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The Mediating Role of Social Sustainability in the Relationship between Community Participation and Support for Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of residents in Mardin, one of Turkey's most significant cultural tourism destinations, regarding community participation, social sustainability, and support for tourism. The study also examines whether social sustainability mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism. In this context, data were collected from 617 residents using the convenience sampling method, and 537 of them were analyzed through reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results indicated that community participation negatively affects host-guest conflict and positively influences social acceptance. It was also found that community participation has no significant impact on social tolerance. Similarly, it was revealed that host-guest conflict negatively affects support for tourism, while social acceptance positively affects support for tourism. However, social tolerance was found to have no significant impact on support for tourism. Furthermore, the study revealed that host-guest conflict and social acceptance, as dimensions of social sustainability, mediate the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

KEYWORDS

Social Sustainability, Community Participation, Host-Guest Conflict, Social Tolerance, Social Acceptance, Support for Tourism.

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1. Introduction

Three fundamental dimensions underlie sustainable development: social, environmental, and economic sustainability (UNEP & WTO, 2005). Social sustainability has recently begun to attract more attention as a crucial part of sustainable development (Larimian & Sadeghi, 2019). Although this concept is essential, less attention has been given to it in the academic literature than to economic and environmental sustainability (Razia & Ah, 2023).

Many authors have stated that there is no common view on the conceptual definition of social sustainability (Dempsey et al., 2009; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Larimian & Sadeghi, 2019; Cope et al., 2022). This concept is inextricably linked to environmental and economic sustainability. A stable social environment ensures economic and environmental sustainability (Foot & Ross, 2004).

From a tourism perspective, social sustainability includes "equity, equality, employment, accessibility, education and information, health, social infrastructure, social cohesion, community support, good governance, local procurement, preservation and development of cultural heritage, public participation, economic self-sufficiency, ethics, and maintaining tourist satisfaction" (Nugraheni et al., 2019a, p. 270). Many authors have stated that the number of studies on social sustainability in the literature, including tourism, is quite limited (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Nugraheni et al., 2019a; Nugraheni et al., 2019b). Indeed, there are a few studies under the title of social sustainability in tourism (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019; McClinchey, 2021).

Cost-benefit analysis within the social exchange theory (SET) and quality-of-life (QoL) analysis can contribute to predicting social sustainability (Aspinall et al., 2011). Likewise, residents' tolerance is seen as one of the critical elements of social carrying capacity (Yusoh et al., 2021). Exceeding the carrying capacity may lead to a decrease in the level of acceptance of tourists by local people to their area (Kılıç & Seçilmiş, 2022). In this context, Zhang et al. (2017) stated that social tolerance and acceptance are essential for social sustainability in destination environments. From this perspective, social sustainability is linked to many concepts, such as social exchange theory (SET), quality of life (QoL), and social carrying capacity (SCC) (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019; Yusoh et al., 2021). In general, the achievement of tourism development in a region depends on how the residents perceive tourism impacts and how they support it (Adongo et al., 2017). In this context, the sustainability, success, and development of tourism require the support of local people (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004).

One of the essential determinants of social sustainability is community participation (Bafarasat & Oliveira, 2023). Participation in local and community activities is identified as a dimension of social sustainability (Dempsey et al., 2009). From this perspective, people must participate at the local level in procedures and other areas of political activity to create and implement the social sustainability process (McKenzie, 2004). In tourism, community participation (CP) refers to a process whereby the community impacts the direction of tourism development rather than passively utilizing the benefits of tourism. Through community participation, homeowners' needs and interests can be considered, their quality of life can be improved, and economic development can be promoted (Jaafar et al., 2015). A community's value can be enhanced through community participation by improving tourism's positive effects and decreasing its negative impacts (Lee, 2013).Therefore, community participation is a critical element for development of sustainable tourism (Nicholas et al., 2009).

When evaluated from all these perspectives, it can be seen that community participation is vital in social sustainability and social sustainability has a considerable role in support for tourism. In this context, this study aims to determine the residents' perceptions of social sustainability, community participation, and support for tourism. The study also aims to examine whether social sustainability mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Sustainability

Underlying the concept of sustainable development lies the idea of meeting today's needs without jeopardizing the capability of future generations to fulfil their necessities. Sustainable development is founded on three basic dimensions: social, environmental and economic sustainability (UNEP & WTO, 2005). These concepts related to sustainability emphasize long-term human well-being, minimizing resource consumption, maximizing resource use efficiency, and ensuring democracy and equality (Martins et al., 2021).

Compared to other dimensions of sustainable development, social sustainability is the least developed in theory and practice (Bafarasat & Oliveira, 2023). Although social sustainability is an important topic, academic literature has paid more attention to environmental and economic sustainability rather than this dimension (Razia & Ah, 2023). However, this dimension has recently been given more attention as a crucial aspect of sustainable development (Larimian & Sadeghi, 2019). Moreover, many authors have stated that there needs to be a definition or consensus on what social sustainability is (Dempsey et al., 2009; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Larimian & Sadeghi, 2019; Cope et al., 2022).

McKenzie (2004, p. 12) defined social sustainability as "a situation that enhances life in communities, and a process with that is accomplished of achieving that condition". Bafarasat and Oliveira (2023, p. 1) defined social sustainability as "the cultural, political and economic inclusion of various groups and individuals in development". The authors stated that community participation and economic equality are the main determinants of social development. Social sustainability means respect for human rights and equal opportunities for everyone in the community. It requires equitable distribution of benefits, with a focus on poverty reduction. It also refers to issues such as maintaining and strengthening local communities' life support systems, avoiding exploitation, and respecting and recognizing different cultures (UNEP & WTO, 2005).

Social sustainability considers issues such as equity, community participation, quality of life, social justice, good governance and human well-being (Nugraheni et al., 2019a). Social sustainability is considered substantive and procedural. While the substantive dimension generally refers to people's well-being, rights and needs, the procedural dimension relates to achieving these goals, such as democratic governance, democratic decision-making, empowerment and access to information (Helgadóttir et al., 2019). Dempsey et al. (2009) stated that the overarching dimensions underlying the idea of urban social sustainability are social equality and sustainability of society. The social equity aspect focuses on a distributive concept of social justice, while the sustainability of society is concerned with society's health, functioning, and continued viability.

