

Community Attachment, Religiosity And Sustainability Of Religious Tourism Destinations

Peter Nderitu Githaiga, Ruth Tubey, Wendy Rop

*Department Of Tourism And Events Management
School Of Tourism, Hospitality And Events Management,
Moi University, Kenya*

Abstract

Religious tourism is among the most ancient and rapidly expanding sectors. This study examines the impact of local community attachment on the sustainability of a religious tourism attraction, focusing on Subukia Shrine as the research site. The sample comprised houses situated near the Shrine in Kenya. Where the majority of the population adheres to Christianity. 300 valid questionnaires were analysed. The regression results, derived from SPSS and Hayes Process Macro, indicated that community attachment influences the sustainability of religious tourism, with religiosity serving as a moderating factor. The study's authors advise that shrine and pilgrimage managers and authorities enhance local community engagement by regularly assessing their requirements and incorporating them into tourism planning. These initiatives should align with the individual's level of religion.

Keywords: *religious tourism, Shrine, community attachment, religiosity, sustainability*

Date of Submission: 10-07-2025

Date of Acceptance: 20-07-2025

I. Introduction

Tourism is an industry in constant growth that can promote job creation, generates income for the local community, leads to cultural exchange, and facilitates improvements of infrastructure. It likewise has some negative impacts, from the economic, cultural, social, and environmental viewpoints (Miralles et al., 2024), altering and even destroying local communities. It is therefore widely accepted that tourism development generates economic, social, and environmental benefits for the destinations, at the same time as involving various costs, which can affect the livelihood of the host community (Hussain et al., 2024).

The concept of sustainable tourism has different meanings for different interest groups at a destination and those meanings are subject to individual and collective characteristics such as culture, education, organizational affiliation, and political participation (Baker, 2024). Over recent years, many definitions of sustainable tourism have been given, although it appears that there is a consensus in relation to the concept coined by OMT-PNUMA (Orgaz-Agüera et al, 2022). "Tourism that takes into account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts attending to the needs of the visitors, industry, the environment, and the communities that welcome the tourists." The debate over the sustainability of tourism has grown in importance over past decades. This growing debate might, among other reasons, be due to the fact that public administrations are increasingly aware of the limits to the use of natural and cultural resources, as well as the negative impact that tourism activity can generate in people and the environment (Baloch et al., 2023).

The concept of sustainable tourism is inextricably linked to the ethic of sustainable development (Tang et al., 2024). It is believed that sustainable tourism includes most of those factors and principles which are emphasized by sustainable development. Mathieson and Wall (1982) who were among the first advocates of adopting a sustainable development approach to tourism, studied on tourism's economic, physical and social impacts due to this fact that tourism development planning is a complex process in which diverse economic, environmental and social structures should be considered).

Reindrawati (2023) by adopting a community approach to tourism planning argues that tourism planning needs to be restructured so that environmental and social factors may be placed alongside economic considerations. Getz (1986) emphasized necessity for considering theoretical models of planning, which draw tourism planners' attention to other forms of social, economic and environmental planning rather than focusing on one form in isolation (Miller & Torres-Delgado, 2023).

During the late 1980s, the sustainable development approach to tourism planning was advanced by a number of authors (Nelson, 1987; Romeril, 1985). Most authors are of the opinion that sustainable tourism development refers to a type of tourism development which is associated with ecological and social responsibility and considerations (Winton, 2024; Titaley, 2023). In other words, sustainable tourism development aims to meet the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing environmental, social and

economic values for the future generations. As Page and Dowling (2002) suggest, sustainable tourism development is recognized as a pioneer to management of all resources in such a way that it can fulfil economic, social and aesthetic needs while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. The concept of sustainability has become a mediating term in bridging the ideological and political differences between the environmental and development lobbies, a bridge between the fundamentally opposed paradigms of eco- and anthropocentrism (Doudaki & Carpentier, 2025).

The perceptions that residents hold of the impacts of tourism are a relevant topic for destinations that have received considerable attention in the literature on tourism (Charag et al., 2021). Their perceptions help create an attitude toward touristic activity. An attitude that extends support to the development of tourism in an area. Enjoying the support of the community is essential to be able to extract the positive impacts of that activity (Lee et al., 2024). Residents support the development of tourism, because they perceive that the benefits will be much higher than the costs (Lee, 2013), and therefore, the most positive perceptions of the residents will stimulate greater support for prospect.

Community attachment can be defined as the social participation of the individual and integration in the life of the community that reflects an affective or emotional link between the individual and a specific community and therefore reflects the roots of the individual in that community and a feeling of belonging to it (Orgaz-Agüera et al., 2022). If we are to say that an individual shows attachment toward the community, then the individual must appreciate, value, remain loyal toward, and identify with the place. This concept of community attachment has been applied in many different ways, from the place of birth to the number of years of residence in the community (Deery et al., 2012). Although the relation between the attachment of residents to the community and their support for tourism development has yet to be clearly established in the scientific literature, some studies have indicated that community attachment affects support for tourism development in a direct and significant manner (Pramanik & Rahman, 2024; Tiwari et al., 2025). It has also been proposed that the benefits and costs that tourists perceive could be mediating variables in the relation between community attachment and support for touristic development (Gannon et al., 2021; Kanwal et al., 2020).

