International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning
Vol. 20, No. 2, February, 2025, pp. 607-621
Journal homepage: http://iieta.org/journals/ijsdp

Cultural Value in the Digital Age: Combining Smart Travel Technology with Traveler Satisfaction and Loyalty

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https://doi.org/10.18280/ijsdp.200212

Received: 5 January 2025
Revised: 11 February 2025
Accepted: 25 February 2025
Available online: 28 February 2025

Keywords:
smart tourism technology, tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, tourism experience, local cultural values

ABSTRACT

In the digital age, Smart Tourism Technology has transformed the tourism landscape, enhancing convenience, personalization, and engagement. However, the role of cultural value in shaping traveler satisfaction and destination loyalty remains under-explored. This study examines the interplay between Smart Tourism Technology, traveler satisfaction, and loyalty, with cultural value as a moderating factor. Using a quantitative approach with 300 respondents, structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the relationships between these variables. The findings confirm that Smart Tourism Technology significantly influences traveler satisfaction, which in turn enhances destination loyalty. However, the direct impact of Smart Tourism Technology on loyalty is weaker, suggesting that satisfaction serves as a key mediating factor. Notably, cultural value did not significantly moderate the relationship between Smart Tourism Technology and satisfaction and loyalty, indicating that technological adoption in tourism may transcend cultural boundaries. The study highlights the need for culturally adaptive digital services, such as localized digital content, immersive virtual reliality heritage tours, and AI-driven personalization. These insights provide practical implications for destination managers and policymakers, emphasizing the integration of technology with culturally rich experiences to foster sustainable tourism engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid digitization of the travel industry has changed how travelers interact with destinations and access services. The tourism industry's rapid transformation has altered how tourists interact with destinations and services [1, 2]; innovative tourism technologies, mobile apps, augmented reality, and personalized recommendation processors have improved the travel experience and added another dimension of satisfaction and loyalty for travelers [3-5].

Mobile applications, augmented reality personal recommendation systems, and other smart tourism technologies have increased efficiency and convenience in traveling. It also contributes to a new dimension of tourist satisfaction and loyalty [6, 7]. However, cultural context is often neglected when implementing such technologies. It remains a determinant of tourists' perceptions, experiences, and emotional connections to destinations [2, 8-10]. This study examines the role of cultural values in shaping outcomes. It bridges the gap between literature discussing technology, culture, and tourism. Smart technology integration has significantly changed how travelers engage with and serve the modern tourism industry [11-13]. Innovative tourism technology refers to new digital tools and systems. That can improve efficiency, privacy, and the quality of the travel experience. These advancements include mobile apps, AR, VR, and intelligent transportation systems. This includes real-time travel information. Interactive destination-specific recommendations and immersive virtual tours can improve the tourism experience [14-17], considering the critical role of STT in tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Tourist satisfaction is, therefore, the level of response to tourists' expectations during their visit [18-20]. Destination loyalty includes how likely travelers are to revisit or recommend a place based on a positive experience. These factors are critical to a tourism destination's long-term success and competitive advantage [21-23]. Although the benefits of innovative travel technology are often discussed, it is necessary to take a closer look at how these technologies affect tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. It is imperative to understand how travel experiences mediate overall attitudes and feelings about a destination and its features and how local cultural values can change the way we view and use technology [24-27]. Tourism experience is a complex concept that includes interactions

with attractions, services, and environments. It is essential to look at how innovative tourism technologies affect different parts of the travel experience and how these experiences affect tourist satisfaction and loyalty [28-30]. Local cultural values influence what tourists expect and how they interact with technology. Understanding how these values affect the relationship between innovative tourism technologies and tourism outcomes is necessary to create appropriate and effective technological solutions for different cultural contexts [31, 32].

