities' capacity to engage in decision-making processes, shape tourism policies, and participate in governance structures. In tourism contexts, politically empowered actors, particularly local entrepreneurs, are positioned to influence policy directions, advocate for community interests, and ensure that tourism development remains aligned with community needs and sustainability principles (Scheyvens & van der Watt, 2021).

Theoretically, political empowerment strengthens entrepreneurial resilience by enhancing entrepreneurs' sense of agency, broadening their access to institutional support, and improving their capacity to navigate regulatory environments. Active involvement in governance and policy processes enables entrepreneurs to anticipate change, respond to regulatory shifts, and construct adaptive strategies. Effective governance and participatory decision-making have been shown to reinforce resilience and long-term sustainability within tourism systems (Mandić et al., 2025).

Political empowerment also promotes collaboration among government, private sector actors, and local communities, a prerequisite for building a sustainable tourism ecosystem. When communities participate actively in policy and planning processes, they develop stronger senses of ownership and responsibility, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable tourism outcomes (Faozen et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial resilience, in turn, plays a critical role in sustaining tourism development by equipping entrepreneurs to navigate political, economic, and environmental uncertainties. Resilient entrepreneurs are better positioned to preserve business continuity, implement sustainable practices, and reinforce the long-term sustainability of destinations. Political and governance conditions exert substantial influence over tourism resilience and destination sustainability, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty (Grigoriadis et al., 2025). Political empowerment is therefore expected to indirectly advance sustainable tourism development through the strengthening of entrepreneurial resilience.

H10: Effect of political empowerment on sustainable tourism development is mediated by entrepreneurial resilience.

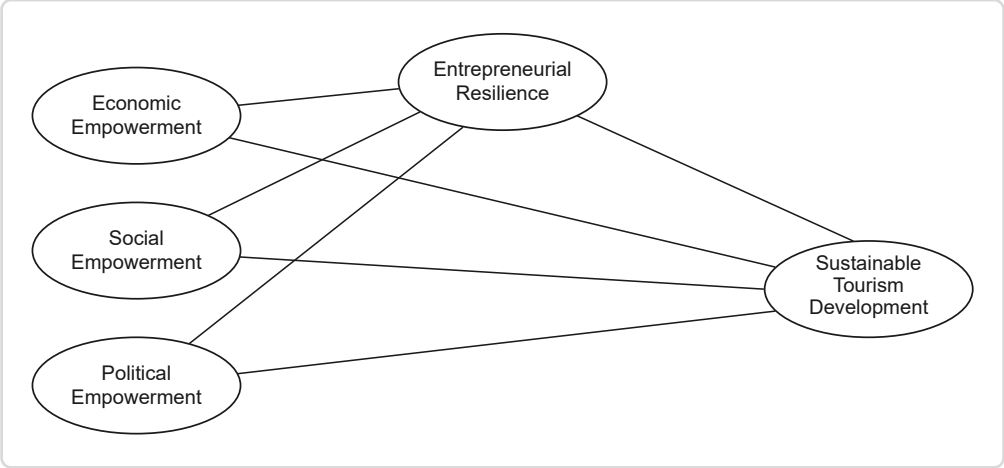


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: *Developed by the authors (2025).*

4. Research Method

4.1. Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised women entrepreneurs operating SMEs within the tourism sector in Semarang. The study employed a nonprobability sampling approach, utilizing the snowball sampling technique to identify and recruit informants who met the established criteria relevant to the research objectives. Given that the total number of entrepreneurs within the population was unknown, a condition that necessitates the use of nonprobability sampling, the required sample size was determined through the Lemeshow formula (Levy & Lemeshow, 2008), as recommended by Luhgiatno et al. (2024). This calculation produced a minimum figure of 96.04 respondents, which was subsequently rounded up to 200 respondents to ensure adequate representation. Each latent variable incorporated in the structural model was operationalized through multiple measurement items rated on a five-point Likert scale.