Environmental and economic sustainability are inseparable from social sustainability. Environmental and economic sustainability is supported by a stable social environment (Foot & Ross, 2004). The first aim of social sustainability is to build inclusive and resilient societies where citizens are represented and governments are responsive, generating opportunities for everyone, both today and in the future. The second aim of social sustainability is the duty of societies to provide their basic human requirements and protect natural resources for future generations. From these perspectives, social sustainability ensures everyone has a good quality of life to achieve a sustainable future (Razia & Ah, 2023). The basic social sustainability principles include promoting social relations, ensuring community participation, equality, and education, and ensuring access to health, housing, employment, green spaces, and a safe environment (Martins et al., 2021). Social sustainability refers to the long-term viability of a city as an environment for human interaction, communication, and cultural development (Akcali & Cahantimur, 2022).

McKenzie (2004) states that the basic principles of social sustainability are equality (e.g., the community ensures that all its members receive equal outcomes and opportunities, especially the most vulnerable and the poor people), diversity (e.g., diversity is promoted and encouraged by the community), interconnectedness (e.g., the community ensures structures, systems and procedures that foster connections outside and within the community at the institutional, informal, formal levels), quality of life (e.g., the community is responsible for meeting basic needs and promoting a good quality of life for every citizen),

and democracy and governance (e.g., the community ensures governance structures and democratic processes that are transparent and accountable).

Especially urban social sustainability, many studies on social sustainability have been carried out, and the conceptual dimensions of social sustainability have been revealed (Dempsey et al., 2009; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Larimian & Sadeghi, 2019; Martins et al., 2021; Akcali & Cahantimur, 2022). For example, Dempsey et al. (2009) stated that social sustainability consists of physical and non-physical factors. Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) revealed that the conceptual framework of social sustainability consists of security, equality, eco-consumption and sustainable urban forms. Larimian and Sadeghi (2019) showed that social sustainability is a multiple dimensions concept that includes six fundamental dimensions: the sense of place, social equity, social interaction, safety/security, neighbourhood satisfaction and community participation. Martins et al. (2021) revealed that sub-dimensions such as environmental awareness, protection of historical heritage, crime prevention, and proximity to green areas contribute to social sustainability. Akcali and Cahantimur (2022) proposed a five-dimensional social sustainability model for urban areas: person (household and demographic characteristics), place (social infrastructure, accessibility, places for daily operations and open spaces), people (social network, social relationships and sense of community), perception (safety, security and sense of place) and process (the future of place and participation).

2.2 Social Sustainability in Tourism

From a tourism perspective, social sustainability (SC) can be defined as "a process and state that addresses the interrelationships of individuals, communities, governments and societies and aiming to achieve the aims of sustainable tourism, while also considering the physical boundaries of both the tourism destination and the world as a whole" (Nugraheni et al., 2019b, p. 6). In this context, social sustainability in tourism includes issues such as "equality, employment, equity, health, education and information, social harmony, social infrastructure, community support, good governance, accessibility, local purchasing, economic self-sufficiency, public participation, protection and development of cultural heritage, ethics and tourist satisfaction" (Nugraheni et al., 2019a, p. 270). It also emphasizes achieving a social situation that ensures a high quality of life and justice in the tourism industry (Nugraheni et al., 2019b).

McKenzie (2004) states that the steps for establishing and implementing the process of social sustainability are: a) equality in access to essential services, including education, health, transportation, recreation, and housing, and b) a system of cultural relations that values and protects the positive aspects of disparate cultures and encourages cultural integration. Aspinall et al. (2011) stated that cost-benefit analysis within the social exchange theory (SET) and quality-of-life (QoL) analysis can considerably contribute to predictions regarding social sustainability in general. In addition, the hosts' tolerance level towards the presence of tourists is considered one of the critical components of social carrying capacity (Yusoh et al., 2021). The decrease in carrying capacity leads to a decrease in local people's acceptance of tourists in their region (Kılıç & Seçilmiş, 2022). In this context, Zhang et al. (2017) stated that social tolerance and acceptance are essential for social sustainability in destination environments. When evaluated from these perspectives, it can be seen that social sustainability is linked to many concepts, such as social exchange theory (SET), social carrying capacity (SCC) and quality of life (QoL) (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019; Yusoh et al., 2021). Studies carried out based on these concepts provide clues in determining social sustainability (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019).

SET aims to determine how individuals perceive relationships' relative benefits and costs and their effects on relationship satisfaction (Ward & Berno, 2011). The first and most common approach in social exchange theory is the cost-benefit approach (Stylidis et al., 2014). Positive effects are described as "benefits", while negative effects are considered "costs" (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004, p. 297). In terms of the tourism industry, if local people believe that the costs of tourism are greater than the benefits, they will discontinue support for tourism, which could threaten the industry's future development and success (Sharpley, 2014).

Quality of life (QoL) can be defined in its most basic form as "contentment with one's experiences in the world and satisfaction with life" (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011, p. 248). Residents' quality of life can be affected by a community becoming a tourism destination (Gursoy et al., 2002). Tourism activities in a region can affect a community's quality of life through social, cultural, environmental and economic im-

pacts (Matatolu, 2019). Therefore, quality of life influences local people's attitudes towards future tourism development in their communities (Liang & Hui, 2016).

In some studies on quality of life within the scope of social exchange theory, tourism's negative and positive impacts were separated according to some quality of life areas, and satisfaction in these areas was examined. These studies generally revealed that tourism's positive impacts positively affect relevant aspects of QoL (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Aref, 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Eslami et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2022; Han et al., 2023), while the negative effects of tourism negatively affect relevant aspects of QoL (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Roberts et al., 2022). Secondly, it has been found that the benefits of tourism increase the QoL (Su et al., 2016; Campon-Cerro et al., 2017; Kolawole et al., 2017; Çalişkan et al., 2022; Mihalic & Kuscer, 2022; Riyanto et al., 2023; Yayla et al., 2023), while its costs decrease the quality of life (Su et al., 2016; Kolawole et al., 2017; Mihalic & Kuscer, 2022).

Nugraheni et al. (2019b) stated that there are few studies on social sustainability in the tourism literature. Indeed, only a limited number of studies have been conducted under the title of social sustainability (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019; McClinchey, 2021). For instance, McClinchey (2021) found that festival experiences, including festival preparation, performance, and venue creation, can contribute to social sustainability.

