

Imperialism, empowerment, and support for sustainable tourism: Can residents become empowered through an imperialistic tourism development model?

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ABSTRACT

Resident empowerment is an effective tool that contributes to the sustainable development of tourism. However, in many low-income countries, tourism is usually implemented through an imperialist tourism development model, questioning the sector's true intentions for this type of development. Within this backdrop, this study aims to investigate how, under such conditions, residents' perception of imperialism is associated with residents' perceptions of empowerment and to what extent these perceptions influence their support for sustainable tourism development. To better understand these relationships, Weber's Theory of Formal Substantive Rationality and Institutional Theory were employed. This study surveyed a representative sample of 341 residents on the island of Sal, Cape Verde in 2022. Overall, results illustrate that residents' perceptions of imperialism do not affect their perceptions of empowerment, rejecting most of the research hypotheses. Theoretical and practical implications highlight that within an imperialistic tourism development model, there is not relationship between imperialism and empowerment. tourism.

1. Introduction

Although the concept of empowerment has furthered our understanding of power relations between tourism stakeholders and the key role residents play in sustainable tourism development, studies examining residents' perceptions of imperialism and its influence on key constructs such as empowerment through tourism and support for tourism are still underdeveloped. In small island destinations, particularly former colonies, understanding the conditions of tourism

development and their relationship with political and socioeconomic structures within the balance of power (Croes, Ridderstaat, & Van Niekerk, 2018; Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019) is crucial for sustainably developing tourism (Grimwood, Stinson, & King, 2019). The concept of imperialism, used to explain power configurations and relations between high-income countries and low-income countries, has been investigated through the lens of tourism development, macroimperialism (local control of resources), and microimperialism (international control of resources) (MacNeill, 2017), justice, supremacy,

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tourism dependency, and sustainable tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022), as well as residents' perceptions of political, economic, and cultural imperialism and their support for tourism (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). It is important to note that residents' perceptions of imperialism may shape their views on the direction of tourism development and the sector's ability to empower communities (Scheyvens & Van der Watt, 2021). Using the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) (Boley and McGehee (2014), studies have examined empowerment within a variety of frameworks, including: trust in political decision-making, and quality-of-life (Mody, Woosnam, Suess & Dogru, 2020), political action and knowledge (Joo, Woosnam, Strzelecka and Boley, 2020), economic benefits (Yeager, Boley, Woosnam and Green, 2020), and as an antecedent explaining residents' support for tourism (Li, Boley and Yang, 2022bb); however, it has yet to be connected to residents' perceptions of imperialism. Other measurements of empowerment have been proposed in the literature, nonetheless, these lack appropriate methodological sophistication and application of rigorous scale development procedure (Castillo-Vizuete et al., 2024), as advocated in the literature (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2017).

Considering these significant advancements in literature that explain existing power relationships in tourism communities, this study attempts to fill this gap and expand the literature by addressing calls to examine the economic, political, and cultural structures rooted in tourism communities and the ongoing presence of imperialism in tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022). Specifically, the study aims to investigate the effect of residents' perceptions of political, economic, and cultural imperialism on their perceptions of economic, environmental, psychological, social, and political empowerment and to what extent this drives their support for sustainable tourism development.

To better understand residents' perceptions of imperialism, this study draws from the underpinnings of institutional theory (Kostova, 1997). This theoretical framework has been used to explain the business environment, economic and political landscape, and the conditions of tourism development (Nguyen, 2022). Due to small island destinations often relying heavily on external investors for tourism development (Sharpley, 2022), multinationals from high-income countries frequently take advantage of this position to dictate the sector's terms and direction (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). Such factors contribute to wage disparity, economic leakage, and power dominance (Galtung, 1971), compromising sustainable and inclusive tourism development. To overcome this, studies have suggested that empowering residents is a pathway towards more sustainable tourism development (Scheyvens & Van der Watt, 2021). However, how imperialism in tourism models hinders or aids residents' empowerment remains less understood. Weber's Theory of Formal Substantive Rationality (WTFSR) (Kalberg, 1980) has been employed to explain this phenomenon. WTFSR's formal and substantive rationality emphasizes the underlying reasons driving a person's involvement in different tourism-related activities (Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014), aligning with institutional theory. In tourism destinations economically dependent on the sector, the theoretical orientations of institutional theory and WTFSR provide a further understanding of the organizational power, political relations, and economic, and non-economic factors within the sustainable tourism development framework.

Grounded on the frameworks of resident perception of imperialism, empowerment, and support for sustainable tourism development, this study seeks to make theoretical and practical contributions by investigating these constructs in the context of a former colonial destination highly dependent on tourism, Cape Verde. Firstly, the conjunction of institutional theory and WTFSR emphasizes how low-income nations, lacking internal economic resources for effective tourism development, often fall victim to an imperialistic tourism development model. The examination of residents' perceptions of imperialism and empowerment within these frameworks will enhance our understanding of the balance of power, and socioeconomic and political structures in the sustainable development process. Secondly, under the umbrella of sustainable

tourism development, examined through the lenses of multifaceted subjects such as economics, politics, international relations, and community development, the study aims to advance our understanding of residents' perceptions and attitudes against the backdrop of imperialism, empowerment, and sustainability. Finally, considering the devastating effects experienced in tourism communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, where tourism ceased to exist (Scheyvens, Movono, & Auckram, 2021), the study aims to shed light on how the imperialistic tourism development model restricts residents from fully capitalizing on the opportunities that tourism presents.

2. Literature review

2.1. Resident perception and attitude towards tourism

The body of literature on residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism has significantly evolved, achieving theoretical maturity and sophistication in empirical measurement (Mody et al., 2020). It's widely recognized that residents' perceptions are pivotal in determining the success or failure of a destination, acting as a critical barometer for sustainable development (Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020). Various theoretical frameworks, including Bottom-up Spillover Theory (Eslami, Khalifah, Mardani, & Streimikiene, 2019), Theory of Reasoned Action (Ribeiro, Pinto, Silva, & Woosnam, 2017), and Stakeholder Theory (Graci and Van Vliet, 2019), have provided valuable insights into understanding residents' perspectives on tourism. However, Social Exchange Theory (SET) that has emerged as the most influential, offering a nuanced understanding of how residents weigh the costs and benefits of tourism (Ap, 1992; Lee, 2013). Despite its extensive application, SET has faced criticism for its oversimplification and overemphasis on economic factors in residents' evaluative processes (Yeager et al., 2020).

In the intricate milieu of economic, political, and psychological power dynamics, SET's capacity to offer a comprehensive understanding of residents' perceptions, especially from both economic and non-economic perspectives, appears limited (Mody et al., 2020). This limitation becomes even more pronounced when considering factors such as empowerment and imperialism. In response, researchers have increasingly turned to WTFSR. WTFSR enhances our understanding of the complex power relations between residents, tourism institutions, and operators, elucidating how both economic (formal) and non-economic (substantive) factors shape residents' decisions to support or oppose tourism development (Wang, Berbekova and Uysal, 2022). In safeguarding residents' economic and non-economic interests in host communities, the role of tourism institutions is paramount, both in terms of resident well-being Nunkoo, Smith and Ramkissoon (2013) and governance of the industry through policy implementation (McLennan, Ritchie, Ruhanen, & Moyle, 2014).