This study presents a new perspective that connects innovative tourism technology with cultural studies. Consider how cultural values influence how thriving technology increases traveler satisfaction and loyalty. Previous research has studied innovative tourism technology or cultural values. But, not many have explored how the two aspects work together. Increasing the moderating role of cultural values provides a new lens for understanding the impact of digital solutions in tourism. The findings also highlight the importance of cultural connections in technological innovation. How can we deal with digital transformation and cultural preservation tension by emphasizing various destinations? To maintain competitiveness, the rapid spread of innovative tourism technology has led to regional cultural differences in tourist preferences and loyal behavior. This conflict has spurred necessary inquiry into cultural values and their impact on how tourists respond to digital innovations. Technology-focused solutions that work anywhere but not in such a way that it would distract tourists from a culture that cares deeply about authenticity, heritage, and personal interaction, and engagement through clicks. Moreover, introducing innovative tourism development without a cohesive cultural narrative jeopardizes the inclusiveness of these new market segments, detracting from a destination. This study responds to how destinations could integrate innovative tourism technologies to achieve higher satisfaction and loyalty while closely considering and utilizing cultural values. The results are significant for destination managers, policymakers, and technology developers. A more profound understanding of the moderating role of cultural values can help destinations design more intelligent experiences that help support the tourists in the throes of assimilation.

For policymakers, this study provides a framework for promoting sustainable tourism development that balances technological advancement and cultural preservation. Technology developers can use these insights to create adaptive and culturally inclusive tools. This will enhance the user experience. Therefore, this study guides balancing digital transformation with cultural integrity. The objectives of this study are to examine the impact of smart tourism technology on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, to assess the moderating role of cultural values in this context, to provide practical advice for cultural integration, and to serve as a guideline for developing technology that covers culture and advanced tourist attractions.

Culture is a broad and multifaceted construct, encompassing values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and behavioral patterns that influence individual perceptions and decision-making processes [33-35]. In tourism research, measuring local culture presents challenges, as tourists often experience cultural elements subjectively, and their interpretations may be shaped by prior exposure, media representations, or personal expectations rather than intrinsic cultural dimensions [36-39]. Furthermore, general cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions or Schwartz's Value Theory provide broad categorizations but may not fully capture situational or destination-specific cultural experiences that influence smart tourism technology (STT) adoption and satisfaction [8, 40-42].

One potential refinement is to disaggregate local culture into specific subdimensions such as uncertainty avoidance, collectivism vs. individualism, or long-term orientation, which may have different implications for how tourists interact with STT [43-45]. The potential impact of cultural hybridity in digital tourism, as globalization and technological advancements increasingly blur the boundaries of traditional cultural categories [46-48].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smart tourism technology includes devices and digital systems that help travelers have a more efficient, convenient, and personalized experience [49, 50]. Smart tourism technology (STT) uses devices and Internet-based digital applications to enhance travelers' travel experiences through real-time information, easy navigation, and interactive experiences [51, 52]. This technology includes mobile applications, augmented reality, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, and AI-powered platforms to help increase traveler engagement in destinations. Research shows that STT is a key driver of growth in the tourism industry. The travel experience has been recreated, laying the foundation for a destination's competitiveness [53-55].

The Technology Accepteance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) provide a structured lens for understanding how travelers perceive, adopt, and derive satisfaction from smart tourism technologies while considering the mediating role of cultural values in shaping behavioral intentions and destination loyalty.

Prior research has demonstrated that TAM effectively explains how travelers evaluate STT based on perceived usefulness and ease of use [56-58]. Meanwhile, TPB has been widely employed to explore how cultural norms influence tourist behaviors and decision-making processes in digital environments [59-61]. ECT provides a critical framework for understanding how tourists' prior expectations and post usage satisfaction with STT impact their intention to revisit destinations and engage in loyalty behaviors [62, 63].

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains the role of perceived usefulness and ease of use in STT adoption. Studies indicate that STT's user friendly interfaces, AI driven customization, and accessibility enhance travelers' willingness to engage with digital platforms [64-70].

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines cultural values, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape tourist decision making. Empirical evidence suggests that trust in digital services, cultural familiarity, and perceived risks mediate technology adoption and satisfaction [71].

Expectation-confirmation theory (ECT) evaluates how pretravel expectations and post travel satisfaction with STT affect loyalty behaviors [66-68]. Previous research demonstrates that a seamless digital travel experience enhances tourist satisfaction, leading to repeat visits and positive word of mouth [72-74].

The TAM framework explains how perceived ease of use and usefulness drive traveler engagement with STT, shaping their overall satisfaction [64]. Meanwhile, ECT will examine

how travelers' pre-travel expectations of STT align with their post-travel experiences, influencing satisfaction and loyalty [75, 76]. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions will be incorporated to explore how variations in individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation impact the adoption and satisfaction levels of STT across different cultural groups [77-79].