Sacred cities are not only venerable focal point for tourists; they also mainly attract believers to take up residence in them, creating potential tension between residents and tourists. Religion is a central cultural factor influencing perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviors (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Mokhlis, 2009).

Accordingly, religion also affects the types of products and services believers consume, including tourist commodities. Since religion influences numerous aspects of believer daily life, it is unsurprising that a pilgrim-oriented tourism industry has evolved in parallel with more conventional tourism, creating, in the words of Bremer, a “duality of place” (Shtudiner et al., 2018). Cities have started to brand their sacred sites and market them to pilgrims and general tourist alike (Timothy, 2021). Religion and religiosity are acknowledged factors influencing human behaviour according to various social settings, yet research that explores relationships between religion, behaviour and tourist destination choice remains highly limited (Bhandari et al., 2024; Alvarez et al., 2024). Din (1989) contends that social scientists have frequently neglected the significance of religion in tourist research. When it comes to the relationship between tourism and religion, the lack of literature is even more obvious, especially regarding religious attributes and their impact on tourist needs (Rashid, 2018; Kim, et al., 2020). Going by the existing empirical literature, there is need for more studies on the nexus between This local community factors such as attachment and sustainability of a sacred place, as well as potential intervening factors such as religiosity.

This paper contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, only a few articles have investigated the impact of religiosity on sustainability affiliation on sustainability of religious tourism destination (Aman et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020).

Second, unlike a majority of studies that have focused on visitors and sustainability of destinations, this study focuses on the local community and how their religiosity affects sustainability of religious tourism sites. Third, the existing research on religious tourism is largely dominated by studies in USA, England, China, India and Japan (Ohlan & Ohlan, 2024).

While, noted that, the most frequent reported geographical areas in religious and spiritual tourism concern West and Southwest Asia (i.e. Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq), which emphasizes a geographical imbalance of research in the field (Heidari et al., 2018).

Hence, less attention has been paid to Sacred sites in Africa (Dafuleya et al., 2017; Muriuki et al., 2018). Thus, expanding such studies at religious centers in countries with a large tourism potential is warranted. Given the dominance of religions and their powerful influence on psychological and behavioral inclinations (Kala & Chaubey, 2024), it is important to examine how religiosity shapes local community attribute toward promoting sustainable religious tourism. Subukia Shrine is the case study since it is well-known as sacred to Christians in Kenya. Therefore, residents end up interacting with visitors across Christian faith. The Shrine, owned by the Kenyan Catholic Conference of Bishops, has served as a spiritual center for the East African nation for the past 30 years in the remote Diocese of Nakuru. Annually, around 200,000 individuals visit the 200-acre Village of

Mary, Mother of God, for Marian devotions, Mass, and reconciliation ceremonies, including around 50,000 attendees for Kenya's annual day of prayer in early October.

Motivated by St. John Paul II's exhortation during his 1980 papal visit for Kenya to establish a national Marian shrine, the Kenyan bishops selected the tranquil, centrally situated valley of Subukia, renowned for its healing spring. The 200-acre monument in the outskirts of Nakuru was dubbed the village of Mary Mother of God in 1983 by Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga. The pristine, spring-fed water was promptly revered as a divine offering from the Virgin Mary. On January 1, 1992, Bishop Cornelius Kipng'eno Arap Korir, the bishop of the Diocese of Eldoret, celebrated the inaugural Mass at the shrine, coinciding with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, during which he blessed the water. The spring-fed water is channelled into three distinct wells: the first for potable use, the second for cleansing, and the third for immersion. Pilgrims, comprising Protestants, non-Christians, Kenyans, and international visitors, ascend the steep mountain along the Way of the Cross to a modest chapel that contains the spring.

Despite its significance as a pilgrimage site within East Africa, the Shrine continues to face environmental degradation. Illegal loggers have been cutting down an increasing number of trees for the purpose of harvesting lumber or burning charcoal. As a result, the surrounding Subukia Forest, which is a part of the shrine and used to be home to a great deal of wildlife, has not been spared during this process. Furthermore, the formerly lush, green, and closed canopy of the forest is now interspersed with white and brown patches, indicating complete destruction, hence jeopardizing the long-term survival of the Shrine's Spring. This further underscores the need to explore the nexus between local community factors and sustainability of the Shrine.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the hypothesis development. Section 3 discusses the research design. Section 4 discusses the findings and discussion. Section 5 concludes.

II. Hypotheses Development

In the 21st century, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is widely deployed in research on the relationship between residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. SET was first proposed by Homans (1958), as a general sociological theory concerning "the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" with the goal of minimizing costs and maximizing benefits. In the 1990s, Ap (1992) developed the Social Exchange Progress Model, pointing out that residents would also seek and exchange things of abstract value such as material, social or psychological and emotional elements. Local residents' attitudes towards tourists and, therefore, their support for tourism (ST) depends on how they evaluate (or, rather, perceive) the total BCT in the community (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Community attachment is a key factor for both the perceptions and the attitudes of residents including the tourism activities within it. Besides, residents' participation in the tourism development process influences their support for the development of tourism activities. Orgaz-Agüera *et al.*, 2022, by analyzing 722 structured questionnaires administered to residents of the city of Santiago de los Caballeros gathered, found that community attachment, involvement in environmental activities and attitude had an impact on residents support for sustainable tourism,

Šagovnović *et al.*, 2022 studied 303 residents of Novi Sad, which was selected to be the (European Capitals of Culture) ECoC for the year 2022. The findings revealed a positive link between community attachment and ECoC brand trust in predicting their supportive attitudes for the event development.