4.2. Variable Measurement

Sustainable tourism development was measured using indicators adapted from (Elshaer et al., 2021), which captured respondents' active engagement with sustainability-oriented practices. These indicators included: supporting community-based sustainable tourism initiatives; participating in sustainable tourism planning and development processes; adopting environmental standards aimed at reducing the adverse impacts of tourism; engaging in cultural exchanges between local residents and visiting tourists; cooperating with tourism planning and development programs; and participating in the promotion of environmental education and conservation activities.

Entrepreneurial resilience was assessed through indicators drawn from Cioca et al. (2019), reflecting individual capacity to persevere and adapt under challenging conditions. The measurement items included: the ability to achieve goals despite encountering obstacles; not feeling discouraged in the face of failure; perceiving oneself as a psychologically strong individual; the capacity to perform effectively under extreme pressure; believing in one's ability to recover from adversity; feeling sufficiently resilient to face any circumstance; the ability to adjust business plans in response to shifting market demand; not being easily overwhelmed by difficult situations; maintaining a tendency to look for constructive perspectives in challenging circumstances; and being capable of managing unpleasant emotions effectively.

Economic empowerment was operationalized using indicators adapted from Rachmawati et al. (2021). These encompassed: the extent to which local tourism contributes to covering household expenses; the degree to which tourism-derived income expands financial choices; the perception that tourism generates lasting economic benefits for the broader local community; the role of tourism in supporting the development of public facilities; the degree to which tourism profits are perceived to accrue disproportionately to local elites, external operators, or government bodies rather than to residents; and the perception that direct financial gains from local tourism are concentrated among only a limited number of individuals or families.

Social empowerment was measured through three indicators sourced from Elshaer et al. (2021), which assessed the quality of respondents' social connectedness and sense of belonging within the entrepreneurial community. These items included: being well connected within the Indonesian business community; possessing a genuine sense of community spirit; and perceiving that the Indonesian entrepreneurial environment provides meaningful opportunities to become an integrated part of broader society.

Political empowerment was assessed using four indicators adapted from Elshaer et al. (2021), which captured respondents' perceived influence and participation in decision-making contexts. The items addressed: the belief that one's voice makes a constructive difference in entrepreneurship development decisions; the sense that one's voice has the capacity to bring about meaningful positive change; active involvement in community decision-making processes; and the willingness to voice concerns and perspectives at community meetings.

5. Results

The demographic profile of respondents points to a favorable foundation for sustainable tourism development. The predominance of female entrepreneurs within the sample suggests that women occupy a central position in driving tourism-

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Information	Characteristics	Amount
Gender	Female	150
Age	20–30 years	64
	31–40 years	45
	>40 years	41
Education Level	High school/equivalent	29
	Diploma	27
	Graduate	67
	Postgraduate	27
Length of Business	<1 year	46
	1–3 years	58
	>3 years	46
Types of business	Restaurant/culinary cafe	19
	clothes/t-shirt shop	19
	motorbike and car rental	19
	local souvenir/handicraft shop	19
	hotel/homestay	18
	tour guide service provider	18
	travel agency	19
	shoe store	19

Source: *Primary data (2025).*

related business activity, underscoring the necessity of gender-inclusive policy frameworks. The majority of respondents fall within the productive age bracket of 20 to 40 years, reflecting a workforce that is both dynamic and adaptable, and therefore well-positioned to embrace and implement sustainable practices. The comparatively high educational attainment of respondents further reinforces their capacity to comprehend and operationalize sustainability concepts within their business contexts. The prevalence of enterprises that have been in operation for one to three years additionally signals an expanding tourism sector in which sustainability principles can be embedded at relatively early stages of business development. The breadth of business types represented among respondents further suggests that the achievement of sustainable tourism requires an integrated, value-chain approach that spans multiple sectors rather than operating in isolation.