Despite the comprehensive documentation of residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism in literature, certain gaps remain unaddressed. Firstly, the exploration of residents' perceptions of political, economic, and cultural imperialism as precursors to various forms of empowerment is notably scarce (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017). Recognizing empowered residents as crucial for destination success, this study aims to illuminate the influence of high-income countries' power in vulnerable destinations and its sustainability implications. Secondly, the conceptualization and operationalization of imperialism within the resident perception and attitude literature remain largely unexplored, with limited studies providing a comprehensive analysis (MacNeill, 2017; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). A deeper understanding of the interplay between government entities, multinational corporations, and tourism communities is essential. Such insights can significantly inform policy implementation and enhance resident engagement in the sustainable tourism development process. Therefore, investigating residents' perceptions within the context of imperialism, empowerment, and support for sustainable tourism development emerges as an area of paramount

importance.

2.2. Institutional theory in tourism development

In analyzing Max Weber rationalization of organizational structure DiMaggio and Powell (1983) contend that initially, organizations emerge as diversified structure with logic schematic, however, over time bureaucratization forces drive these structures to transform into isomorphism institutions. Such isomorphism manifests within a three-dimensional framework of institutional structure: coercive (stem from organizational pressure placed on institutions by political influence); mimetic (symbolic uncertainty and ambiguity from powerful forces encourage imitation and adaptation of other organizational models), and normative (methods put in place to control production of the producer with an end goal to promote professionalization) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Later, North (1990) categorized institutional structure as formal (political, economic, and legal systems) and informal (social and cultural norms) institutions.

Building on previous schools of thought, Scott (1995) conceptualized institutional structure as consisting “of cognitive, normative, and regulatory structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carriers – cultures, structures, and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction” (Scott, 1995, p. 33). In tourism, regulatory institutions implement policies aimed at influencing certain types of behavior, while normative institutional structures determine social norms, values, and beliefs in society (Badola et al., 2018). Additionally, the interpretation of implemented regulations and norms influences behavior that shapes perceptions and attitudes based on previous social knowledge and understanding of the cognitive elements embedded in institutional structure (Nguyen, 2022). Such rationalities highlight that individuals are instrumentally inspired to make their choice based on cost and benefit judgement (Ghalia, Fidrmuc, Samargandi, & Sohag, 2019).

Contrary to the general based analysis of institutional structure, Scott’s (1995) triplicate institutional frameworks examine specific phenomenon within a particular context (Kostova, 1997). This analytical approach allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of control that inspect, monitor, and manipulate rules, intended to influence future behavior (Nguyen, 2022). As such case, the functions of imperialism, empowerment, and support for sustainable tourism are of particular interest in understanding the development of tourism. Issue-specific phenomena are worthy of interest because the constructs under examination highlight the complexity of tourism development in dependent destinations, particularly small island nations with colonial history. This also illuminates how dominant multinational corporations wield substantial bargaining power over government institutions, shaping the direction and nature of tourism development (Yu, 2020). These dynamics lead to a form of imperialistic tourism development model, where market expansion and wealth generation are prioritized, often at the expense of the local community’s welfare and sustainable tourism practices.

2.3. Imperialism in the tourism development

Imperialism in tourism is often characterized by foreign powers leveraging their economic and political dominance to systematically control and accumulate wealth, often within low-income countries and vulnerable societies (MacNeill, 2017). Wealth accumulation and power dominance have supported the expansion of global neoliberalism practices in many destinations, propelling a “new global order” that promotes economic and social imbalance in small size economies (Wijesinghe, 2022). Implemented through international programs, the proliferation of neoliberalism governs the market through hegemonic structural systems that “drive extractive growth agendas” (Bellato, Frantzeskaki, Lee, Cheer, & Peters, 2023). This form of extraction is particularly evident in small island developing states (SIDS), where

foreign direct investment (FDI) in tourism is frequently cloaked in promises of economic and social development (MacNeill, 2017). As a result, the sustained presence of imperialism and its resultant injustices continue to hinder sustainable development (Higgins-Desbiolles, Scheyvens, & Bhatia, 2023). This phenomenon has a profound influence on residents’ perceptions of political, economic, and cultural imperialism.

Political imperialism occurs when external investors dictate the trajectory of tourism development, often resulting in the host country’s compliance (Galtung, 1971). While it can bring positives such as international market access, FDI, and local business opportunities, the power often shifts to external investors. This power shift leads to the marginalization of residents in decision-making and planning processes, undermining their empowerment (Higgins-Desbiolles & Everingham, 2022). Policies favoring trade liberalization, private ownership, and foreign exchange restrictions often exacerbate these inequalities (Wijesinghe, 2022). Ormerod and Wood (2021) observed that top-down structures, driven by capitalist corporations and sanctioned by governments, often exclude locals from participation and insight into tourism planning. However, studies also indicate a significant relationship between residents’ perception of political imperialism and the impact of tourism development in small island settings (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015).

Economic imperialism, particularly prevalent in small islands, offers a lucrative proposition for capitalists seeking to enhance profit margins through tourism (Galtung, 1971). It is characterized by foreign investment providing the means of production, with the host country supplying raw materials and markets (Sharpley, 2022). While it can lead to employment, improved living standards, and GDP contributions, the darker side of economic imperialism includes commodification and neocolonial development, leading to economic and cultural disparities and community disempowerment (Everingham, Young, Wearing and Lyons, 2022). For instance, in Trujillo, Honduras, tourism development fostered community well-being, but policies favored Western expansion and wealth accumulation (MacNeill, 2017). However, the relationship between economic imperialism and tourism development’s impacts is not always clear-cut (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015).

Cultural imperialism involves transmitting the high-income country’s knowledge, teachings, and culture to low-income countries (Galtung, 1971). Investments in luxury resorts often bring with them Western cultural impositions. The role of culture in consumerism, especially in industrial capitalism in low-income countries, is significant (Tomassini and Lamond, 2023). The spread of Eurocentrism, a legacy of colonialism, has deeply influenced the social fabric of colonized societies (Wijesinghe, Mura, & Culala, 2019). This influence extends into tourism, where Eurocentric perspectives in academia spill over into industry practices, often overshadowing local cultures (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Residents’ perceptions of cultural imperialism and its impact on tourism development have shown mixed results (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015). To encapsulate, the exploitation and imposition through political, economic, and cultural imperialism are critical factors impeding residents’ empowerment (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022). By employing the WTFSR and institutional theory, this study aims to illuminate residents’ perspectives on tourism development and how institutional, economic, and non-economic factors influence their decision-making within the sector. To our knowledge, this conjunction of theories has yet to be fully explored within the context of residents’ perceptions and attitudes towards tourism literature.