Zhang et al. (2017) revealed that social sustainability in destination environments consists of three elements: social acceptance (SA), social tolerance (ST) and host-guest conflicts (HGC). In this context, host-guest conflict includes inappropriate behaviour of tourists (e.g., spitting, eating and shouting in forbidden public areas) and conflicts of interest between tourists and hosts due to complaints occurring as the number of tourists rises. Social tolerance represents the owner's feedback on the destination tourism capacity (e.g., their evaluations of social equality, medical facilities and transportation facilities), and social acceptance refers to the extent to which local people accept the guests and tourism development. Within the category of host-guest conflict, the authors found that Hong Kong residents complained that tourists from mainland China engaged in inappropriate behaviour (e.g., eating in prohibited public areas, spitting, and shouting). Similarly, Hong Kong residents complained about goods shortages, price inflation on consumer goods, overcrowding, changes in the appearance of local environments, and increased visits. In terms of social tolerance, it has been found that residents complain about not being able to find free rooms in local hospitals and the high cost of hospitals due to the Hong Kong administration's support of health tourism and the increasing demand of tourists for medical services. All of this has triggered hostile attitudes towards tourists.

Aspinall et al. (2011) evaluated social sustainability regarding perceived quality of life and compared before-and-after scenarios through a hypothetical tourism development project. The authors revealed that the perception of tourism in the community affected residents' perception of overall quality of life, with residents perceiving that their quality of life would be lower after resort development.

Helgadóttir et al. (2019) examined social sustainability based on social exchange theory and quality of life, revealing residents' attitudes in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland. The authors found that residents prioritize welcoming and helping visitors. However, locals were concerned about overcrowding in certain areas, vehicle traffic, human traffic caused by group tours, increased prices of services and goods, and limited access to services and goods.

As previously mentioned, Zhang et al. (2017) revealed that social sustainability in destination environments has three-dimensional structure: host-guest conflicts, social acceptance, and social tolerance. This structure provides a significant clue in ensuring the social sustainability of the destination within the scope of tourism. Therefore, this study used Zhang et al.'s (2017) three- dimensional structure to measure homeowners' perceptions of social sustainability.

2.3 Social Sustainability and Community Participation

Community participation (CP) encourages people's active participation in the affairs of their local communities to encourage sustainable social development in various communities in the human environment (Ugwu & Aruma, 2019). The social sustainability process considers community participation (Nugraheni et al., 2019a; Nugraheni et al., 2019b). Bafarasat and Oliveira (2023) stated that community participation and economic equality are critical determinants of social sustainability. Dempsey et al. (2009) noted that par-

ticipation in local and community activities had been identified as one of the domains of social capital and a dimension of social sustainability related to social network integration and social cohesion. McKenzie (2004) stated that one of the steps towards creating and implementing the process of social sustainability should be the participation of citizens at the local level, not only in election processes but also in procedures and other fields of political activism. Therefore, local and community organizations are the social structures that best deal with complexities and social issues related to social sustainability and are most likely to contribute to social sustainability (Stevenson, 2021).

Understanding each stakeholder's perspective on tourism development is crucial in creating tourism experiences because stakeholders are involved in tourism development (Kattiyapornpong et al., 2018). Community participation in tourism involves collaboration among community members to achieve common goals, improve their local communities, and pursue individual interests (Jaafar et al., 2015). A community's value can be enhanced through community participation by increasing tourism's positive effects and decreasing negative impacts (Lee, 2013). Therefore, community participation is considered the foundation stone of the development of sustainable tourism (Nicholas et al., 2009).

Much research has been done on community participation within social exchange theory and QoL. Some of these found that community participation positively impacts the perceived benefits (Lee, 2013; Kim et al., 2021; Riyanto et al., 2023), support for tourism (Lee, 2013; Fong & Lo, 2015; Sher et al., 2015; Gannon et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2023), quality of life (Abdillah, 2016), and others found that community participation negatively impacts the perception of conflict (Wang et al., 2021). The following hypotheses are proposed in light of theoretical support from the literature:

H_1: Community participation negatively affects host-guest conflict.
H_2: Community participation positively affects social tolerance.
H_3: Community participation positively affects social acceptance.

2.4 Social Sustainability and Support for Tourism

The successful operation, development, and sustainability of tourism require the support of local people, as tourism heavily relies on their goodwill (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004). A community's active support is a prerequisite for the tourism industry's sustainable development. By assessing the host community's views on tourism, the industry's negative impacts can be minimized, and appropriate policies can be implemented. Residents' attitudes towards tourism also significantly impact development policies (Nunkoo, 2016).

As mentioned before, Aspinall et al. (2011) stated that cost-benefit analysis within the social exchange theory and quality of life analysis can considerably contribute to predictions regarding social sustainability in general. Support for tourism (SFT) has been a variable evaluated in many studies conducted within the scope of social exchange theory. Most of these studies have revealed that perceived benefits positively impact support for tourism (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Lee, 2013; Stylidis et al., 2014; Nunkoo & So, 2015; Rua, 2020; Kim et al., 2021), the perceived costs negatively impact support for tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Lee, 2013; Rua, 2020; Kim et al., 2021). With regard to QoL, it has been found that quality of life has a positive impact on support for tourism (Woo et al., 2015; Campon-Cerro et al., 2017; Eslami et al., 2019; Yayla et al., 2023; Han et al., 2023). Some studies on quality of life have revealed that as satisfaction in the relevant areas of life increases, support for tourism also increases (Liang & Hui, 2016).

Zhang et al. (2017) identified three dimensions of social sustainability: social tolerance, social acceptance, and host-guest conflict. Many studies have been carried out within the scope of host-guest conflicts, one of the dimensions of social sustainability (Tsaur et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Xiang & Yang, 2022). For example, Tsaur et al. (2018) revealed a negative relationship between tourist-local conflict and support, finding that the greater the tourist-local conflict perceived by residents, the less likely they are to support tourism development. Xiang and Yang (2022) examined host-guest conflicts in a five-dimensional structure (e.g., economic, environmental, social, emotional and cultural conflicts). The authors found that each dimension negatively affected the residents' support for tourism development. Wang et al. (2021) revealed that the perception of conflict negatively impacts the support for tourism.