Prior research has demonstrated that TAM is effective in predicting tourist adoption of digital platforms [80, 81], ECT provides insights into post-travel behavioral intentions [82, 83], and Hofstede's framework explains cultural variations in technology acceptance and satisfaction [75, 84]. By explicitly integrating these theoretical perspectives, our study will offer a structured and well-contextualized analysis of how digital technology, cultural values, and traveler expectations interact to shape satisfaction and loyalty. These enhancements will clarify our study's theoretical positioning and contribute to advancing knowledge in the intersection of smart tourism, cultural adaptation, and consumer behavior in the digital age.

2.1 Smart tourism technology and tourist satisfaction, tourist experience

Smart tourism technology (STT) has become the cornerstone of modern tourism. Help travelers plan, navigate, and experience their travels. These technologies include mobile applications. Increase participation By simplifying complex processes like booking, navigating, and planning a trip, STT significantly reduces travel-related stress [85]. To improve the overall experience and create tourist satisfaction [86, 87]. Tourism satisfaction is fundamentally affected by the quality, convenience, and relevance of the services provided during the trip. Smart travel technology doesn't just address these issues. But it also builds on its value proposition with real-time updates [7, 88, 89]. The speed and accuracy of these technologies allow travelers to make informed decisions. This results in a feeling of control and satisfaction. Empirical studies consistently show a positive relationship between adopting smart travel technologies and tourist satisfaction.

Smart destination management systems improve accessibility to tourist attractions. At the same time, AI-powered chatbots provide support services. Improve service quality and satisfaction [12, 13]. Augmented reality enhances the travel experience by allowing users to interact with historical or cultural stories, and deepen user engagement and satisfaction.

The rise of Smart Tourism Technology (STT) has transformed the tourism landscape, influencing traveler experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty. STT encompasses AI-driven recommendation systems, mobile applications, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and big data analytics that enhance personalized travel experiences [7, 90-94]. Studies suggest that travelers increasingly rely on digital platforms to plan, navigate, and experience destinations, with perceived ease of use and usefulness being critical determinants of adoption [53, 95-98]. Research highlights that real-time information, interactivity, and customization through STT contribute significantly to traveler satisfaction [53, 54]. Although there are many benefits to STT, its effectiveness in increasing satisfaction depends on factors such as ease of use. Conformity to user expectations poorly designed or culturally insensitive technologies can devalue perceptions and negate their positive impact on satisfaction [99, 100]. Therefore, developing and deploying a user-centered STT is essential, considering global travelers' diverse needs and preferences. From this discussion, we can draw the following assumptions:

H1: *The adoption of smart tourism technology positively and significantly impacts tourist satisfaction.*
H2: *The adoption of smart tourism technology positively and significantly impacts tourist experience.*

2.2 The mediating role of tourism experience

Travel experiences are a key determinant of traveler satisfaction and loyalty. It includes the emotional, sensory, and cognitive aspects that shape tourists' perceptions of a destination [101, 102]. Smart tourism technologies (STT) significantly impact the quality of tourism experiences. By enabling smooth navigation, it provides real-time information and offers immersive tools such as augmented reality and virtual tours [103]. These technologies not only increase convenience. But they are also personal and engaging. They enhance the experience by enabling interaction. They facilitate a deeper connection between travelers and destinations [99, 100]. As such, improved tourism experiences are an essential channel through which STT affects tourists' overall satisfaction and loyalty. The mediating role of the tourism experience lies in its ability to combine the functional benefits of STTs with the emotional satisfaction and connection tourists gain from their travels. Although STTs also provide tools for optimizing the travel process, the quality of the experience ultimately determines the tourist's evaluation of the destination. Activities are creative and can transform an ordinary visit. Make it an unforgettable experience. Such rich experiences increase traveler satisfaction and influence positive behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and support. [88, 95]. Therefore, tourism experience is a mediating variable that explains how STT affects satisfaction and loyalty. Empirical evidence supports the idea that tourism experiences mediate the relationship between technological innovation and tourism outcomes emphasizes that although technological infrastructure improves operational efficiency, success depends on creating engaging and meaningful travel experiences [92, 93]. Similarly, those who provide technology-enabled experiences to destinations will be more satisfied and return for repeat visits [80, 85, 89]. From these discoveries, It is hypothesized that travel experience mediates the effects of STT on satisfaction and loyalty. It emphasizes the need for destinations to prioritize experience design alongside technological investment.