Nasr *et al.*, 2022, using a sample of 375 residents from the largest tourist destinations in Ghana. A cross-sectional research design was used, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the mediating role of community attachment and involvement. The findings of this study confirmed that DSR has a significant and positive relationship with residents' community attachment, involvement, and ERB.

Kusumawati *et al.*, (2022) using a sample collected in distributing questionnaires to the communities involved in the Jember Fashion Carnival is 221 from various types of communities. Construct this study's validity, reliability and hypothesis testing using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to produce SEM. The results of this study revealed a positive and significance are community attachment and community involvement on perceived value, community attachment and community involvement on perceived social impact, perceived social impact on event attachment and event attachment on tourism sustainability.

Elshaer *et al.*, (2024), employing a quantitative approach, including surveys with 328 local residents of AlUla Heritage City (located in Saudi Arabia) and structural equation modeling partial least square (PLS-SEM) analysis, found a positive link between community attachment and tourists' tendencies toward green consumption behavior. Moreover, the mediating effects of local community support for green tourism development suggested that a deep sense of community attachment improves tourists' support for green practices in the tourism sector.

Zafar *et al.*, (2025), by employing data that was collected from 300 respondents from the Swat Valley, located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and through the use structured questionnaires, found that community satisfaction, community attachment and sustainable tourism development were positively related.

Chen *et al.*, (2025) using data were collected from 260 residents in the Khumbu region and analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software found that a strong community attachment enhances perceived value, which

subsequently boosts support for sustainable tourism. Additionally, community attachment and perceived value significantly reinforce emotional solidarity, playing a crucial role in fostering positive resident attitudes towards sustainable tourism. Winton (2024), using a unique population of residents on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, found that place attachment was a necessary link to environmentally responsible behavior and support of sustainable tourism development.

Using partial least squares-structural equation modelling based on 245 questionnaires from Bektashi residents in Türkiye, Tiwari et al., (2025) found that community attachment positively relates to place identity and faith-based tourism impact. The mediation model also showed that only the perceived impact of faith positively mediates the link between community attachment and support for tourism development.

Employing a sample of 250 residents of two museums, Pramanik and Rahman (2024) found that community awareness, community involvement, and community attachment had strong positive influences on support for sustainable development. Based on the existing literature, the following hypothesis is proposed

H1. Community attachment has a positive and significant effect on sustainability of religious tourism destinations

Religion has a social impact on consumer products and services in various industries, including hospitality and travel. Sociologists view religion as an ideology that applies to humans and members of a community bonded in a harmonious relationship. Religion is among the most critical social and cultural forces and has a significant impact on human behavior.

Social Distance Theory, with social distance defined by Magee and Smith (2013) as “a subjective perception or experience of distance from another person or other persons.” The theory claims that people have expectations of closeness in their interaction with others. Hence, individuals are motivated to minimize the social distance between them. The reduction of distance not only depends on type of interaction, but also on other parameters, among them closeness and resemblances between individuals. People are more tolerant and acceptable of others who are similar to themselves, compared to those who are socially or culturally dissimilar. For example, Triandis and Triandis (1960) found that both Roman Catholics and Protestants considered Jews as more distant from themselves, while Jews considered Roman Catholics more distant compared to Protestants. During the interaction of residents and tourists, both groups evaluate each other and decide how to behave according to the magnitude of distance between them (e.g., Nyaupane et al., 2015; Sinkovics & Penz, 2009; Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012). While some studies used race and nationality as determinants of social distance (Triandis & Triandis, 1960), Nyaupane et al. (2015) argue that religion should also be taken into account. They followed the evolution of distance between tourists from dissimilar religions such as Christianity and Hinduism visiting sites sacred to Buddhism. Religion affects the interaction of people, and it helps individuals of different mindsets to create a better understanding. Social distance theory claims that people with similar social, cultural, and religious values are more vulnerable than other individuals. Social distance determines the distance or gap between different people, groups, and social systems in human society, and the notion of this distance rests on social class, race, ethnic group, gender, and sexuality. However, it is a fact that social range is higher among dissimilar people or groups, while people with different mindsets mix more efficiently in social gatherings as the degree of intimacy or understanding is more elevated in their personal and social relations.

Earlier studies showed the powerful influence of religiosity on consumption patterns, family decision making, shopping behavior, food choices, and recreational activity decisions (Usman et al., 2022; Osanlou & Rezaei, 2025; Nugraha & Widyaningsih, 2022). Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) indicated that low or high religiosity affects consumer satisfaction. This implies that a customer with high religiosity would have high levels of satisfaction compared to consumers with low religiosity

Using data based on 508 residents' responses, Aman et al., (2019) found that residents' religiosity level (religious commitment, practices, and beliefs) affected the socio-cultural impact of sustainable tourism development in Pakistan. Wang et al., (2020), using data from 519 Chinese tourists indicated that intrinsic religiosity positively and directly affected tourists' pro-environmental behavioral intention in hotels, while extrinsic religiosity had no significant direct effect. Intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity both indirectly affected pro-environmental behavioral intention via frugality consciousness and connectedness to nature. In addition, the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity on tourists' pro-environmental behavioral intention was contingent on environmental concern, which positively moderated the relationships among them.