5.1. Outer Model

The criteria applied in validity testing required an outer loading value exceeding 0.7 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value surpassing 0.5. Reliability was examined through two complementary measures, namely Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. A construct was considered to demonstrate acceptable reliability when its Cronbach's Alpha value reached at least 0.7 and its Composite Reliability value met or exceeded 0.8 (Ghozali & Latan, 2020). Discriminant validity was evaluated by applying the Fornell-Larcker criterion, as presented in Table 3. The results confirm that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with all other constructs in the model, thereby satisfying the established requirement for discriminant validity.

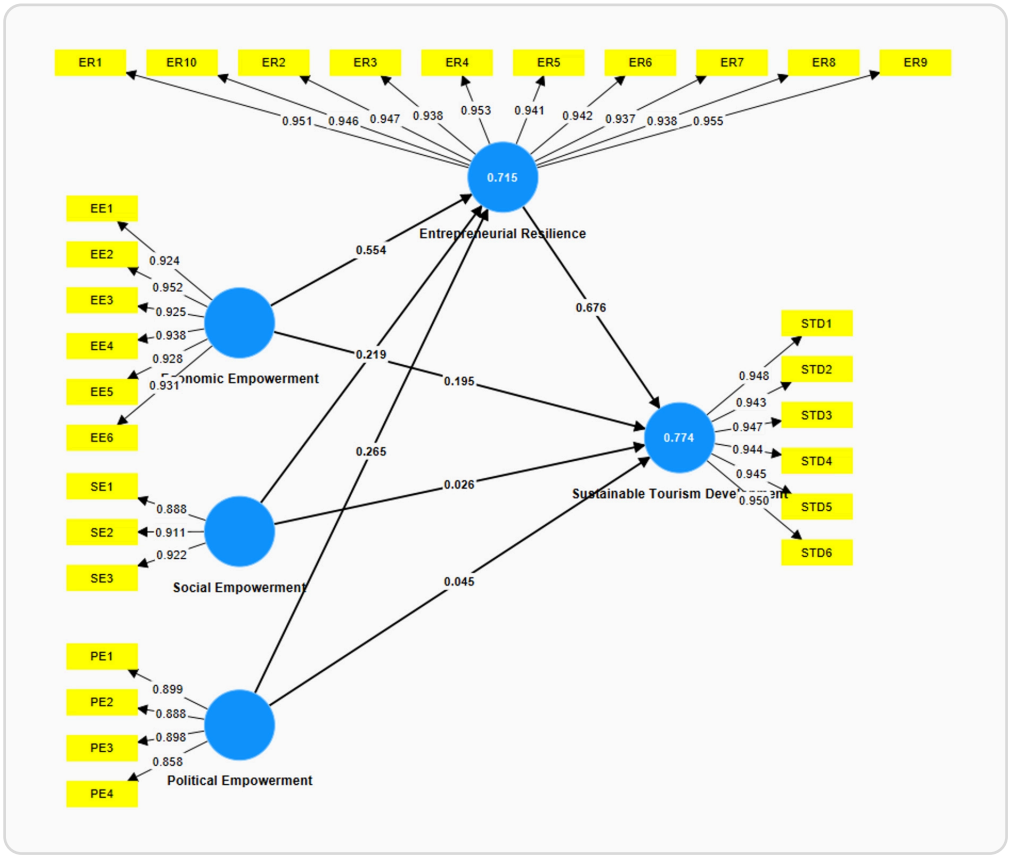


Figure 2. Outer Model

Source: *SmartPLS output.*

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test

Variables	Items	Outer Loading Value	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
Economic Empowerment (X1)	EE1	0.924	0.970	0.971	0.976	0.870
	EE2	0.952				
	EE3	0.925				
	EE4	0.938				
	EE5	0.928				
	EE6	0.931				
Social Empowerment (X2)	SE1	0.888	0.892	0.893	0.933	0.823
	SE2	0.911				
	SE3	0.922				
Political Empowerment (X3)	PE1	0.899				
	PE2	0.888				
	PE3	0.898				
	PE4	0.858				
Entrepreneurial Resilience (Z)	ER1	0.951	0.987	0.987	0.988	0.893
	ER2	0.947				
	ER3	0.938				
	ER4	0.953				
	ER5	0.941				
	ER6	0.942				
	ER7	0.937				
	ER8	0.938				