Tolerance towards tourists plays a considerable role in the sustainability and facilitation of tourist-host interactions, and hosts' tolerance needs to be considered in tourist-host relationships. Tolerance has been defined as ˝the ability or endurance to endure a situation that one dislikes or even hates˝(Qin et al., 2021, p. 116). Under social exchange theory, tolerance is an overarching appraisal consisting of a general attitude toward benefits and costs and a coping or adaptive appraisal that deals with dynamic adjustments and attitude change (Qi et al., 2021). Many authors have stated that highly perceived benefits increase tolerance, and highly perceived costs reduce tolerance (Qi et al., 2016; Qin et al., 2021). Therefore, tolerance is a determinant of support, and high tolerance increases the level of support (Qi et al., 2016). For example, Qi et al. (2021) revealed that residents' tolerance positively impacts support for tourism and that perceived benefits/costs also determine tolerance. Specifically, perceived costs decrease acceptance, while perceived benefits enhance acceptance. Positive interactions between tourists and the host society will increase tourists' positive perceptions about the region and the host society's acceptance of tourists in their region without any problems (Armenski et al., 2011). The following hypotheses are proposed in light of theoretical support from the literature:

H4: Host-guest conflict negatively affects support for tourism.
H5: Social tolerance positively affects support for tourism.
H6: Social acceptance positively affects support for tourism.

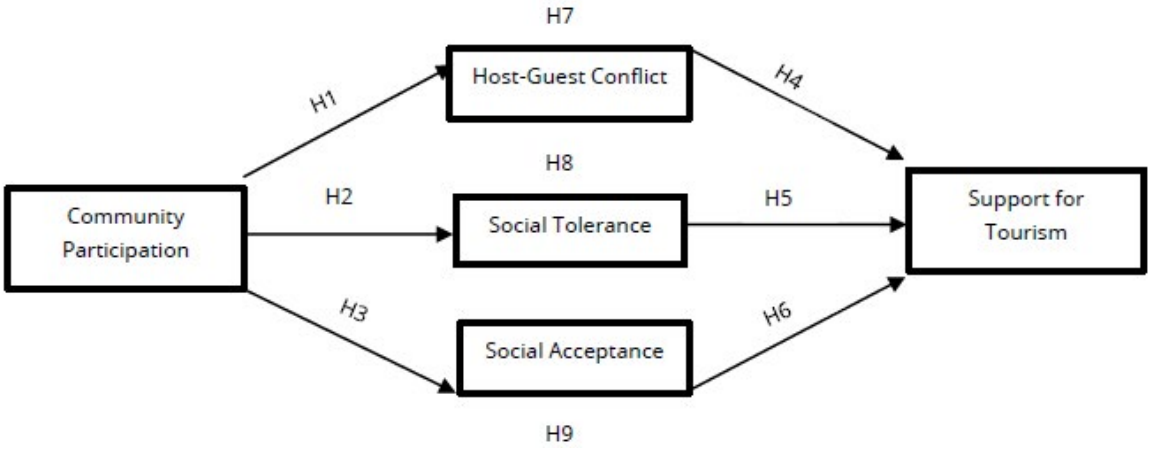
2.5 The Mediating Role of Social Sustainability

Zhang et al. (2017) identified social tolerance, social acceptance, and host-guest conflict as the three most important dimensions of social sustainability. Qi et al. (2021) found that tolerance partially mediated the effects of perceived benefits on support and wholly mediated the effects of costs on support. Qi et al. (2016) revealed that residents' tolerance towards tourism activities mediated the relationship between support for tourism and perceived costs/benefits. Qin et al. (2021) found that hosts' tolerance plays a moderating role in the relationship between the perceived costs of tourism and the support for tourism. If tolerance increases, the negative effects of costs on support decrease significantly. Likewise, Kılıç and Seçilmiş (2022) found that community participation mediates the relationship between social carrying capacity and support for tourism development. Wang et al. (2021) revealed that the perception of conflict has a mediating effect between community participation and support for tourism. The following hypotheses are proposed in light of theoretical support from the literature:

H7: Host-guest conflict mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.
H8: Social tolerance mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.
H9: Social acceptance mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

In this context, Figure 1 presents the conceptual model with the hypotheses of this study.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model of the Research



Source: Own Elaboration

3. Methodology

This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of local people living in Mardin regarding community participation, social sustainability, and support for tourism. The research also aims to determine the mediation effect of social sustainability on the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

3.1 Study Area

Mardin, which is in Turkey, was chosen as the study area. Mardin is one of Turkey's most important cultural destinations (Atsız & Kızılırmak, 2017). Mardin, one of the most important cities of Mesopotamia, contains many important cultural and historical attractions due to its strategic location (Ataman, 2019). Mardin called the cradle of civilizations, is a cosmopolitan city where different ethnic groups live together. The different cultures of these ethnic groups, independent of each other regarding lifestyle and beliefs, have added cultural richness to the city. Hence, Mardin resembles an open-air museum in terms of its archaeological, architectural, historical, visual and ethnographic values. Therefore, it is frequently visited by tourists as a touristic destination (Atsız & Kızılırmak, 2017). In 2023, Mardin hosted 2.6 million tourists (Ntv.com, 2023). According to 2023 data, the total population of Mardin province is 888,874 (TUIK, n.d.).

Figure 2. Study Location

Source: Maphill, n.d.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The research was carried out using quantitative research method. Survey data collection technique was used in the research. Permission was obtained from the affiliated university's department of the Board of Ethics on May 2, 2023, and numbered 2023/64418 for the data collection phase of the research. A survey was distributed to 617 people between 15 May 2023 and 1 May 2024 using the convenience sampling method. Popular tourist locations in each district (e.g., shops, restaurants, hotels, and busy streets where locals work) were selected for survey distribution. First, participants in these popular locations were asked if they would like to participate in a survey for a scientific study on sustainability. The questionnaires had been duplicated in advance and were distributed to local residents, who were asked to complete them by marking the required boxes with a pencil. For population sizes over 1,000,000 people with a 5% sampling error, a sample size of 384 is sufficient (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Of the 617 surveys collected, a total of 537 surveys were subjected to data analysis, and 80 were excluded from the analysis because they had missing data.

3.3 Measurement

The survey was adapted from previous studies. Experts reviewed the survey to make it better understandable (four field academics and two linguistic experts). The part of the survey on social sustainability was adapted from the study of Zhang et al. (2017), the part on community participation was adapted from the study of Lee (2013), and the part on support was adapted from the study of Nicholas et al. (2009). Evaluations about the survey were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with response statements ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The survey occurs in four parts in total. The first part includes questions about descriptive and demographic information; the second includes questions about social sustainability; the third includes community participation; and the last includes questions about tourism support.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, structural equation model (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). All these analyses were carried out using SPSS Statistics 26 and SPSS AMOS 26.