2.4. Weber’s Theory of Formal Substantive Rationality

WTFSR offers critical insights into understanding residents’ support for or opposition to tourism development. This theory, articulated by sociologist Max Weber, distinguishes between formal (extrinsic) and substantive (intrinsic) rationality, providing a framework for analyzing how residents relate to tourism (Mody et al., 2020). Weber’s exploration

of these rationalities, especially in the context of Eastern cultures, reveals their interplay with political and economic systems (Kalberg, 1980; McGehee, 2007). In tourism research, WTFSR has been instrumental in examining how the blend of formal and substantive rationalities influences residents' decisions regarding the sector's development (Santos, Pereira, Pinto, & Boley, 2024).

Formal rationality focuses on decisions grounded in economic reasoning (Mody et al., 2020). Residents who perceive economic empowerment through tourism, recognizing its potential to enhance their living standards, create employment opportunities, and secure family income, are more inclined to support it (Santos et al., 2024). This economic stability contributes significantly to the sustainable development of the sector (Lee, 2013). However, if economic benefits are disproportionately distributed, favoring multinational corporations and elites within an economic imperialism framework, residents may withdraw their support for tourism, feeling marginalized and exploited.

Substantive rationality encompasses human values, beliefs, and ideologies and how they shape engagement in economic activities (Kalberg, 1980; Li et al., 2022b). It is evident in aspects like psychological, political, social, and environmental empowerment (Boley et al., 2014). For instance, residents who feel a sense of pride in their culture being appreciated by tourists, who feel they have a voice in tourism-related matters, and who perceive tourism as contributing positively to community cohesion and environmental conservation, are more likely to support sustainable tourism development (Santos, Pereira, Pinto and Boley, 2024). Conversely, if tourism development promotes cultural and political imperialism, neglecting residents' culture, identity, and traditions, support for tourism may decline. This scenario often leads to a sense of disempowerment and alienation among the local community. In this sense, the WTFSR provides a nuanced lens to understand residents' perceptions of economic, environmental, psychological, social, and political empowerment in tourism. By leveraging the WTFSR to dissect the complex interplay of these factors, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how residents in a tourism-dependent community perceive and react to the different dimensions of empowerment, and their overall attitude towards sustainable tourism development.

2.5. Residents' perception of empowerment

The tourism ecosystem is a complex network involving multiple stakeholders – residents, tourists, and tourism brokers (Boley et al., 2014). Governed by intricate power relations and political dynamics (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012), these networks are succinctly described by Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, p. 514) as “specific relationships where actors are positioned within a network of power relations.” Within this framework, the empowerment of residents is identified as a critical factor in maintaining these relationships and is recognized as a pathway towards sustainable development (Pécot et al., 2024).

Psychological empowerment corresponds to the pride and self-esteem residents gain when visitors appreciate their culture, traditions, and community (Scheyvens, 1999). It is manifested through cultural exchanges and local knowledge sharing, where residents' welcome foreigners to their communities (Boley & McGehee, 2014). Gautam and Bhalla (2024) discovered that psychological empowerment is a strong predictor of residents' quality-of-life and support for tourism.

Social empowerment is evidenced when tourism contributes to uniting the community, fostering collaborative efforts among residents and enhancing social stability (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Scheyvens & Van der Watt, 2021). Recent studies confirmed that socially promoted programs aimed to empower local women and encourage entrepreneurship contribute significantly to the sustainable development of tourism (Pécot et al., 2024).

Political empowerment occurs when residents actively participate in decision-making processes concerning tourism development (Scheyvens & Van der Watt, 2021). This form of empowerment allows residents to

express concerns related to tourism through established platforms (Boley & McGehee, 2014). Studies have shown diverse outcomes, with political empowerment sometimes not correlating with support for tourism initiatives like Airbnb (Mody et al., 2020) or short-term vacation rentals (Yeager et al., 2020), while in other contexts, such as festival tourism in Victoria Falls, it has been positively received (Eluwole et al., 2022).

Environmental empowerment provides residents with the power to manage their natural resources and engage in environmentally sustainable tourism activities (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). A recently developed empowerment scale suggests that environmentally empowered residents are aware of the obligation to protect their natural surroundings and promote environmentally friendly initiatives (Santos et al., 2024). Studies in destinations like Kashan and Tabriz have highlighted a significant relationship between environmental attitudes and tourism support (Gannon, Rasoolimanesh, & Taheri, 2021).

Economic Empowerment, though not extensively explored, is pivotal for the equitable distribution of tourism benefits among community members (Scheyvens, 1999). Economically empowered residents benefit long-term from tourism while improving their standard of living (Santos et al., 2024), which in turn contributes to pro-poor tourism income distribution (Pang, Hao, Xiao, & Bao, 2024).

Offering a nuanced understanding of the complexity of tourism development in low-income countries, the blend of institutional theory and WTFSR elucidates how tangible and intangible components of tourism shape social beliefs, values, and norms through regulatory and normative policies (Gannon et al., 2021; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016). The values and beliefs underpinning Weber's substantive rationality have been instrumental in several studies that explore residents' feelings of pride when visitors express interest in their culture and community, a key aspect of psychological empowerment (Santos et al., 2024). Such sentiments are evidenced in the cognitive mechanisms embedded in institutional theory. These theoretical orientations aid in understanding residents' political engagement with tourism policies that are implemented through tourism institutions aimed to regulate and govern the sector.

Hence, the interplay between residents' perceptions of political, economic, and cultural imperialism and perceptions of various forms of empowerment has remained voiceless in the literature. Under the conditions of an imperialistic tourism development model, which often favors external investors, residents' sentiments of empowerment are typically absent or diminished (Pang et al., 2024). Investigating these dynamics is crucial for understanding the power relations and political-economic structures within sustainable tourism development (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2023). Based on the above discussion, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1. : Residents' perception of political imperialism has a negative effect on perception of economic (H_{1a}), environmental (H_{1b}), psychological (H_{1c}), social (H_{1d}), and political empowerment (H_{1e}).

H2. : Residents' perception of economic imperialism has a negative effect on perception of economic (H_{2a}), environmental (H_{2b}), psychological (H_{2c}), social (H_{2d}), and political empowerment (H_{2e}).

H3. : Residents' perception of cultural imperialism has a negative effect on perception of economic (H_{3a}), environmental (H_{3b}), psychological (H_{3c}), social (H_{3d}), and political empowerment (H_{3e}).

2.6. Residents' support for sustainable tourism development

Despite the critiques surrounding the SET, economic focus, it has significantly shaped our understanding of residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development through a cost-benefit analysis framework (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Gursoy, Jurovski, & Uysal, 2002; Vargas-Sánchez, & do Valle, P., Mendes, J., & Silva, J.A., 2015). SET posits that residents evaluate tourism

development based on the perceived benefits and costs it brings to their community. However, recognizing that residents' attitudes towards tourism encompass more than just economic factors, the WTFSR provides a broader perspective. This theory helps to explain residents' support for or opposition to tourism development based on a combination of economic and non-economic factors (Kalberg, 1980; McGehee, 2007). WTFSR considers the intricate balance between residents' material benefits from tourism and their cultural, social, and political values.