Suhartanto et al., (2025), using data were collected through a survey of 234 young Muslim tourists visiting mangrove ecotourism destinations in Riau Province, Indonesia. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was used to analyze the data. Based on the findings religiosity indirectly influences attitudes by enhancing consumption value, environmental concern and knowledge, highlighting their interconnected roles in shaping positive attitudes.

Ullah et al (2024), using data collected through a questionnaire from 788 tourists found that religiosity of tourists positively moderated the effect of norms on pro-environmental behaviour. The mediated moderation

model proved a positive moderating effect of religiosity on the mediated relationship between eco-guilt and tourist pro-environmental behaviour.

Using a sample of 827 participants, Arli et al., (2021) found that consumers with high intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness are more likely to be motivated by economic motivation. Being religious does not make consumers more environmentally friendly.

Notwithstanding, religiosity was earlier investigated in the context of tourism (Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012), and Eid and El-Gohary (2015) directed future studies on religiosity in different geographical settings. This study uses religiosity as a moderator variable between local community attachment and sustainability of religious tourism destinations. The study will make a similar attempt to test whether Islamic religiosity would significantly moderate the relationships in a different research context which would enhance a holistic understanding of religious tourism from a developing economy context. Thus, this hypothesis:

H2. Religiosity influences the relationship between community attachment and sustainability of religious tourism

III. Research Design

Target population

The target population was household living around Subukia Shrine, Kenya. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics census of 2019, the total number of households living in the sub-location where the shrine is located was 2,275 households. Upon apply the Yamane Taro formula, the final sample was 382 households.

Data collection instrument

The study adopted a quantitative approach. Data was collected through the use of structured questionnaires. The variables were measured using a five-point Likert Scale: “1” strongly disagree, “2” disagree, “3” neutral, “4” agree, “5” strongly agree. Sustainability of religious tourism was measured as an index comprising of economic sustainability (3 items), environmental sustainability (3 items), cultural sustainability (3 items), social (3 items) and spiritual sustainability (5 items) (Wani *et al.*, 2025; Tsaur & Lin, 2023). Community attachment was measured using 3 items (Jaafar *et al.*, 2015a; Nicholas *et al.*, 2009). For this study religiosity is operationalized through the five-item version of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) (Huber & Huber 2012; Unser & Riegel, 2023; Leite *et al.*, 2024; Fekih-Romdhane *et al.*, 2023; Tomás *et al.*, 2024; Goleń *et al.*, 2022; Oviedo *et al.*, 2014).

This scale measures religiosity as a multidimensional construct that includes the intellectual dimension, the ideological dimension, the dimensions of public and private practice, and the experiential dimension.

Model specification

The study adopted the following regression model to test the hypotheses.

$$SRTD = \beta_0 + \beta_1 CA + \beta_2 REL + \beta_3 CA_REL + C + \varepsilon$$

Where:

SRTD, sustainability of religious tourism destinations

CA, community attachment; REL, religiosity; C are the control variables. β_0 is a constant, $\beta_{1,3}$; are beta coefficient of the predictor variables. ε is an error term

IV. Findings And Discussion

Response rate

The study employed structured and self- administered questionnaires that were administered to households' head. This study targeted a sample of 382 households. A total of 327 questionnaires were returned; however, 27 questionnaires were incomplete. Hence, the final sample comprised of 300 duly filled and usable questionnaires. This reflects a response rate of 78.53%.

Demographics

The demographic statistics of the respondents is provided in Table 2. Among the respondents, males constituted a greater proportion than females (70.0% vs. 30.7%). These statistics support the patriarchal nature of African society. Furthermore, it is in line with the unit of inquiry that was the household heads. In terms of household income, majority of the households had an income below Ksh 10,000. In addition, a significant percentage of the respondents possessed a secondary school education. Majority (54.7%) of respondents had at least secondary school education, with 15.7% primary school certificate and 29.6% tertiary education.

Table I. Demographic statistics

Attribute		Frequency	Percent
Household's head gender	Female	90	30.0
	Male	210	70.0
Household Income	0–10,000	102	34.0
	10,001 –20,000	70	23.3
	20,001 –30,000	69	23.0
	30,001 – 40,000	36	12.0
	Above 40,001	23	7.7
Household's head education	Primary	47	15.7
	Secondary	164	54.7
	Tertiary	89	29.6
Source: Authors (2025)			

Reliability and validity

The results of the reliability and validity tests are shown in table II. The results indicate that the Cronbach's alpha of each dimension was all above 0.7. In addition, the KMOs for these dimensions were all above 0.7, and the factor loadings for each item were all above 0.5. However, one the dimension of religiosity had a KMO value of less than 0.5. Accordingly, the item was deleted.