4. Results

4.1 Respondents' Demographics Results

As seen in Table 1, most participants are between the ages of 26-35 (32.4%) and 18-25 (24.8%). In terms of education levels, the majority of the participants have a high school education or above (42.6%, 14.2%, 17.9%, 2.8%, 0.6 %, respectively). The majority of the participants are men (77.3%). Regarding marital status, 55.1% are married, and 44.9% are single. Most participants reside in Artuklu (36.7%) and Midyat (34.5%).

Table 1. Respondents' Demographics Information

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25	133	24.8
26-35	174	32.4
36-45	111	20.7
46-55	71	13.2
56-65	36	6.7
66 +	12	2.2
Gender		
Woman	122	22.7
Man	415	77.3
Education		
Primary school	46	8.6
Secondary school	72	13.4
High school	229	42.6
Associate degree	76	14.2
Bachelor	96	17.9
Master	15	2.8
PhD	3	0.6
Marital Status		
Married	296	55.1
Single	241	44.9
Residence Area		
Artuklu	197	36.7
Kızıltepe	110	20.5
Midyat	185	34.5
Nusaybin	38	7.1
Others	7	1.3

Source: Own Elaboration

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

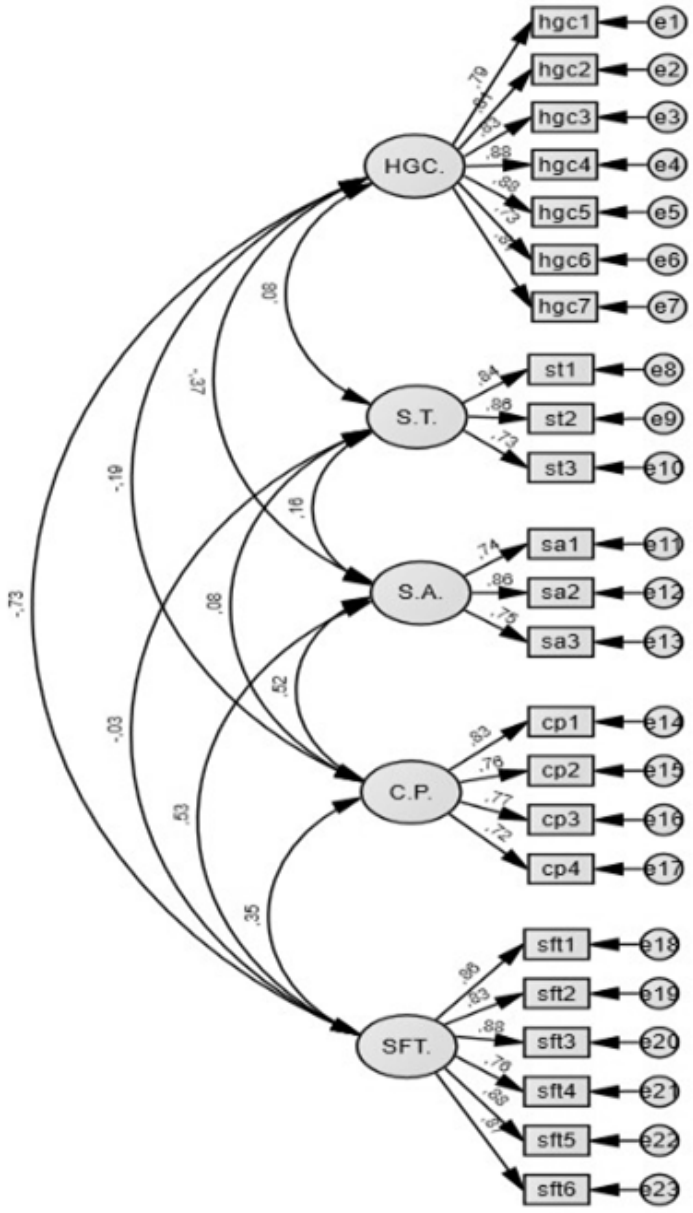
The reliability of the scales was tested before performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The scale reliability for HGC was 0.935, for ST was 0.850, for SA was 0.823, for CT was 0.850, and for STD was 0.923. In this regard, the scales are considered reliable, as Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 indicate good reliability (Eriksson & Lindstrom, 1998; Ursachi et al., 2015).

The formal normality tests, such as the K-S (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) and S-W (Shapiro-Wilk) tests, can be used small-to-medium-sized samples (e.g., < 300), but when used for larger samples, they may give imprecise and unreliable results (Kim, 2013). Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012) stated that the K-S test should not be used to evaluate normal distribution due to its low power. But values of skewness and kurtosis and histograms can be examined without considering z values for sample sizes greater than 300 (Kim, 2013; Mishra et al., 2019). Many authors indicated that -1 and +1 values for both skewness and kurtosis is considered perfect for normal distribution but also -2 nad +2 values is acceptable (Hair et al., 2022; George & Mallery, 2024). It was observed that the data were normally distributed, as values of the kurtosis and skewness fell between -2 and +2 [HGC = (Skewness = 0.501; Kurtosis = -1.005); ST = (Skewness = -0.397;

Kurtosis = -0.966); SA = (Skewness = -0.739; Kurtosis = -0.199); CP = (Skewness = -0.388; Kurtosis = -0.789); SPT = (Skewness = -0.501; Kurtosis = -0.883)]. Additionally, Hatem et al. (2022) indicated if the skewness values is between -0.5 and 0.5, the data is highly symmetrical, if the skewness values is between - 0.5 and 1 or 1 and -0.5, the data is moderately skewed and if the kurtosis values is less than zero, the distribution is slightly flat-tailed (platykurtic). For ST and CP, the data are symmetrical and slightly flat-tailed, while for HGC, SFT and SA, the data are moderately skewed and slightly flat-tailed. According to this, data were normal distribution in general.

The measurement model is expected to be tested before the research hypotheses. The structure that envisages testing the research's structural equation model was tested with first-level CFA. Accordingly, Hair et al. (2014) indicate that the factor loading must be greater than 0.70 for CFA. In this context, it was found that the factor loading of each variable was statistically significant and above the limits accepted in the literature (>0.70). In addition, although there are still debates about which goodness-of-fit values should be given during the analyses, this study follows Kline's process of reporting X^2/df, *p*-value of X^2, RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR indices (Kline, 2016). The measurement model of research is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Measurement Model Results for the Research



Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): HGC. = Host-Guest Conflict; ST. = Social Tolerance; SA. = Social Acceptance; CP. = Community Participation; SFT. = Support for Tourism.