Utilizing WTFSR, Mody et al. (2020) found that perceptions of psychological, social, and political empowerment were significantly related to non-hosting residents' support for tourism. Similarly, Yeager et al. (2020) used WTFSR to establish a significant relationship between psychological and social empowerment and support for Short-Term Vacation Rentals (STVR), though they found that political empowerment did not significantly influence support. More recently, Li, Boley, and Yang (2022a) employed WTFSR to reveal a significant link between social and psychological empowerment and support for both gaming and cultural tourism. However, their study also noted that the proposed relationships between social empowerment and support for cultural tourism, as well as political empowerment and support for mass and alternative tourism, were not substantiated in their model.

Given these inconsistencies in the existing literature, this study aims to further examine the relationship between residents' perceptions of empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism development. The theoretical model (Fig. 1) will be scrutinized to understand how different dimensions of empowerment influence residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism initiatives. Accordingly, the following hypotheses propose that:

H4. : Residents' perception of economic (H_{4a}), environmental (H_{4b}), psychological (H_{4c}), social (H_{4d}), and political empowerment (H_{4e}) have a positive effect on resident support for sustainable tourism development.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study setting

The methodology for testing the 20 hypotheses relating to the relationship between imperialism, empowerment, and support for tourism involved survey data collected from residents on the island of Sal in Cape

Verde. Throughout its history, the Republic of Cape Verde has undergone significant transformations, evolving from a "trading post to slave dungeon to colonial administrative headquarters" (Teye, Sönmez, & Sirakaya, 2002, p. 672) and eventually becoming one of the most popular tourism destinations in the Sub-Saharan West African region (Santos, 2014). During its struggle for independence, the nation's hero, Amílcar Cabral, famously stated, "What we must do is to modify, to radically transform, the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions of our people" (Cabral, 1972, p. 22). Tourism has been in the last 30 years a pivotal element in this transformation. Presently, the majority of the country's tourism activities are concentrated on the islands of Sal and Boa Vista, predominantly offered through all-inclusive models by multinational brands. According to the 2021 National Census, Sal's population is 33,347 inhabitants (53.5% male and 46.5% female), with 52.9% (pre-COVID-19 pandemic) employed in tourism-related activities (INE, 2021; TradeInvest, 2019).

This island is the bedrock of the tourism industry in Cape Verde, which strategically positioned Sal (and the country) in the Africa-Americas-Europe route, triggering mass tourism during the early 1960s (Santos, 2014). International arrivals in Cape Verde accounted for 835,945 in 2022, of which 61.8% of total arrivals were in Sal (INE, 2023). Of the 34 accommodations available on the island, 21 are four and five-star hotel resorts covering a total of 17,490 rooms (during high season), and 12,903 rooms (during low season) (INE, 2023). As highlighted above, most visitors arrive on the island through the all-inclusive tourism package offered by multinationals such as Riu, Melia, TUI, Hilton, Marriott, and Oasis.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

Data were collected during July, August, and October of 2022 at the most touristic points (Santa Maria, Murdeira, Palmeira) on the island of Sal. Using a random route method combined with a systemic sampling approach, a self-administered, door-to-door, paper-and-pencil questionnaire was adopted for data collection (Boley & McGehee, 2014). This sampling scheme enabled the researchers to obtain a representative sample of the population in terms of gender, reduce non-sampling errors, increase the response rate, and minimize measurement errors (Lohr, 2022). The data collection team, consisting of two undergraduate students and the leading author, used the information from the country's census tracts as a guide. It should be noted that the leading author is a

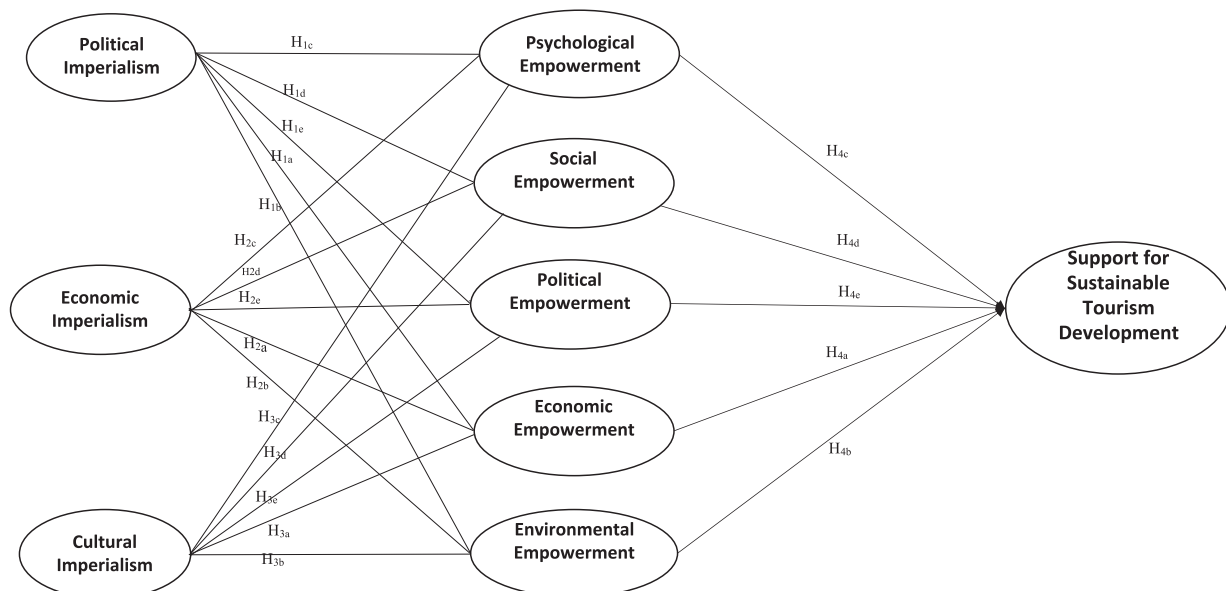


Fig. 1. presents the theoretical model to test the relationships among constructs.

native of Cape Verde, which allowed him to have a unique understanding of tourism from a resident perspective. It also allowed him to easily build rapport with residents since they found him to be a fellow countrymen. One questionnaire was distributed to each household. If the household members were unable to complete the questionnaire immediately, a copy was left in a sealed envelope for later completion and collected either at the end of the day or the following day by the fieldwork team. The interviewers informed all household members that filling in the questionnaire was regarded as their consent to participate in the study. The informed consent was also included in the introduction of the questionnaire. Respondents who agreed to participate were provided with detailed information about the research objectives and definitions of terms for clarification. Of the 836 questionnaires distributed, 543 (65%) were returned. After undergoing data cleaning and screening procedures, 341 (40.8%) questionnaires were validated for this study.

3.3. Questionnaire design

This study used previously tested and validated scales to obtain information regarding residents' perception on imperialism, empowerment, and support for tourism on Sal, the most touristic island of Cape Verde. Resident perceptions of empowerment were measured using the extended 15-item Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS 2.0) borrowed from Santos et al. (2024). The perception of imperialism was measured using a reduced 19-item scale adapted from Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015. Additionally, residents' support for sustainable tourism development was measured using 7-item scale adapted from Lee (2013) and Man-Cheng, So, and Nang-Fong (2021). All scales were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire also inquired about sociodemographic characteristics.