Variables	Items	Outer Loading Value	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
	ER9	0.955				
	ER10	0.946				
Sustainable Tourism Development (Y)	STD1	0.948	0.977	0.977	0.981	0.895
	STD2	0.943				
	STD3	0.947				
	STD4	0.944				
	STD5	0.945				
	STD6	0.950				

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS. AVE = average variance extracted.*

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	EE	ER	PE	SE	STD
EE	0.933				
ER	0.971	0.945			
PE	0.394	0.536	0.886		
SE	0.604	0.617	0.239	0.907	
STD	0.763	0.870	0.490	0.572	0.946

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS.*

5.2. Inner Model

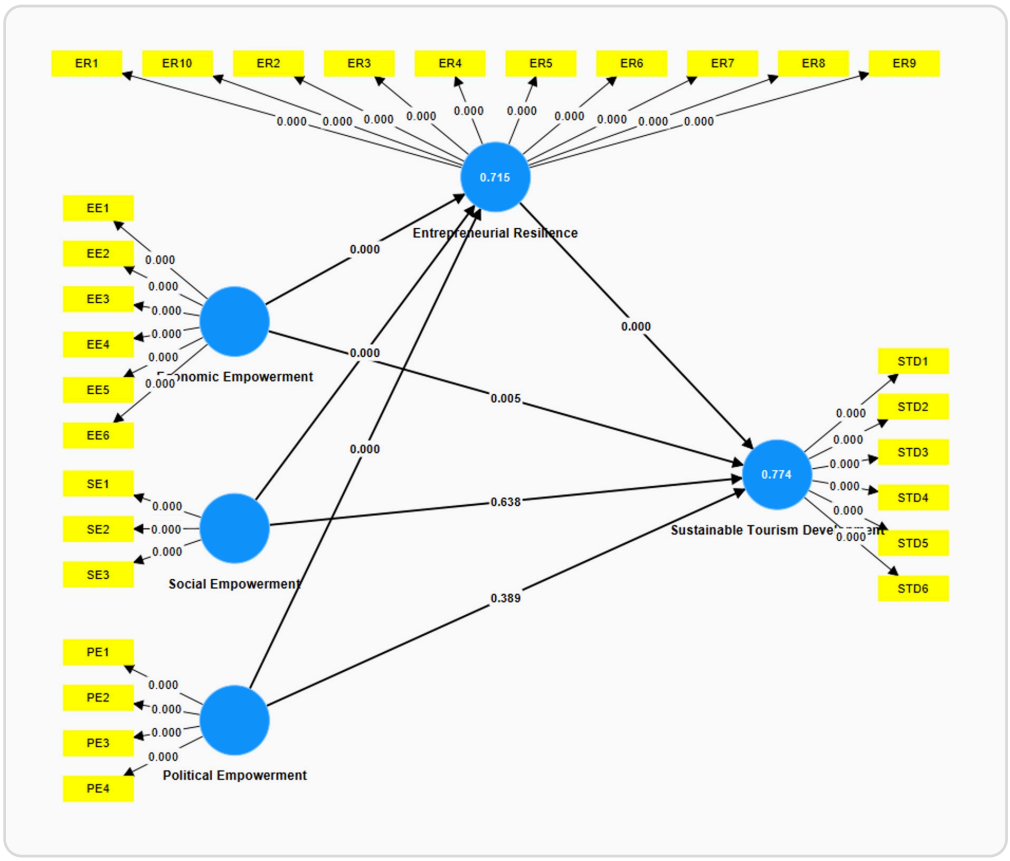


Figure 3. Inner Model

Source: *SmartPLS output.*

This analytical stage entailed the examination of several key model fit and predictive indicators. Specifically, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was employed to detect the presence of multicollinearity, Q^2 was used to assess predictive relevance, R^2 was applied to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) served as an indicator of overall model fit (Hair et al., 2021).