Figure 3 shows the structure and results of the confirmatory factor analysis (chi-square (χ^2) = 639.209; degrees of freedom (df) = 220; p < 0.001; χ^2/df = 2.905; CFI = 0.952; SRMR= 0.0467; RMSEA = 0.060; GFI=0.909). Numerous authors stated that values less than 0.08 are acceptable for RMSEA (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996; MacCallum et al., 1996; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Hooper et al., 2008; Cheng, 2011). For SRMR, values up to 0. 10 indicate an acceptable fit (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Hooper et al., 2008). For χ^2/sd, values up to 5.0 can be accepted (Hooper et al., 2008). Values above 0.90 can be accepted for GFI (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Hooper et al., 2008; Cheng, 2011). CFI is considered a good fit when values exceed 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hooper et al., 2008). In this context, goodness-of- fit values of the CFA model meet acceptable levels. Table 2 displays the measurement model's regression coefficients, significance levels, standard error, and *t*-values.

Table 2. CFA Results for the Measurement Model

			β^0	β^1	**S.E.**	*t*	*p*
cp1	<---	CP	0.833	1.000			
cp2	<---	CP	0.756	0.875	0.046	21.216	***
cp3	<---	CP	0.770	0.930	0.048	21.937	***
cp4	<---	CP	0.716	0.913	0.046	23.702	***
sft1	<---	SUP	0.858	1.000	0.047	23.437	
sft2	<---	SUP	0.826	1.018	0.051	18.587	***
sft3	<---	SUP	0.883	1.041	0.049	21.243	***
sft4	<---	SUP	0.760	0.877			***
sft5	<---	SUP	0.876	1.041	0.056	19.437	***
sft6	<---	SUP	0.868	1.077	0.046	17.484	***
hgc1	<---	HGC	0.791	1.000			
hgc2	<---	HGC	0.814	0.977	0.070	17.323	***
hgc3	<---	HGC	0.834	1.054	0.067	16.080	***
hgc4	<---	HGC	0.883	1.083			***
hgc5	<---	HGC	0.875	1.102	0.048	18.269	***
hgc6	<---	HGC	0.735	0.943	0.050	18.648	***
hgc7	<---	HGC	0.815	1.037	0.053	17.160	***
st1	<---	ST	0.839	1.000			
st2	<---	ST	0.863	1.082	0.041	24.541	***
st3	<---	ST	0.727	0.802	0.038	27.733	***
sa1	<---	SA	0.738	1.000	0.041	21.410	
sa2	<---	SA	0.855	1.211	0.038	27.301	***
sa3	<---	SA	0.752	1.075	0.040	26.806	***

Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): β^0= Standardized regression coefficient, β^1= Unstandardized regression coefficient, ***: p<0.001

It would be useful to conduct a more detailed analysis to confirm the validity of the measurement model. In this context, the AVE, CR, ASV, and MSV values of the latent variables included in the measurement model must be calculated to ensure convergent and discriminant validity. Table 3 shows the convergent and discriminant validity values of the latent variables.

Table 3. Convergent and Discriminant Validity Outcomes of the Scale

	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	S.A.	HGC.	S.T.	C.P.	SFT.
S.A.	0.826	0.614	0.282	0.177	**0.783**				
HGC.	0.936	0.676	0.529	0.177	-0.367	**0.822**			
S.T.	0.852	0.659	0.025	0.009	0.157	0.082	**0.812**		
C.P.	0.853	0.593	0.267	0.108	0.517	-0.195	0.076	**0.770**	
SFT.	0.938	0.716	0.529	0.233	0.531	-0.727	-0.028	0.349	**0.846**

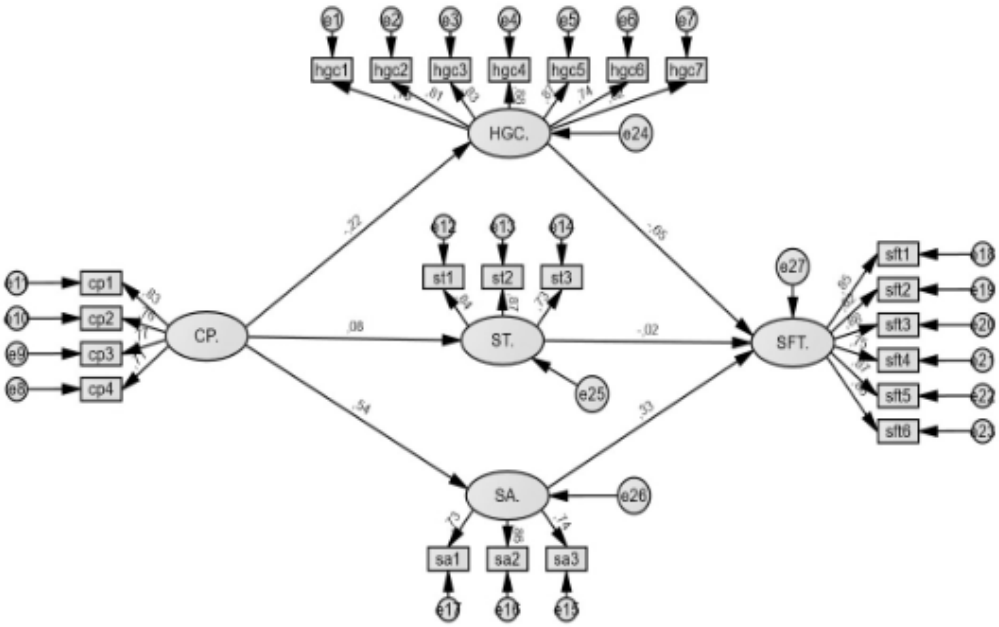
Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): Cα= Cronbach Alpha; CR= Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted; MSV= Maximum Shared Variance; ASV= Average Shared Variance; Values in bold indicate = √AVE scores.

For convergent validity, CR values must exceed 0.70, AVE values exceed 0.50, and the CR>AVE condition must be met (Almen et al., 2018). When Table 3 is examined, CR values are above 0.70, AVE values are above 0.50, and the CR>AVE condition being met indicates that convergent validity is achieved. For discriminant validity, AVE values should be greater than ASV and MSV (AVE > ASV; AVE>MSV) and square root values of AVE should be greater than the correlation values between factors (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). When Table 3 is examined, these conditions are achieved for discriminant validity. On the other hand, Cronbach's α and CR values being over 0.70 indicate that the reliability of the factors is ensured. The maximum likelihood calculation method was employed for SEM because the data was normally distributed.