Considering that the original scales were developed in English, a back-translation method was conducted, involving translation from English to Portuguese and then back to English. This ensure that the items were functionally and conceptually equivalent in the Cape Verdean context (Malhotra, Agarwal, & Peterson, 1996). After confirming the translational and linguistic equivalence, the items were incorporated into the survey questionnaire. Prior to the initial data collection, a pre-test was conducted with fifteen residents provided their insights regarding suitability of the questions and its applicability in the study context (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

3.4. Analytical strategy

To ensure the rigor of the collected data and mitigate Common Method Bias (CMB), several measures were implemented, following the guidelines of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). Prior to the data collection, first, the questionnaire was meticulously crafted and ensured proper wording of items, for clarity, neutrality and simplicity to reduce any ambiguity and accurately capture the intended information. Second, during data collection, participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. After the data collection, firstly to assess the presence of CMB, Harman's single-factor test was conducted. The 41 items were all loaded onto a single unrotated Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results revealed that the variance accounted for by a single factor was 31.10%, suggesting the absence of CMB in the data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, a further check of CMB was conducted using the marker variable approach, which also indicated no CMB in the data. The data were also subject to a normality test assessed via skewness and kurtosis values. SPSS outputs revealed that both skewness and kurtosis were both below the recommended threshold of 3.0 and 7.0, respectively (Hair et al., 2010) indicating that non-normality was not an issue for further analysis. Lastly, the study employed IBM Amos v28 software to test a theoretical model using the maximum likelihood estimation (ML) method (Hair et al., 2010). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model. The following cut-off values for fit

indices were used: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA<0.08), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR<0.08), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI > 0.90), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI> 0.90) (Hair et al., 2010). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then used to test the structural model of the proposed hypotheses through path analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic profile

Data on residents' sociodemographic characteristics were collected following the census-guided scheme. As detailed in Table 1, the sample comprised 49.5% male and 50.5% female respondents. Participants spanned all age groups, ranging from 18-24 (7.6%) to 65+ (1.2%), with the largest group being those aged 24–36 years. The majority of respondents possessed a high school diploma (43.1%). Additionally, 74.8% of participants were employed by the public-private sector (mostly tourism-related: 62.2%) and 34.6% lived on the Island of Sal for more than 20 years. Marital status indicated that 68.3% of respondents were single while 23.5% were married. Approximately 110 families (34.9%) reported an average income between €362.76– €544.13, and 50.4% of the families derived their income from the tourism sector.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Profile (n = 341).

Variables	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	44.6
	Female	55.4
Age (years)	18–24	7.6
	25–36	49.3
	37–46	34.3
	47–56	3.8
	57–64	3.8
	≥ 65	1.2
Marital status	Single	68.3
	Married	23.5
	Divorced	7.5
	Widow	0.9
Education	Primary School	7.6
	Secondary School	43.1
	Technical Training	22.6
	University	26.5
Occupation	Self-employed	17.6
	Public-private sector	74.8
	Student	1.5
	Unemployed	4.1
Monthly family income (euros)	Maid	2.1
	<€181.38	9.4
	€181.39–€362.75	25.5
	€362.76–€544.13	34.9
	€544.14–€725.52	13.5
Length of residence (years)	>€725.53	16.7
	1–5	7.9
	6–10	24.0
	11–15	17.6
	16–20	15.8
Primary income come from tourism	>20	34.6
	Yes	50.4
Work in tourism	No	49.6
	Yes	62.2
Work in tourism as...	No	37.8
	Employer	13.2
	Employee	47.5
	No response	39.3

Note: Missing data related to the question: "Do you work in tourism?", if participants did not work in tourism, the question was left blank, corresponding to missing data.

4.2. Testing the measurement model

To evaluate the fit and construct validity of the measurement model, CFA was conducted using AMOS v28. Results from the first round of CFA indicated that several items in the imperialism scale had a factor loading below the recommended threshold, therefore were removed from the model. These items were as follows: Economic (2 item removed), Cultural (4 items removed), and Political (3 items removed) Imperialism. After the elimination of nine items, the retained 19 items of the imperialism scale were ready for further analysis. The results indicate a satisfactory overall model fit with the following metrics: $\chi^2 = 1106.12$, $df = 743$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04. The measurement model's further assessment, which encompassed reliability and construct validity (both convergent and discriminant validity), was also conducted. As presented in Table 2 construct reliability and convergent validity were achieved for all the measured constructs, surpassing the 0.70 threshold for Composite Reliability (CR) and 0.50 for Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The factor loadings were all significant at $p < 0.001$ and ranged from 0.66 to 0.91, which is higher than the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, Cronbach Alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, affirming the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant validity, which tests the distinctiveness between constructs, was assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE with the correlations among the constructs of the model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the data presented in Table 3, the square root of each AVE (values on the diagonal) was greater than the correlations between each construct and the others (values off the diagonal). The square root of AVE ranged from 0.74 to 0.83, fitting well within the recommended criteria outlined in the literature (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4.3. Testing the structural model

After assessing the quality of the measurement model, the study evaluated a structural model to test the proposed hypotheses. Model fit for the SEM indicated satisfactory results, yielding the following: $\chi^2_{(749)} = 248.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.67$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.07. Results presented in Table 4 reveal that seventeen of the twenty proposed hypotheses were rejected in the model. Support for sustainable tourism development explained 34% of the total variance. Specifically, the direct effect of political imperialism on economic ($\beta = -0.01$, $p = 0.89$), environmental ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.17$), psychological ($\beta = 0.00$, $p = 0.96$), social ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.28$), and political empowerment ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.47$) were found to be insignificant, rejecting H_{1a}, H_{1b}, H_{1c}, H_{1d} and H_{1e}. Similarly, the effect of economic imperialism on economic ($\beta = 0.04$, $p = 0.52$), environmental ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.89$), psychological ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.13$) and political empowerment ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.11$), were not confirmed by our data, rejecting H_{2a}, H_{2b}, H_{2c} and H_{2e}. A significant and direct relationship between economic imperialism and social empowerment ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.03$) was found, but since it was positive, H₂ was rejected. The effects of cultural imperialism on economic ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = 0.61$), environmental ($\beta = 0.01$, $p = 0.94$), psychological ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = 0.62$), social ($\beta = -0.03$, $p = 0.64$) and political empowerment ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.54$) were also found to be not significant, rejecting H_{3a}, H_{3b}, H_{3c}, H_{3d} and H_{3e}. Finally, a significant and direct relationship between economic empowerment and support for sustainable tourism development ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.05$), environmental empowerment and support for sustainable tourism development ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.01$), and psychological empowerment and support for sustainable tourism development ($\beta = 0.45$, $p = 0.01$) was confirmed, supporting H_{4a}, H_{4b}, and H_{4c}. However, the effect of social empowerment on support for sustainable tourism development ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.22$) was insignificant and the effect of political empowerment on support for sustainable tourism development ($\beta = -0.20$, $p = 0.05$) was significant but

Table 2 Measurement Model, Reliability and Convergent Validity Results (CFA).