Table II. Reliability and Validity

Construct or indicator	Communalities	KMO and Bartlett's Test			Cronbach's Alpha	
		Λ	t	df	α	Items
Economic sustainability		0.675	247.225	3	.756	3
I believe the Shrine's income has increased	.611					
I think the Shrine attracts a large number of visitors	.755					
I think the Shrine has a positive reputation.	.688					
Environmental sustainability		.740	451.945	3	0.871	3
I think the Shrine has promoted the protection of the natural environment and wildlife	.808					
I believe the Shrine has promoted the protection of local community biodiversity	.794					
I think the Shrine has helped in creating environmental awareness among local residents.	.784					
Cultural sustainability		0.709	281.687	3	0.798	3
The shrine has promoted the dissemination and preservation of local community culture	.710					
The shrine has promoted cultural exchanges between the visitor and the local community.	.735					
The Shrine helps generates a greater sense of pride and belonging among the local residents	.695					
Social sustainability		0.669	247.245	3	0.768	3
I feel that the shrine's activities improve the living standards and infrastructure for the residents	.653					
I believe the Shrine has promoted fair access to economic resources, services, and rights to all people	.765					
I believe that those who visit the Shire show their enthusiasm and satisfaction after their visit.	.632					
Spiritual sustainability		0.766	1053.456	10	0.888	5
I believe the Shrine enables the visitors to get closer to God	.755					
Visiting the Shrine enables visitors to express their love and respect for God	.796					
The Shrine's visitor are provided with information on the religious significance of the Shrine	.585					
The shrine officials are available for the pilgrims	.643					
The environment surrounding the shrine enables it maintain is religious meaning.	.688					
Community attachment		0.608	335.899	3	.778	3
I know it is important to preserve the Shrine	.521					
I would be sorry if I moved away from the Shrine	.839					
I hope that my children or relatives will continuously live around this Shrine	.745					
Religiosity		0.770	588.315	10	0.819	5
I often think about religious issues	.408					
I believe that God or something divine exists	.603					
I usually take part in religious services/activities	.664					
I pray regularly	.682					
I usually feel that God or something divine intervenes my life	.631					

Source: Authors (2025)

Correlation analysis

The study used the Pearson pairwise correlation analysis to test the nature and the strength of the research variables. Based on table III, sustainability of religious tourism destination is positively correlated with community attachment, religiosity, household income and household's head level of education.

Table III. Pearson pairwise correlation matrix

	SRTD	CA	REL	Gender	Income	Education
SRTD	1					
CA	.463**	1				
REL	.601**	.309**	1			
Gender	-.052	.028	-.090	1		
Income	.085	.039	.047	-.025	1	
Education	.070	-.062	.076	-.095	.363**	1

** $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors (2025)

Regression results

The regression results are presented in table IV. Based The hypotheses were tested as follows.

The first hypotheses sought to examine the effect of community attachment on sustainability of religious tourism destinations. The results demonstrate a positive and signification effect ($\beta = .501$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, our hypothesis (H1) is supported and the results agree with those of earlier studies (Zafar et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2025; Winton, 2024). Lopez, Virto, Manzano, and Miranda (2018), view community attachment as the perceptions that residents have on the benefits that are drawn from tourist destinations. Arguably, residents who have a strong attachment to a place are said to have better socio-economic benefits than those who have a weaker attachment to the area (Lee, 2013). It is possible that the people's dedication to their community will inspire them to take more steps to ensure the sustainable development of their destinations, as a result of the benefits they receive from these sites.

Community attachment significantly influences residents' perceptions and attitudes regarding changes or developments within their community, as the interplay between community attachment, resident attitudes, and surrounding natural landscapes can affect residents' perceptions and the evolution of tourism activities (Nicholas et al., 2009). The involvement and dedication of all stakeholders are essential to ensure that the advantages of tourism are equitably distributed among inhabitants and that the overall quality of life within the community is enhanced. This approach can inspire the local community to serve as stewards, safeguarding indigenous resources and values (Hatipoglu et al., 2016). Látková and Vogt (2012) identified a positive and substantial correlation between community attachment and residents' favorable perceptions, while the relationship between community attachment and negative perceptions was found to be nonsignificant. Jaafar et al. (2015) identified substantial beneficial effects of community attachment and the sense of belonging on locals' attitudes, both favorable and unfavorable, regarding the proposal to designate the Valley of Lenggong (Malaysia) as a World Heritage Site. The literature on community-based natural resource conservation indicates a widespread concern for small, cohesive groups that utilize locally established norms to manage resources sustainably and equitably (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999).

Following the guidance of Hayes (2018), the study employed SPSS PROCESS MACRO tests regarding the moderating effect of religiosity. The study tested for interaction effects through automatic software calculations, which also generate the proportion of variance explained by the moderating effects of human crowdedness, spatial crowdedness, and monetary promotions (the increase in R-squared due to the interaction). In addition, each path of the structural model was tested with model 1 of the SPSS PROCESS MACRO (Hayes, 2017). The bias corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI) were estimated using a bootstrap process of 5,000 samples. The results of the analysis showed that within the context of sustainability of religious tourism destination, the interaction between community attachment and religiosity ($\Delta R^2 = .014$, $b = -.073$, $SE = .035$, $p < 0.05$ CI in the range of, $-.141$ and $-.005$) was significant.