5.2.1. Collinearity Test

Table 4. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values

	VIF
EE → ER	1.759
EE → STD	2.839
ER → STD	3.512
PE → ER	1.184
PE → STD	1.430
SE → ER	1.576
SE → STD	1.744

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS.*

With reference to the VIF values reported in Table 4, all obtained scores fall below the widely accepted threshold of 5. This outcome confirms the absence of multicollinearity among the variables, indicating that the constructs included in the model do not introduce distortions into the estimation of significance levels or path coefficients.

5.2.2. Predictive Relevance (Q2) Test

The Q^2 test was conducted to evaluate the predictive relevance and validity of the proposed research model. A Q^2 value greater than zero is interpreted as evidence that the model possesses meaningful predictive capability and is relevant for accounting for variation in the observed data. The Q^2 values corresponding to each construct in the model are presented in the table that follows (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 5. Q^2 Value

	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (= 1 - SSE/SSO)
EE	900.000	900.000	0.000
ER	1500.000	551.294	0.632
PE	600.000	600.000	0.000
SE	450.000	450.000	0.000
STD	900.000	284.614	0.684

Source: *primary data processed with SmartPLS. SSE = sum of squared errors of prediction; SSO = sum of squared observations.*

5.2.3. Predictive R2

Table 6. Predictive R^2

Variables	R2	Adj R2
Entrepreneurial Resilience	0.715	0.709
Sustainable Tourism Development	0.774	0.767

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS.*

The adjusted R^2 value for the entrepreneurial resilience model stands at 0.709, indicating that the model's estimation accuracy is at a sufficient level. In comparison, the adjusted R^2 value for the sustainable tourism development model reaches 0.767, a figure that reflects a high degree of estimation accuracy and suggests that the independent variables incorporated in the model account for a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent construct.

Table 7. Model of Fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.036	0.036
d_ULS	0.553	0.553
d_G	0.714	0.714
Chi-square	592.162	592.162
NFI	0.911	0.911

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS. SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; NFI = normed fit index.*

Turning to the model fit indices, the overall structural model demonstrates a satisfactory level of adequacy. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) yields a value of 0.911, which falls below the upper boundary of 1, while the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) produces a value of 0.036, which remains well below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08. Taken together, these two fit statistics provide converging evidence that the proposed model achieves a good overall fit with the observed data.

5.3. Hypothesis Test Results

Table 8. Direct Influence Hypothesis

Hypothesis		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics (IO/STDEVI)	P Values	Supported/ Not Supported
H1	EE → ER	0.554	0.553	0.070	7.960	0.000	Yes
H2	SE → ER	0.219	0.221	0.060	3.664	0.000	Yes
H3	PE → ER	0.265	0.266	0.060	4.436	0.000	Yes
H4	EE → STD	0.195	0.197	0.069	2.822	0.000	Yes
H5	SE → STD	0.026	0.025	0.055	0.471	0.638	No
H6	PE → STD	0.045	0.045	0.052	0.861	0.389	No
H7	ER → STD	0.676	0.675	0.066	10.187	0.000	Yes

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS.*

Based on the path coefficient calculations presented above, each pathway yielded a p-value below the 0.05 significance threshold; however, a closer examination of the results reveals that not all direct relationships between the variables attained statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level. Specifically, Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6 failed to produce statistically significant direct effects, indicating that social empowerment and political empowerment do not directly and significantly influence sustainable tourism development when considered in isolation from mediating mechanisms.