Constructs and items	Means	Factor Loading	t-statistics
Political Imperialism (CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.57)			
Foreign investors and business elites are very dominant in the making of tourism policies.	3.40	0.70	13.71***
The resort-type accommodations are mostly constructed on prime agricultural lands or on the coasts.	3.18	0.74	14.67***
Foreign investors and business elites benefit from tax and import duty incentives.	3.29	0.73	14.30***
The environmental laws are relaxed to facilitate tourism development.	3.47	0.82	16.74***
Foreign investors can withdraw from the country at any time.	3.47	0.78	15.74***
The government is pressured by international organizations to develop the tourism industry	3.43	0.81	N/A
Economic Imperialism (CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.55)			
Foreign tourism investors have businesses here because of reduced operating cost.	3.33	0.68	13.27***
The majority of profit made by the foreign companies is sent back to their home country.	3.41	0.67	12.87***
Only a small number of residents benefit from tourism.	3.57	0.80	N/A
Expatriate workers get better paying jobs, benefits and allowances.	3.50	0.77	15.32***
Tourism does not provide that much economic benefit to the country as publicized.	3.45	0.80	16.10***
Tourists in the all-inclusive hotels do not spend money in the community.	3.60	0.79	15.91***
The community supplies the hotels with agricultural produce.	3.40	0.73	14.46***
Residents are unable to afford the high prices charged for tourism facilities.	3.66	0.66	12.78***
Cultural Imperialism (CR = 0.86; AVE = 0.56)			
The local culture has been changed because of foreign-owned tourism/ hospitality businesses	3.79	0.70	13.28***
The culture of the tourists is transmitted to the local community.	3.87	0.73	13.83***
The culture of foreign companies is transmitted to the local community.	3.87	0.74	14.08***
The local culture is used as a show and becomes another commodity.	3.95	0.82	14.19***
There are moral issues such as prostitution and criminal activities because of tourism.	3.82	0.74	N/A
Environmental Empowerment (CR = 0.84; AVE = 0.64)			
Reminds me that I have the obligation to protect my natural surroundings	3.25	0.81	15.24***
Provides ways for me to promote environmentally friendly initiatives	3.38	0.79	14.81***
Makes me feel I can contribute to my community's wellbeing through preservation of physical surrounding	3.30	0.80	N/A
Economic Empowerment (CR = 0.85; AVE = 0.65)			
Makes me feel I can benefit economically long-term	3.43	0.78	N/A
Provides ways for me to support my family	3.30	0.84	15.33***
Makes me feel I can improve my standard of living	3.43	0.79	14.58***

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Constructs and items	Means	Factor Loading	t-statistics
Psychological Empowerment (CR = 0.86; AVE = 0.67)			
Makes me feel special because people travel to see my country's unique feature	3.79	0.75	15.84***
Reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors	3.87	0.80	17.19***
Makes me want to work to keep Sal special	3.82	0.90	N/A
Social Empowerment (CR = 0.84; AVE = 0.64)			
Makes me feel more connected to my community	3.31	0.81	14.97***
Fosters the sense of community spirit within me	3.31	0.80	15.44***
Provides ways for me to get involved in my community	3.23	0.78	N/A
Political Empowerment (CR = 0.87; AVE = 0.69)			
I have a voice in Sal tourism development decisions	2.43	0.88	N/A
I have access to the decision-making process when it comes to tourism in Sal	2.48	0.91	20.54***
I have an outlet to share my concerns about tourism development in Sal	2.95	0.68	14.15***
Support for Sustainable Tourism Development (CR = 0.92; AVE = 0.62)			
I would support the development of sustainable tourism initiatives	4.05	0.71	14.04***
I would participate in sustainable tourism-related plans and development	3.93	0.80	N/A
I would participate in cultural exchanges between local residents and visitors	3.87	0.78	15.81***
I would cooperate with tourism planning and development initiatives	3.88	0.84	17.46***
I would participate in the promotion of environmental education and conservation	4.02	0.82	16.82***
I would cooperate with regulatory environmental standards to reduce the negative impacts of tourism	3.96	0.79	16.15***
Overall, I would support sustainable tourism development that aims to bring positive experiences for local people, tourism companies, and tourists themselves	3.94	0.75	14.99***

Note: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

negative, thus rejecting H_{4d} and H_{4e} .

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to address concerns pertaining to the balance of power, the ongoingness of imperialism, and high-income and low-

Table 3
Discriminant Validity Test based on Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. SSTD	0.79								
2. POL_IMP	-0.03	0.77							
3. ECO_IMP	0.00	0.09	0.74						
4. CUL_IMP	0.02	-0.09	-0.11	0.75					
5. ECO_EMP	0.32	-0.00	0.04	-0.04	0.81				
6. ENV_EMP	0.37	0.09	0.02	0.00	0.65	0.80			
7. PSY_EMP	0.57	0.02	0.09	-0.04	0.42	0.51	0.82		
8. SOC_EMP	0.26	0.08	0.14	-0.05	0.51	0.66	0.55	0.79	
9. POL_EMP	-0.12	-0.03	0.10	-0.04	0.42	0.41	-0.04	0.53	0.83

Note: The bold diagonal elements are the squared root of the AVE; interconstruct correlations is shown off-diagonal. POL_IMP=Political Imperialism; ECO_IMP = Economic Imperialism; CUL_IMP=Cultural Imperialism; ECO_EMP = Economic Empowerment; ENV_EMP = Environmental Empowerment; PSY_EMP=Psychological Empowerment; SOC_EMP=Social Empowerment; POL_EMP=Political Empowerment; SSTD=Support for Sustainable Tourism Development.

income countries' relations within a vulnerable tourism destination (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2022; Nash, 1989; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015), exploring the case of Cape Verde. In an attempt to advance our knowledge surrounding such concerns, the study intended to better understand how actions that are often justified by economic and political agenda and policies that are fueled by the urgency to actuate national consumption and congregate standard of living ambitious in the high-income countries, continue to hamper growth in the low-income countries. Within such conditions, the proposed theoretical framework using WTFSR and institutional theory assessed the relationship between imperialism and empowerment. Moreover, empowerment is important for destinations seeking to achieve support for sustainable tourism development.

Despite the prevailing notion that imperialistic tourism development disempowers residents through its neo-colonial structure, our results suggest the imperialistic tourism development has no influence over resident perceptions of being empowered by tourism. This finding of no relation between imperialism and empowerment offers a greater understanding of the terms and conditions of tourism development as well as the relationships between residents, governments, and foreigners. Further, the effects of perceptions of empowerment on residents' support for sustainable tourism development, provide critical insight into residents' attitudes towards tourism. By investigating these effects, the study seeks to make a novel contribution to the residents' perception and attitude scholarship.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The key findings of this study significantly contribute to the overarching principles of sustainable tourism development by exploring the potential linkages among empowerment, imperialism, and support for sustainable tourism. This exploration, conducted within a cohesive theoretical framework, yields several novel contributions to the existing body of literature. Firstly, the study's integration of WTFSR and institutional theory offers a novel perspective in understanding how residents' support for tourism development is shaped by a complex interplay of economic and non-economic factors at individual, community, and institutional levels. This perspective extends WTFSR by demonstrating that, within a neoliberalism context where imperialism practice flourish there is a low level of empowerment among residents, as demonstrated in our study. In line with institutional theory, our findings suggest that these formal structures are not just economic constructs but are deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric of the community. This insight deepens the discourse on sustainable tourism development, particularly in the context of political and economic imperialism, and aligns with the observations made by Gursoy, Chi, and Dyer (2010) and MacNeill (2017).