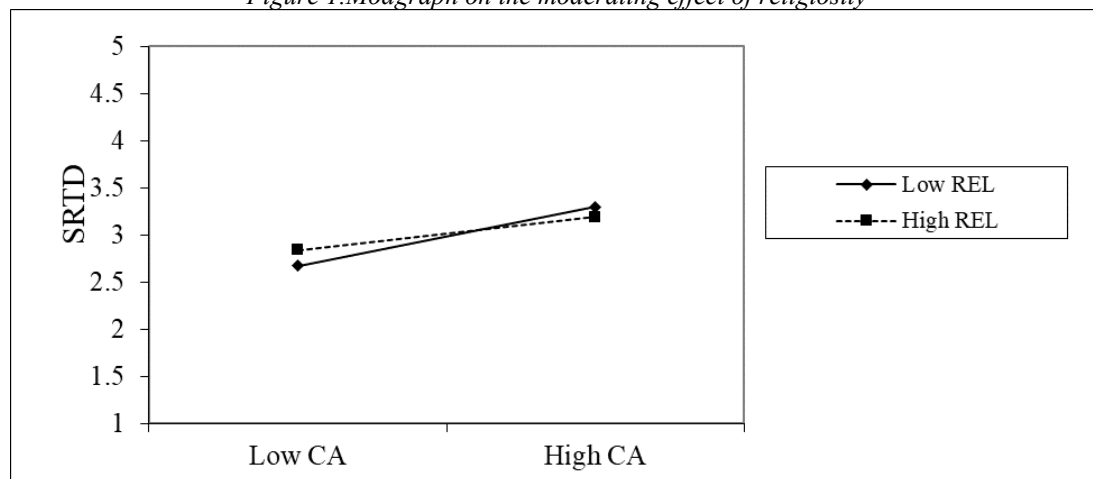
Table IV. Regression results

	Sustainability of religious tourism destinations					
	B	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	-.033	.036	-.916	.360	-.103	.038
CA	.501	.135	3.717	.000	.236	.766
REL	.036	.009	3.872	.000	.018	.054
Int 1	-.073	.035	-2.119	.035	-.141	-.005
Gender	-.001	.002	-.254	.799	-.004	.003
Income	-.001	.001	.617	.538	-.001	.002
Education	.002	.001	1.047	.296	-.001	.004

Model summary	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.461	.000	41.749	6.000	293.000	.000
<i>Conditional effect</i>						
REL						
LOW	.250	.035	7.183	.000	.181	.318
HIGH	.149	.047	3.134	.002	.056	.243
<i>Unconditional interaction</i>						
CA*REL		R2-chng	F	df1	df2	p
		.008	4.491	1.000	293.000	.035
Note(s) CA, community attachment; REL, religiosity, p<0.05						
Source: Authors (2025)						

The study further tested for moderation effect using Modgraph, depicted as figure 1. The modgraph demonstrates that the impact of community attachment on sustainability of religious tourism is high low level of religiosity. In light of this, the findings suggest that the level of religiosity in a community has a significant impact on the attitudes of its members. As a result of our findings, which are in line with the Social Distance Theory, the more religious people are, the less positive they were toward tourism. Arguably, persons who benefit monetarily from tourism tend to have a more positive attitude towards tourism as supported by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Arli et al., 2021).

Figure 1. Modgraph on the moderating effect of religiosity



V. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the impact of community attachment and religiosity on the sustainability of religious tourism destination. The study used structured questionnaire to collect data from the heads of households around the Shrine. The findings robustly validate the research hypothesis by illustrating the empirical relationship among community attachment and the social, cultural, economic, environmental, and spiritual elements of tourism sustainability. The research additionally indicated a moderating influence of local community religiosity. The study concludes that the two variables utilized in this research should be incorporated into tourism development studies. This study aims to inspire future research to enhance understanding of the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism development efforts. The local community's attitude toward tourism development may alter based on varying levels of individual religion. Thus, the researchers contend that a broader understanding of tourism's effects, particularly in developing nations, could facilitate the development of a more comprehensive tourism theory, specifically with Kenya. The results of this study have significant implications for tourism practitioners and policymakers in the planning process to guarantee the sustainability of religious tourism destinations. This research underscores the necessity of local community engagement in the planning of tourism sites. The study emphasizes that managers of religious tourism destinations should formulate sustainability plans that align with the local community's religiosity, level of involvement, and dedication to their religious practices and spiritual beliefs. As a suggesting for future studies, scholar may consider conducting comparative studies with other religious tourism sites, which can provide valuable insight. In addition, by employing more broader variables, deeper measurements, and looking at a more

comprehensive context, future research can provide deeper insight into the link between local community attachment, religiosity and sustainability of holy sites.