4.3 Structural Equation Modeling Results

The structure of the structural equation modeling (SEM) is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. SEM Model of the Research



Source: Own Elaboration

It was found that the goodness of fit values of the SEM model were within limits accepted in the literature (chi-square (χ^2) = 698.792; degrees of freedom (df) = 224; $p < 0.001$; χ^2/df = 3.120; SRMR= 0.0726; CFI = 0.945; RMSEA = 0.063; GFI=0.900) (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996; MacCallum et al., 1996; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Hooper et al., 2008; Cheng, 2011). The regression coefficients, significance levels, standard errors, and *t*-values of the model are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of SEM

Path			β^0	β^1	SE	CR	*p*	R^2	Hypothesis	Result
HGC	<---	CP	-0.225	-0.254	0.055	-4.631	***	0.050	H1	Supported
ST	<---	CP	0.083	0.091	0.055	1.651	0.099	0.007	H2	Not Supported
SA	<---	CP	0.537	0.520	0.054	9.688	***	0.288	H3	Supported
SFT	<---	HGC	-0.650	-0.597	0.039	-15.343	***		H4	Supported
SFT	<---	ST	-0.023	-0.022	0.032	-0.697	0.486	0.586	H5	Not Supported
SFT	<---	SA	0.334	0.359	0.041	8.837	***		H6	Supported

Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): β0 = Standardized regression coefficient (***) = (p<0.001); β1= Unstandardized regression coefficient

When Table 4 is examined, it was found that community participation had a significant and negative impact on host-guest conflict (p<0.001)). In this context, the H1 hypothesis was supported. It was revealed that community participation has no significant impact on social tolerance (p=0.099). In this context, the H2 hypothesis was not supported. Likewise, it was revealed that community participation positively affects social acceptance (p < 0.001). Therefore, the H3 hypothesis was supported. When the results affecting support were examined, it was concluded that host-guest conflict negatively affects support for tourism (p < 0.001). In this context, the H4 hypothesis was supported. Additionally, it was revealed that social tolerance has no significant impact on support for tourism (p = 0.486). In this context, the H5 hypothesis was not supported. Lastly, it was found that social acceptance positively affects support for tourism (p < 0.001). In this context, the H6 hypothesis was supported.

4.4 Mediation Effect Results

Table 5. Goodness Fit of Mediating Model

Path					χ^2	Df	χ^2 / df	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	SRMR
CP	---->	HGC	---->	SFT	378.643	116	3.264	0.962	0.925	0.065	0.0488
CP	---->	ST	---->	SFT	238.520	62	3.847	0.960	0.937	0.073	0.0546
CP	---->	SA	---->	SFT	297.664	62	4.801	0.949	0.927	0.084	0.0583

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 5 shows the goodness-of-fit values of the mediation model. In this context, the goodness-of-fit values of the mediation model meet acceptable levels. Path analysis was conducted using the bootstrap technique to test whether community participation affects support through the social sustainability factors of host-guest conflict, social acceptance and social tolerance. 5000 resampling options were used in this analysis. In mediation effect analyses performed using the bootstrap method to evaluate the research hypotheses, the 95% confidence interval (CI) values obtained during the analysis should not include the value zero (0) (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2018). According to, the results of the mediation models and effects are shown in Table 6 and Table 7.

Table 6. Results of Mediating Models

Path			β^0	β^1	SE	CR	*p*
For Mediating by HGC							
HGC	<-------	CP	-0.190	-0.215	0.055	-3.931	***
SFT	<-------	CP	0.212	0.228	0.039	5.869	***
SFT	<-------	HGC	-0.657	-0.687	0.042	15.820	***
For Mediating by ST							
ST	<-------	CP	0.078	0.085	0.055	1.550	0.121
SFT	<-------	ST	-0.55	-0.54	0.045	-1.211	0.226
SFT	<-------	CP	0.347	0.372	0.053	7.074	***
For Mediating by SA							
SA	<-------	CP	0.516	0.467	0.050	9.334	***
SFT	<-------	SA	0.478	0.567	0.068	8.344	***
SFT	<-------	CP	0.102	0.110	0.056	1.960	0.050

Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): β0= Standardized regression coefficient, β1= Unstandardized regression coefficient, ***: $p<0.001$

Table 7. Results of Mediation Effects

Path				STE	SDI	SIE	SE	Confidence Interval (CI)		*p*	Hypothesis	Result
								Lower	Upper			
CP	--->	HGC --->	SFT	0.343	0.212	0.131	0.034	0.062	0.197	0.001	H7	Supported
CP	--->	ST --->	SFT	0.342	0.347	-0.004	0.006	-0.024	0.002	0.193	H8	Not Supported
CP	--->	SA --->	SFT	0.349	0.102	0.247	0.050	0.165	0.361	0.000	H9	Supported

Source: Own Elaboration
Note(s): SDI= Standardized Direct Effects; SE.= Standart Errors; S.I.E = Standardized indirect effects; STE=Standardized Total Effects

According to the bootstrap results, it was concluded that host-guest conflict mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism (β=0.131; CI (0.135, 0.286). In this context, the H7 hypothesis was supported. Secondly, it was found that social tolerance does not mediate the relationship between community participation and support for tourism. (β= -0,004; CI (-0.024, 0.002). In this context, the H8 hypothesis was not supported. Lastly, it revealed that social acceptance mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism. (β=0.247; CI (0.165, 0.361). In this context, the H9 hypothesis was supported.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to evaluate the residents' perceptions of community participation, social sustainability, and support for tourism. It also seeks to explore the mediating role of social sustainability in the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

Firstly, the study examined the impact of community participation on social sustainability and found a significant effect on the other two dimensions (host-guest conflict and social acceptance), excluding social tolerance. A community's value can be enhanced through community participation by increasing tourism's positive effects and decreasing its negative impacts (Lee, 2013). Therefore, it is considered the foundation stone of sustainable tourism development (Nicholas et al., 2009). In previous research on community participation in the literature, no study has been found that observes the impact of community participation on social sustainability. However, community participation has been found to have a

positive impact on perceived benefits (Lee, 2013; Kim et al., 2021; Riyanto et al., 2023), a positive impact on quality of life (Abdillah, 2016), and a negative effect on conflict (Wang et al., 2021).