Secondly, the study's exploration of the impact of economic imperialism on empowerment reflects the nuanced interplay between WTFSR and institutional theory. While WTFSR helps in understanding the

Table 4
Hypotheses Relationships and Observed Relationships from the SEM.

Hypotheses	Paths	Std. Regression Weights	p-Value	Results
H _{1a}	Political Imperialism→>Economic Empowerment	-0.01	0.89	Rejected
H _{1b}	Political Imperialism→>Environmental Empowerment	0.09	0.17	Rejected
H _{1c}	Political Imperialism→>Psychological Empowerment	0.00	0.96	Rejected
H _{1d}	Political Imperialism→>Social Empowerment	0.07	0.28	Rejected
H _{1e}	Political Imperialism→>Political Empowerment	-0.04	0.47	Rejected
H _{2a}	Economic Imperialism→>Economic Empowerment	0.04	0.52	Rejected
H _{2b}	Economic Imperialism→>Environmental Empowerment	0.01	0.89	Rejected
H _{2c}	Economic Imperialism→>Psychological Empowerment	0.09	0.13	Rejected
H _{2d}	Economic Imperialism→>Social Empowerment	0.13	0.03	Rejected
H _{2e}	Economic Imperialism→>Political Empowerment	0.10	0.11	Rejected
H _{3a}	Cultural Imperialism→>Economic Empowerment	-0.03	0.61	Rejected
H _{3b}	Cultural Imperialism→>Environmental Empowerment	0.01	0.94	Rejected
H _{3c}	Cultural Imperialism→>Psychological Empowerment	-0.03	0.62	Rejected
H _{3d}	Cultural Imperialism→>Social Empowerment	-0.03	0.64	Rejected
H _{3e}	Cultural Imperialism→>Political Empowerment	-0.04	0.54	Rejected
H _{4a}	Economic Empowerment→ SSTD	0.15	0.05	Supported
H _{4b}	Environmental Empowerment→ SSTD	0.19	0.01	Supported
H _{4c}	Psychological Empowerment→ SSTD	0.45	0.01	Supported
H _{4d}	Social Empowerment→ SSTD	-0.08	0.22	Rejected
H _{4e}	Political Empowerment→ SSTD	-0.20	0.05	Rejected

formal economic structures that drive imperialism, institutional theory offers insights into how these structures are interpreted and navigated by local communities. Our study results in Table 2 (the means) show low/moderate levels of empowerment in all dimensions (no items reached 4 or a higher mean value). So, the fact that foreign investor dominates tourism policies and exert pressure on local government can be an explanation for this low sense of empowerment. This lack of empowerment can be attributed to the inequitable distribution of tourism benefits and limited opportunities for residents to express their concerns about tourism-related activities. These observations extend previous research by Gursoy et al. (2010) and Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2015, which did not establish a significant relationship between political imperialism and tourism impacts.

Third, our findings on cultural imperialism also challenge the theoretical assumptions of both WTFSR and institutional theory. While one would predict that formal cultural structures in tourism would lead to empowerment, our study shows that this is not the case. Similarly, institutional theory, which focuses on institutional norms and values,

would suggest a positive impact of cultural exchange on empowerment. Our study results in Table 2 (means) show low/moderate levels of empowerment in all dimensions (no items reach 4 or higher values). Therefore, the commodification of local culture and imposition of foreign customs, often driven by formal institutional decisions, can be a possible reason for this low sense of empowerment. This contradiction with theoretical expectations calls for a re-evaluation of how cultural aspects within WTFSR and institutional theory frameworks are understood and integrated in the context of tourism development. This finding aligns with the observations of MacNeill (2017) and Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001), suggesting a gap in existing literature regarding the impact of cultural imperialism on resident empowerment.

Lastly, the study confirms a positive relationship between residents' perceptions of empowerment (economic, environmental, and psychological) and their support for sustainable tourism development. It should be noted that a negative path coefficient for the relationship between political empowerment and support for sustainable tourism development was found, but the *sp* value was almost not significant, as Yeager et al. (2020) found. The correlation between community pride, self-esteem from tourism development, and support for sustainable tourism development echoes findings by Strzelecka et al. (2017). Moreover, residents' commitment to environmental conservation aligns with findings by Eluwole et al. (2022), indicating a broader pattern of environmental concerns influencing support for tourism. Additionally, our findings corroborate those of Li et al. (2022a) and Mody et al. (2020) in identifying economic empowerment as a crucial factor, although our study focuses on long-term economic benefits rather than short-term gains. In line with Boley et al. (2014) and Mody et al. (2020), our study also observes a lack of a direct significant relationship between social and political empowerment and support for tourism, possibly due to cohesion and unity in the community when residents engage with tourism. This aspect was particularly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted community unity and led to more individualized behaviors, influencing the relationships examined in our study.

5.2. Practical implications

Considering that residents embrace tourism as a tool for economic, social, and cultural well-being as well as a path towards empowerment, our findings provide practical implications for stakeholders. First, our findings highlight that, although imperialistic tourism models are deeply rooted in Cape Verde and is known to contribute to national GDP as well as attract FDI, the importance of engaging residents in tourism development should not be overlooked. Cape Verde's unique settings (emerging tourism destination with colonial history) presents many challenges for managers and policymakers in prioritizing community engagement and promote inclusivity. These types of initiatives involve establishing forums for resident involvement in decision-making processes and ensuring that their voices are heard and acted upon. Strategic partnerships should be formed between residents, policymakers, and multinational companies, focusing on sustainable practices that offer real empowerment opportunities. These partnerships can facilitate knowledge transfer and skill development, particularly in managerial roles, helping to bridge the gap between foreign investment and local empowerment. Synergies between various ministries and sectors (culture, tourism, agriculture, environment, local planning and development, and health) are crucial for creating a holistic approach to sustainable tourism that benefits both the economy and the community.