References

- [1] Alvarez, M. D., Campo, S., & Fuchs, G. (2024). Variables Influencing Visitation Decisions To Conflict-Ridden Destinations: The Effect Of Religiosity. *Anatolia*, 35(4), 673-687.
- [2] Aman, J., Abbas, J., Mahmood, S., Nurunnabi, M., & Bano, S. (2019). The Influence Of Islamic Religiosity On The Perceived Socio-Cultural Impact Of Sustainable Tourism Development In Pakistan: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach. *Sustainability*, 11(11), 3039.
- [3] Ap, J. (1992). Residents' Perceptions On Tourism Impacts. *Annals Of Tourism Research*, 19(4), 665-690.
- [4] Arli, D., Pentecost, R., & Thaichon, P. (2021). Does Religion Make Consumers More Environmentally Friendly?. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 39(8), 1024-1041.
- [5] Baker, M. A. (2024). Sustainable Tourism Employment: A Comprehensive Overview Of Tourism Employees' Experience From A Tourist-Employee Interaction Perspective. *Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Management*, 60, 228-238.
- [6] Baloch, Q. B., Shah, S. N., Iqbal, N., Sheeraz, M., Asadullah, M., Mahar, S., & Khan, A. U. (2023). Impact Of Tourism Development Upon Environmental Sustainability: A Suggested Framework For Sustainable Ecotourism. *Environmental Science And Pollution Research*, 30(3), 5917-5930.
- [7] Bhandari, H., Mittal, A., & Arora, M. (2024). Influence Of Memorable Tourism Experience On Attitude Towards Pilgrimage: A Moderated-Mediation Model With Memorable Religious Experience And Religiosity. *Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Insights*, 7(2), 1111-1129.
- [8] Charag, A. H., Fazili, A. I., & Bashir, I. (2021). Residents' Perception Towards Tourism Impacts In Kashmir. *International Journal Of Tourism Cities*, 7(3), 741-766.
- [9] Chen, Q., Jiang, F., Guo, Y., Shrestha, R. K., & Zhang, Q. (2025). Community Attachment, Emotional Solidarity, And Sustainable Tourism Support: Evidence From Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal. *Sustainable Development*. Preprint.
- [10] Dafuleya, G., Gyekye, A. B., Oseifuah, E. K., Nethengwe, T., & Sumbana, F. (2017). Religiously Motivated Travel And Rural Tourism In Vhembe District Of South Africa. *Tourism Economics*, 23(4), 911-918.
- [11] Din, K. H. (1989). Islam And Tourism: Patterns, Issues, And Options. *Annals Of Tourism Research*, 16(4), 542-563.
- [12] Doudaki, V., & Carpentier, N. (2025). Behind The Narratives Of Climate Change Denial And Rights Of Nature: Sustainability And The Ideological Struggle Between Anthropocentrism And Ecocentrism In Two Radical Facebook Groups In Sweden. *Journal Of Political Ideologies*, 30(1), 200-219.
- [13] Gannon, M., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., & Taheri, B. (2021). Assessing The Mediating Role Of Residents' Perceptions Toward Tourism Development. *Journal Of Travel Research*, 60(1), 149-171.
- [14] Getz, D. (1986). Models In Tourism Planning: Towards Integration Of Theory And Practice. *Tourism Management*, 7(1), 21-32.
- [15] Hayes, A. F. (2018). Partial, Conditional, And Moderated Moderated Mediation: Quantification, Inference, And Interpretation. *Communication Monographs*, 85(1), 4-40.
- [16] Heidari, A., Yazdani, H. R., Saghafi, F., & Jalilvand, M. R. (2018). The Perspective Of Religious And Spiritual Tourism Research: A Systematic Mapping Study. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*, 9(4), 747-798.
- [17] Homans, G. C. (1958). Social Behavior As Exchange. *American Journal Of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606.
- [18] Hussain, A., Mandić, A., & Fusté-Forné, F. (2024). Transforming Communities: Analyzing The Effects Of Infrastructure And Tourism Development On Social Capital, Livelihoods, And Resilience In Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Management*, 59, 276-295.
- [19] Kala, D., & Chaubey, D. S. (2024). Pro-Environmental Behavior Of Religious Tourists: Moderating Role Of Religious Beliefs. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 65(1), 105-119.
- [20] Kanwal, S., Rasheed, M. I., Pitafi, A. H., Pitafi, A., & Ren, M. (2020). Road And Transport Infrastructure Development And Community Support For Tourism: The Role Of Perceived Benefits, And Community Satisfaction. *Tourism Management*, 77, 104014.
- [21] Kim, B., Kim, S., & King, B. (2020). Religious Tourism Studies: Evolution, Progress, And Future Prospects. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 185-203.
- [22] Kusumawati, A., Pangestuti, E., & Supriono, S. (2022). The Antecedent Of Event Attachment Influence On Tourism Sustainability: The Case Of Jember Fashion Carnaval, Indonesia. *International Journal Of Tourism Cities*, 8(4), 1000-1018.
- [23] Lee, S., Lee, N., Lee, T. J., & Hyun, S. S. (2024). The Influence Of Social Support From Intermediary Organizations On Innovativeness And Subjective Happiness In Community-Based Tourism. *Journal Of Sustainable Tourism*, 32(4), 795-817.
- [24] Magee, J. C., & Smith, P. K. (2013). The Social Distance Theory Of Power. *Personality And Social Psychology Review*, 17(2), 158-186.
- [25] Mathieson, A., & Wall, G. (1982). *Tourism, Economic, Physical And Social Impacts* (P. 208pp).
- [26] Miller, G., & Torres-Delgado, A. (2023). Measuring Sustainable Tourism: A State Of The Art Review Of Sustainable Tourism Indicators. *Journal Of Sustainable Tourism*, 31(7), 1483-1496.
- [27] Miralles, C. C., Roura, M. B., Salas, S. P., Argelaguet, L. L., & Jordà, J. C. (2024). Assessing The Socio-Economic Impacts Of Tourism Packages: A Methodological Proposition. *The International Journal Of Life Cycle Assessment*, 29(6), 1096-1115.
- [28] Muriuki, L. M., Bururia, D., & Mutegi, J. (2018). Determinants Of Religious Tourism Branding Tactics In Kenya: A Cross Sectional Study. *Tourism And Hospitality Research*, 18(4), 456-469.
- [29] Nasr, E., Emeagwali, O. L., Aljuhmani, H. Y., & Al-Geitany, S. (2022). Destination Social Responsibility And Residents' Environmentally Responsible Behavior: Assessing The Mediating Role Of Community Attachment And Involvement. *Sustainability*, 14(21), 14153.
- [30] Nelson, J. G. (1987). National Parks And Protected Areas, National Conservation Strategies And Sustainable Development. *Geforum*, 18(3), 291-319.
- [31] Nugraha, Y. D., & Widyaningsih, Y. A. (2022). The Moderating Role Of Gender And Religiosity On The EMA Model: An Indonesian Muslim Pilgrim Perspective. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*, 13(6), 1201-1223.
- [32] Ohlan, R., & Ohlan, A. (2024). Religious Tourism Scholarship: Current State And Future Research Directions. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*, 15(3), 800-818.
- [33] Orgaz-Agüera, F., Castellanos-Verdugo, M., Acosta Guzman, J. A., Cobena, M., & Oviedo-García, M. D. L. Á. (2022). The Mediating Effects Of Community Support For Sustainable Tourism, Community Attachment, Involvement, And Environmental Attitudes. *Journal Of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 46(7), 1298-1321.