Table 9. Indirect Influence Hypothesis (Mediation)

Hypothesis		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Statistics (IO/ STDEVI)	P values	Supported/ Not Supported
H8	EE → ER → STD	0.374	0.373	0.060	6.238	0.000	Yes
H9	SE → ER → STD	0.148	0.149	0.043	3.419	0.001	Yes
H10	PE → ER → STD	0.179	0.179	0.043	4.118	0.000	Yes

Source: *Primary data processed with SmartPLS.*

The findings pertaining to the mediating role of entrepreneurial resilience indicate that all mediation hypotheses put forward in this study are supported, given that the corresponding p-values fall below the 0.05 threshold. The Variance Accounted For values for each mediation pathway further substantiate these findings. VAFH8 = 65.75%, VAFH9 = 85.05%, and VAFH10 = 79.92%. With respect to the nature of mediation, entrepreneurial resilience functions as a partial mediator in the relationships between economic empowerment and sustainable tourism development, as well as between political empowerment and sustainable tourism development. In contrast, entrepreneurial resilience operates as a full mediator in the relationship between social empowerment and sustainable tourism development, suggesting that the influence of social empowerment on sustainability outcomes is channeled entirely through the development of entrepreneurial resilience rather than exerting any independent direct effect.

5.4. Discussion

Viewed through the lens of empowerment theory, which foregrounds access to resources, agency, and participation as its core tenets, the results confirm that economic, social, and political empowerment each contribute meaningfully to strengthening entrepreneurial resilience. Economic empowerment consolidates women's control over financial resources and decision-making processes, thereby expanding their capacity to respond to uncertainty and commit resources to adaptive strategies. Social empowerment, as reflected in network membership and community engagement, broadens access to information and social support, both of which are integral to opportunity recognition and effective problem-solving. Political empowerment, operating through participation in governance and access to institutional structures, sharpens strategic awareness and reinforces perceived legitimacy. Collectively, these findings support the theoretical position that empowerment enlarges individual agency, which itself constitutes a foundational prerequisite for effective entrepreneurial action (Awotunde, 2025).

The results, however, also yield several more specific observations. First, economic empowerment is confirmed to exert a strong and positive influence on entrepreneurial resilience. This finding indicates that access to financial resources, income stability, and economic opportunity substantially elevates women entrepreneurs' capacity to adapt, persevere, and expand within the tourism sector. Women who command greater economic resources are inherently better positioned to navigate market uncertainties, direct investment towards innovation, and sustain their enterprises through periods of disruption. This outcome aligns with prior research by Odoch et al. (2025) and Stowers-Lewis (2025), both of which emphasise that resource access reinforces individual agency and adaptive capability.

Second, social empowerment is similarly found to exert a positive influence on entrepreneurial resilience. Social networks, community involvement, and knowledge-sharing platforms collectively furnish women entrepreneurs with both tangible and intangible forms of support. These relational structures facilitate access to market intelligence, emotional sustenance, and collaborative opportunities, all of which are indispensable for navigating the complexities of dynamic tourism environments. This finding resonates with prior work by Purnomo and Purwandari (2025); Uthamaputhran et al. (2024); Dushkova and Ivlieva (2024) ; and Bonuedie and Fombad (2026), reinforcing the understanding that social capital functions as a primary driver of resilience in small tourism enterprises.

Third, the study establishes that political empowerment significantly strengthens entrepreneurial resilience. Participation in decision-making processes and access to institutional support equip women entrepreneurs with a more nuanced understanding of regulatory environments and a greater capacity to anticipate policy shifts (Wójcik-Czerniawska & Grzymała, 2025). This engagement fortifies their strategic capacity and self-confidence, which in turn improves their ability to manage external pressures. Notably, while economic empowerment produces a direct positive effect on sustainable tourism development, neither social nor political empowerment yields significant direct effects on sustainability outcomes. This pattern suggests that social and political empowerment in isolation may be insufficient to directly shape sustainability outcomes. Rather, their substantive impact materializes when these forms of empowerment are translated into entrepreneurial capabilities, and resilience in particular. This constitutes an important theoretical implication: empowerment must first be internalized as entrepreneurial competency before it can generate tangible and measurable sustainability outcomes.