Second, in response to the pressing challenges of climate change and economic instability, factors that are extremely sensitive to Cape Verde's socio-economic development, the imperative of empowering residents in environmental conservation and economic participation is paramount. As Higgins-Desbiolles (2022) suggests, grassroots projects that educate and actively involve locals in environmental stewardship are crucial in fostering a deeper understanding of and commitment to sustainable tourism practices. Furthering this approach, Scheyvens and Van

der Watt (2021) advocate for training programs that equip residents to become environmental advocates, thereby enhancing their role in sustainable tourism. Additionally, considering Cape Verde’s mass body of ocean, harboring a diverse marine life (abundance coral reef, humpback whales, manta rays, and endangered turtle species), initiatives addressing coastal development concerns (construction of multinational resorts near the coastline) must give priority to marine fauna and flora protection and advocate for sustainable land use practices. To ensure a fair distribution of economic benefits from tourism, revenue generated from tourism taxes and visa entry in Cape Verde, managed through Ministry of Tourism Agency: Tourism Fund, it is essential to channel such funds back into the local economy through structural programs aimed to support entrepreneurship and strengthen local businesses. The promotion of local culture, encompassing arts (distinct West African sculptures and paintings, various religious festivals, Carnival of São Vicente), music (*Morna*: UNESCO World Heritage, the captivating voice of *Cesária Évora*, (the bear-foot diva), *Coladeira*, *Funana*), and cuisine (diverse seafood dishes, *Catxupa*; national dish introduced during colonial era with beans and corn from Brazil, banana sweet potato from West Africa, and meat from Portugal), not only stimulates local economic growth but also, as emphasized by Higgins-Desbiolles (2022) and Scheyvens and Van der Watt (2021), provides a pathway to access national and international markets. Such exposure to cultural products can significantly diversify and enhance the local economic landscape, contributing to empowering the local communities and a more resilient and sustainable tourism sector.

Third, gaining resident support for sustainable tourism development in an imperialistic context requires a focused approach to economic, environmental, psychological and empowerment. Although such sentiments were overshadowed by neoliberalism practices that foster imperialism model in Cape Verde, residents’ relationship with tourism (economic dependency for livelihood) demonstrate their willingness to accept (mechanism of survival) such conditions. Transparent community programs that advocate for the equitable distribution of tourism wealth can strengthen local support for sustainable tourism development. Policies designed to mitigate negative environmental impacts are also critical in securing resident support. Creating platforms for residents to express their tourism-related concerns is essential for fostering a sense of ownership and involvement in tourism development. While sustainable tourism can exist within an imperialistic model, as Clarke (1997) suggests, it is vital to recognize that true empowerment comes from beyond just economic gains. Policies and practices need to be reoriented to prioritize resident empowerment and sustainable development holistically.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Although attempts were made to fill an important gap in literature, a few limitations are worth noting in this study. The data for this study was collected before the return of the high tourist season post-COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many residents experienced layoffs from multinational brands, leading to significant economic hardship. This context likely influenced respondents’ perceptions of imperialism and empowerment, as the importance of economic tourism activity on the island of Sal might have been viewed with heightened sensitivity. As

suggested by Higgins-Desbiolles (2022), perceptions during crises can significantly differ from those in normal circumstances. Therefore, future research should consider data collection during periods of economic stability, such as high tourist seasons, to assess if and how residents’ perceptions change when employment and economic conditions are normalized.

Second, institutional theory, as highlighted by Scheyvens and Van der Watt (2021), emphasizes the role of local, regional, and national authorities in governing institutions responsible for safeguarding residents’ well-being. The limitations imposed by the pandemic might have influenced residents’ perceptions of these institutions. Future studies should adopt a longitudinal approach to monitor and compare residents’ perceptions over time, particularly as authorities adapt and respond to crises. This approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how institutional actions during different phases of a crisis impact resident perceptions and attitudes.

Lastly, this study’s data collection was confined to one island, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Insights from a broader geographical scope, encompassing both national and international perspectives, could offer a more nuanced understanding of local population perceptions and attitudes within the broader context of tourism development. Future studies should consider expanding the geographical scope to include multiple small island destinations. Furthermore, as Clarke (1997) points out, the role of multinational corporations in tourism development is critical. Investigating residents’ perceptions of imperialism concerning all-inclusive resorts and trust in local government will further enrich the tourism attitude literature, particularly in small island contexts where such corporate involvement is prevalent.

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Declaration of competing interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic		Statistic	
PIMP4	341	3.40	1.084	-0.266	0.132	-0.689	0.263
PIMP5	341	3.18	1.051	-0.051	0.132	-0.802	0.263
PIMP6	341	3.29	0.962	-0.158	0.132	-0.487	0.263

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	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
PIMP7	341	3.47	1.019	-0.218	0.132	-0.672	0.263
PIMP8	341	3.47	1.056	-0.386	0.132	-0.440	0.263
PIMP9	341	3.43	0.997	-0.256	0.132	-0.549	0.263
EIMP2	341	3.33	1.000	-0.372	0.132	-0.325	0.263
EIMP3	341	3.41	1.052	-0.318	0.132	-0.514	0.263
EIMP4	341	3.57	1.059	-0.257	0.132	-0.820	0.263
EIMP5	341	3.50	1.045	-0.261	0.132	-0.755	0.263
EIMP7	341	3.45	1.012	-0.091	0.132	-0.777	0.263
EIMP8	341	3.60	1.011	-0.321	0.132	-0.651	0.263
EIMP9	341	3.40	1.018	-0.287	0.132	-0.375	0.263
EIMP10	341	3.66	0.958	-0.410	0.132	-0.411	0.263
CIMP4	341	3.79	0.883	-0.323	0.132	-0.475	0.263
CIMP5	341	3.87	0.942	-0.449	0.132	-0.601	0.263
CIMP6	341	3.87	0.963	-0.599	0.132	-0.373	0.263
CIMP7	341	3.95	0.969	-0.647	0.132	-0.370	0.263
CIMP8	341	3.82	0.935	-0.467	0.132	-0.330	0.263
ECOE7	341	3.25	1.071	-0.113	0.132	-0.635	0.263
ECOE8	341	3.38	1.109	-0.288	0.132	-0.616	0.263
ECOE9	341	3.30	1.003	-0.131	0.132	-0.667	0.263
ENVE3	341	3.43	1.081	-0.186	0.132	-0.759	0.263
ENVE6	341	3.30	1.017	-0.035	0.132	-0.602	0.263
ENVE11	341	3.43	0.973	-0.266	0.132	-0.266	0.263
PSE2	341	3.79	0.982	-0.442	0.132	-0.478	0.263
PSE4	341	3.87	1.023	-0.542	0.132	-0.563	0.263
PSE5	341	3.82	1.021	-0.504	0.132	-0.512	0.263
SCE1	341	3.31	1.072	-0.170	0.132	-0.623	0.263
SCE3	341	3.23	1.102	-0.097	0.132	-0.780	0.263
PLE1	341	2.43	1.303	0.404	0.132	-1.057	0.263
PLE2	341	2.48	1.384	0.365	0.132	-1.189	0.263
PLE4	341	2.95	1.232	-0.114	0.132	-0.950	0.263
SSTD1	341	3.94	0.947	-0.489	0.132	-0.648	0.263
SSTD2	341	4.05	0.919	-0.802	0.132	0.294	0.263
SSTD3	341	3.93	0.975	-0.638	0.132	-0.389	0.263
SSTD4	341	3.87	0.956	-0.524	0.132	-0.371	0.263
SSTD5	341	3.88	0.941	-0.584	0.132	-0.206	0.263
SSTD6	341	4.02	0.879	-0.588	0.132	-0.275	0.263
SSTD7	341	3.96	0.921	-0.663	0.132	-0.018	0.263
Valid N (listwise)	341						

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