- [34] Osanlou, B., & Rezaei, E. (2025). The Effect Of Muslim Consumers' Religiosity On Brand Verdict. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*, 16(1), 26-64.
- [35] Pramanik, S. A. K., & Rahman, M. Z. (2024). Influences Of Local Community Dimensions In Enhancing Support For Sustainable Tourism Development. *International Journal Of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 25(4), 817-841.
- [36] Rashid, A. G. (2018). Religious Tourism—A Review Of The Literature. *Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Insights*, 1(2), 150-167.
- [37] Reindrawati, D. Y. (2023). Challenges Of Community Participation In Tourism Planning In Developing Countries. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1), 2164240.
- [38] Romeril, M. (1985). Tourism And The Environment—Towards A Symbiotic Relationship: (Introductory Paper). *International Journal Of Environmental Studies*, 25(4), 215-218.
- [39] Šagovnović, I., Pivac, T., & Kovačić, S. (2022). Examining Antecedents Of Residents' Support For The European Capital Of Culture Project—Event's Sustainability Perception, Emotional Solidarity, Community Attachment And Brand Trust. *International Journal Of Event And Festival Management*, 13(2), 182-202.
- [40] Shtudiner, Z. E., Klein, G., & Kantor, J. (2018). How Religiosity Affects The Attitudes Of Communities Towards Tourism In A Sacred City: The Case Of Jerusalem. *Tourism Management*, 69, 167-179.
- [41] Suhartanto, D., Dean, D., Amin, H., & Seperi, Y. (2025). Faith, Ecology And Leisure: Understanding Young Muslim Tourists' Attitudes Towards Mangrove Ecotourism. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*.
- [42] Tang, R., Moon, J., Heo, G. R., & Lee, W. S. (2024). Exploring The Knowledge Structure And Potential Research Areas Of Sustainable Tourism In Sustainable Development: Based On Text Mining And Semantic Network Analysis. *Sustainable Development*, 32(4), 3037-3054.
- [43] Timothy, D. J. (2021). Sociopolitical And Economic Implications Of Religious And Spiritual Tourism. In *The Routledge Handbook Of Religious And Spiritual Tourism* (Pp. 301-314). Routledge.
- [44] Titley, E. (2023). Sustainable Ecotourism Development In Negeri Lumoli, Maluku-Indonesia: Sociology Studies. *Khazanah Sosial*, 5(1), 53-64.
- [45] Tiwari, S., Taspinar, O., Kandemir Altunel, G., & Cifci, I. (2025). Community Attachment And Place-Identity On Residents' Tourism Support In The Bektashi Faith Destination. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*.
- [46] Triandis, H. C., & Triandis, L. M. (1960). Race, Social Class, Religion, And Nationality As Determinants Of Social Distance. *The Journal Of Abnormal And Social Psychology*, 61(1), 110.
- [47] Ullah, S., Lyu, B., Ahmad, T., Sami, A., & Kukreti, M. (2024). A Mediated Moderation Model Of Eco-Guilt, Personal And Social Norms And Religiosity Triggering Pro-Environmental Behavior In Tourists. *Current Psychology*, 43(8), 6830-6839.
- [48] Usman, H., Chairy, C., & Projo, N. W. K. (2022). Impact Of Muslim Decision-Making Style And Religiosity On Intention To Purchasing Certified Halal Food. *Journal Of Islamic Marketing*, 13(11), 2268-2289.
- [49] Wang, S., Wang, J., Li, J., & Zhou, K. (2020). How And When Does Religiosity Contribute To Tourists' Intention To Behave Pro-Environmentally In Hotels?. *Journal Of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(8), 1120-1137.
- [50] Winton, B. G. (2024). Building Responsible And Sustainable Tourism: The Effects Of Community Attitudes And Place Attachment On The Mississippi Gulf Coast. *Journal Of Ecotourism*, 23(4), 519-538.
- [51] Zafar, N., Ul Haq, I., Khan, D., Khan, S., & Taj, H. (2025). Nexus Between Community Satisfaction, Community Attachment And Sustainable Tourism In Swat, Pakistan. *International Journal Of Business And Economic Affairs*, 10(1), 51-61.