H3: *Tourist experience mediates the relationship between smart tourism technology and destination loyalty*.
H4: *Tourist satisfaction mediates the relationship between smart tourism technology and destination loyalty*.

2.3 Tourist satisfaction, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

Tourist satisfaction is an essential factor in destination loyalty. It refers to a tourist's desire to revisit a destination and recommend it to others. Satisfaction occurs when travelers meet or exceed their expectations. It stimulates a positive emotional response that strengthens attachment to the destination [51]. High satisfaction promotes trust. Emotional attachment and feeling connected increase loyalty [104].

Satisfied travelers are more likely to return to their destination and share their positive experiences through word of mouth and digital platforms. Empirical studies have repeatedly shown that tourist satisfaction positively affects destination loyalty [105, 106]. Satisfaction significantly impacts behavioral intentions such as repeat visits and references [107, 108]. Similarly, Juliana et al. [109] found that satisfied tourists perceived higher prices. And develop a stronger emotional connection with the destination. This, in turn, encourages loyal behavior. This relationship is significant in the highly competitive travel market. Which various destinations not only must it attract tourists. However, it is also necessary to retain tourists to achieve sustainable growth [92, 96]. Both cognitive and affective aspects support the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Perceived, satisfied tourists perceive the quality and value of a destination. This leads to a rational decision to revisit. Emotionally, positive emotions associated with satisfaction create lasting memories and foster deeper loyalty.

H5: *Tourist satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on destination loyalty.*
H6: *Tourist experience has a positive and significant effect on destination loyalty.*

2.4 Moderating role of local culture

Local cultural values are essential in shaping tourists' perceptions, behaviour, and overall travel experience. Local culture as a moderating variable affects the strength and direction of the relationship between smart tourism technologies. Tourist satisfaction and loyalty to the destination cultural values determine what travelers value in their travel experiences (e.g., authenticity, tradition, interpersonal interactions), which can increase or decrease the effectiveness of smart tourism technologies) [80, 81]. Travelers in cultures that value cultural heritage and human connections may appreciate digital tools that provide insights into local traditions. However, they may feel isolated from too much automatic or impersonal interaction. Empirical evidence points to the importance of cultural fit in technology adoption and its impact on tourism. Some research indicated that tourists' cultural preferences influence technology adoption and preferences [81, 84, 85]. Creating culturally responsive experiences increases satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, a lack of cultural sensitivity in technology development and deployment can diminish the impact of innovative tourism technologies desired outcomes and perceived mismatch between the technology's services [37, 38].

Smart travel technologies highlighting cultural attractions or multilingual navigation can bridge the gap between global digital trends and local cultural expectations, creating experiences that resonate across cultural boundaries [23, 34]. This interaction emphasizes the need to integrate cultural considerations to ensure that smart tourism tools meet the needs of diverse traveler segments. At the same time, it preserves and promotes local heritage.

Cultural values are pivotal in shaping tourist behavior, particularly in digital environments where technology-mediated experiences intersect with traditional cultural expectations. Cultural dimensions theory underscores how national and individual cultural orientations impact technological adoption, decision-making, and satisfaction levels in tourism [45]. For instance, tourists from high-context cultures (e.g., East Asia) may prioritize collectivist and experiential aspects of travel. In contrast, low-context cultures (e.g., Western societies) may emphasize efficiency and convenience in digital interactions [56]. Some research also suggests that cultural differences influence travelers' trust in digital platforms and willingness to engage with STT [34].

Culture is a multidimensional construct, and previous studies have highlighted the importance of specific dimensions, such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, in shaping technology acceptance and consumer decision-making in tourism [44, 45]. Our study's use of general cultural indicators may have oversimplified the complex ways culture interacts with technological engagement and travel behaviors. For instance, high uncertainty avoidance cultures may be more cautious about adopting STT, while collectivist societies may rely more on peer recommendations and shared experiences [48-50].