Secondly, the impact of the dimensions of social sustainability on support for tourism was examined in the study. In this context, it was found that host-guest conflict negatively affects support for tourism. This result was similar to previous studies, which found that support for tourism decreases as conflicts between hosts and visitors increase (Tsaur et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Xiang & Yang, 2022).

The study revealed that social acceptance positively affects support for tourism. It also found that social tolerance does not impact support for tourism. This result contrasts with the findings of Qi et al. (2021), who found that tolerance positively impacts support for tourism. However, Qi et al. (2016) stated that although tolerance has the potential to support tourism, it does not necessarily mean encouraging tourism development. Moreover, in this study, social tolerance was measured using the social tolerance variable developed by Zhang et al. (2017), which primarily reflects hosts' feedback regarding the carrying capacity (such as transportation and medical facilities) at a destination. Specifically, the social tolerance variable in the authors' study represents situations related to carrying capacity. Therefore, this result may arise from the fact that the tourism carrying capacity in Mardin has not been exceeded, and thus, this situation has not yet impacted transportation and medical facility availability.

The study also revealed that host-guest conflict mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism. This result is similar to the result of Wang et al. (2021). The authors found that conflict played a mediating role between support and community participation (Wang et al., 2021). The study revealed that social tolerance does not mediate the relationship between community participation and support for tourism. This result is contrasted with previous studies. Previous studies have revealed that tolerance mediates between perceived benefits/costs and support (Qi et al., 2016; Qin et al., 2021). Moreover, the study also found that social acceptance mediates the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

5.1 Theoretical Implication

Although social sustainability is an important concept, it has yet to receive much attention in the academic literature (Razia & Ah, 2023). In tourism literature, there are a few studies, albeit a small number, under the title of social sustainability. In these studies, social sustainability has been examined in terms of social exchange theory and quality of life (Aspinall et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2017; Helgadóttir et al., 2019; McClinchey, 2021). Many authors have stated that community participation is one of the critical determinants of social sustainability (McKenzie, 2004; Dempsey et al., 2009; Nugraheni et al., 2019a; Nugraheni et al., 2019b; Bafarasat & Oliveira, 2023).

In general, studies on community participation were conducted on perceived benefits/costs (Lee, 2013; Kim et al., 2021; Riyanto et al., 2023), support for tourism (Lee, 2013; Fong & Lo, 2015; Sher et al., 2015; Gannon et al., 2020; Wang, 2021; Jiang et al., 2023), quality of life (Abdillah, 2016), and conflict perception (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, this study contributed to the literature in terms of uncovering the impact of community participation on social sustainability. Previous studies on support for tourism mainly were carried out on social exchange theory (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Stylidis et al., 2014; Nunkoo & So, 2015; Campon-Cerro et al., 2017; Rua, 2020; Kim et al., 2021) and quality of life (Woo et al., 2015; Campon-Cerro et al., 2017; Eslami et al., 2019; Han et al., 2023; Yayla et al., 2023). Therefore, this study found the impact of social sustainability on support for tourism. The study also contributed to uncovering the mediating role of social sustainability in the relationship between community participation and support for tourism.

5.2 Managerial Implication

To ensure sustainable development in a tourism destination, local people's opinions about the impacts of tourism need to be considered and their participation in tourism-related decision-making processes is essential. In this context, tourism planners should thoroughly analyse environmental, economic and sociocultural impacts caused by tourism in the region to enhance the locals' quality of life. Therefore, meetings and workshops should be organized with the participation of all tourism stakeholders. Additionally, it is necessary to develop transportation and infrastructure systems for a livable environment and reduce the factors that will deteriorate the quality of life of residents, such as traffic, noise and pollution.

Tourism planners must make efforts to develop community-based tourism activities in the region. To gain the support of the host society, the society should be informed about the benefits of tourism, and internal marketing techniques can be used in this regard. Additionally, it is necessary to increase communication and cultural exchange between tourists and local people and guests coming to the region should be informed about the culture and values of the region.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The questions prepared for the research on social sustainability included the questions included in Zhang et al. (2017) confirmatory factor analysis. In addition, question Q18 was removed due to cultural differences. The research focuses only on Mardin province. The research can be investigated in different countries, cities and other tourist destinations with different tourist densities in future research. In addition, due to time and cost savings, it was mostly conducted in the Artuklu and Midyat districts, which are the leading districts of Mardin in cultural tourism. In the research, due to cultural prejudices in the region, female participants were not willing to fill out the survey, so there was a problem in reaching female participants, and mostly male participants participated in the research. Only the attitudes and perceptions of the local people were investigated in the study, and other tourism stakeholders were excluded. Therefore, other stakeholders' views on social sustainability can be considered in future research. Moreover, issues such as host-guest conflict and host tolerance, which are among the most important dimensions of social sustainability, can be investigated in future research. In addition, the research can be examined in the context of different demographic and predictive variables (e.g., age, education, marital status, level of contact with tourists, distance to the tourism center, personal benefit and tourism knowledge, etc.).

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APPENDIX

Host-Guest Conflict

1. Tourists bring challenges to local government.
2. Community resources are occupied by tourists.
3. I heard a lot of complaints on tourists.
4. Tourists cause a great number of social problems.
5. Mardin is overcrowded because of tourism.
6. There are conflicts of interest between Mardin residents and tourists.
7. I saw some uncivilized behavior of tourists.

Social Tolerance

1. Even though there are many tourists, I am satisfied with the medical facilities provided by the government.
2. Even though there are many tourists, I am satisfied with the transportation facilities provided by the government.
3. Tourism in Mardin is developed in a fair and social way.

Social Acceptance

1. Most tourists can keep public places clean and tidy.
2. Tourists can help Mardin residents understand cultural diversity.
3. I think most tourists are satisfied with traveling in Mardin.

Community Participation

1. I participate in sustainable tourism-related activities.
2. I support research for the sustainability of community
3. I am involved in the planning and management actions of sustainable tourism in the community.
4. I am involved in the decision-making process for sustainable tourism in the community.

Support for Tourism

1. I support the development of community-based tourism initiatives.
2. I support the participation of local in tourism planning and development.
3. I support cultural exchange between local residents and tourists.
4. I support cooperation in tourism planning and development.
5. I support the development of regulatory environmental standards to reduce the negative impacts of tourism.
6. I support the promotion of environmental education and conversation.