Beyond this, entrepreneurial resilience is found to exert the strongest direct influence on sustainable tourism development among all variables in the model. This confirms that resilience represents a critical capability within the tourism sector, which is inherently susceptible to external shocks including economic downturns, environmental perturbations, and demand volatility. Resilient entrepreneurs are considerably more capable of preserving business continuity, integrating sustainable practices into their operations, and contributing to the long-term vitality of tourism destinations. These results corroborate prior research by Altinay et al. (2026), Seyfi et al. (2025), and Stylianou et al. (2025). Of particular theoretical significance, the mediation analysis establishes that entrepreneurial resilience functions as a meaningful mediating variable throughout the model. It partially mediates the relationships between economic empowerment and sustainable tourism development, and between political empowerment and sustainable tourism development, while fully mediating the relationship between social empowerment and sustainable tourism development. This implies that the contribution of social empowerment to sustainability is realised exclusively through the enhancement of resilience, as Prayitno et al. (2024) note that social empowerment deepens community cohesion, trust, and shared values, which together constitute key dimensions of social capital underpinning long-term tourism sustainability. Economic and political empowerment, by contrast, retain the capacity to shape sustainability outcomes both directly and through the mediating pathway of resilience.

These findings extend the existing body of literature by demonstrating that empowerment functions not merely as a direct determinant of sustainable tourism outcomes, but also as a foundational precondition for building entrepreneurial resilience. The study draws attention to the value of coupling empowerment initiatives with capacity-building programs specifically oriented towards strengthening resilience among women entrepreneurs. Within the context of urban tourism SMEs, where competitive intensity is high and market conditions shift rapidly, resilience emerges as the principal mechanism through which empowerment is converted into sustainable outcomes. Policies directed at advancing sustainable tourism should therefore extend beyond improving resource access and participatory opportunities to prioritize the cultivation of adaptive capabilities among entrepreneurs as a core strategic objective.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the relationship between women's empowerment and sustainable tourism development by incorporating entrepreneurial resilience as a mediating variable within the context of women-owned tourism SMEs. The findings provide robust empirical support for the multidimensional role that empowerment plays in shaping sustainable outcomes. The results demonstrate that economic, social, and political empowerment each significantly strengthen entrepreneurial resilience, confirming that empowerment enhances women entrepreneurs' adaptive capacity, strategic flexibility, and ability to manage uncertainty. Among these dimensions, economic empowerment additionally produces a direct positive effect on sustainable tourism development, underscoring the critical importance of financial access and economic independence in enabling sustainable business conduct.

Social and political empowerment, by contrast, do not directly influence sustainable tourism development, indicating that their contributions are not spontaneously converted into sustainability outcomes in the absence of mediating processes. When channeled through entrepreneurial resilience, however, both dimensions produce significant indirect effects on sustainability. This pattern confirms that resilience constitutes the critical mechanism through which empowerment is translated into sustainable entrepreneurial performance. Entrepreneurial resilience also emerges as the most influential predictor of sustainable tourism development across the entire model. This finding highlights the indispensable role of adaptive capacity in preserving business continuity, stimulating innovation, and maintaining long-term sustainability within a tourism sector that is structurally vulnerable to external disruption.

Taken as a whole, this study advances the literature by integrating empowerment theory with resilience theory, providing a more comprehensive account of the processes through which women's empowerment contributes to sustainable tourism development. It establishes that empowerment in isolation is insufficient unless it is accompanied by the concurrent development of entrepreneurial resilience. The strengthening of resilience should therefore be regarded as a central and non-negotiable component of empowerment-based tourism development strategies.

The findings also carry meaningful implications for policymakers and practitioners. Programs designed to empower women in tourism ought not to confine their focus to improving access to resources, networks, and participatory platforms. They should equally prioritize capacity-building interventions that specifically enhance resilience, including training oriented towards crisis management, fostering innovation, and developing strategic adaptability in the face of an unpredictable business environment.

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