H7: *Local culture moderates the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.*
H8: *Local culture moderates the relationship between tourist experience and destination loyalty.*

3. METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between smart tourism technology (STT) and tourist satisfaction. Destination loyalty travel experience and local culture data collection comprised an online questionnaire distributed to tourists using STT while traveling to a specific destination. The target sample included tourists with recent experience traveling to a destination with STT. The sample size was determined based on a power analysis. And there will be 300-400 survey respondents for practical statistical analysis. Respondents will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure they have experience with smart tourism technology. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data. It makes it possible to comprehensively analyze direct, indirect, and moderating effects between variables [110, 111]. The source of the adopted tourist destination loyalty was [30, 112] tourism experience indicators were adapted from previous studies that local culture indicator adopted [113, 114]: smart tourism technology adaptation, visitor satisfaction modified tourists' level of satisfaction drawn [102, 115, 116] mainly upon studies [117, 118]. Each hypothesis aligns with prior literature and is grounded in the constructs defined in the study, supporting a robust investigation into the role of STT, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty, with the mediating and moderating effects of tourism experience and local culture.

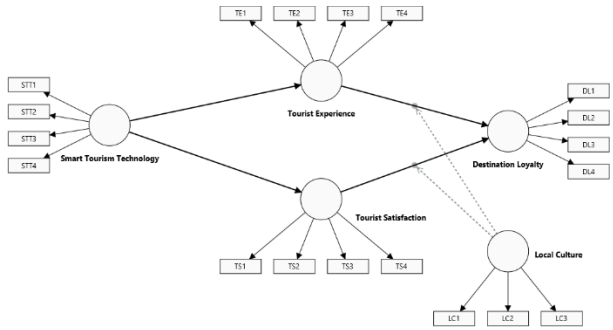

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sample characteristics

The 300 distributed questionnaires were successfully returned. The demographic analysis revealed that women constituted 56% of the respondents, while men accounted for 44%. A significant portion of the participants fell within the age brackets of 21-30 (47.6%) and 31-40 (29%), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	168	56
	Male	132	44
Age	21-30	143	47.6
	31-40	87	29
	41-50	70	23.34
Job	Student	120	40
	Employed	138	46
	Entrepreneur	42	14

Source: Processed data (2025)

In analyzing the measurement model, the external loadings are assessed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs. The reliability test of all constructs (DL, LC, STT, TE, and TS) demonstrated that each construct has a high level of internal consistency as they achieved values higher than 0.70 for the standardized Cronbach's alpha and loading above 0. This means that the constructs are solidly related to their factors. DL, LC, STT, and TE have an external load between 0.716 and 0.857; this criterion demonstrates the genuineness of each scale as a reliable measure. In addition, the effect of interaction between local culture and tourist satisfaction and experience has an absolute value of 1 (Table 2), which means they are the synergy of internal relations. In conclusion, the ME measurement model seems reliable and valid, providing an articulated structure in which everyone who reads this study may understand its variables.

Table 2. Reliability and validity analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Destination Loyalty	0.791	0.796	0.864	0.614
Local Culture	0.78	0.784	0.872	0.694
Smart Tourism Technology	0.805	0.829	0.871	0.628
Tourist Experience	0.798	0.828	0.866	0.619
Tourist Satisfaction	0.822	0.833	0.882	0.651
Destination Loyalty	0.791	0.796	0.864	0.614
Local Culture	0.78	0.784	0.872	0.694
Smart Tourism Technology	0.805	0.829	0.871	0.628

Source: Processed data (2025)

The reliability and validity analysis of the measurement model, as shown in Table 2, reveals high internal consistency and convergent/discriminant legitimacy among each construct. Values of Cronbach's alpha are between 0.78 and 0.822, which is also above the threshold for high reliability. Similarly, the composite reliability values (rho_a and rho_c) range from 0.784 to 0.882, confirming that the constructs are consistently measured by their indicators. The average variance extracted (AVE) values range from 0.614 to 0.694, exceeding the threshold of 0.50, indicating sufficient convergent validity. This means that each construct explains a significant portion of the variance of its indicators. Therefore, all constructs in the model (destination loyalty, local culture, smart tourism technology, tourist experience, and tourist satisfaction) are reliable and valid (Table 2).

Table 3. HTMT analysis

Variable	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
Local Culture <-> Destination Loyalty	0.234
Smart Tourism Technology <-> Destination Loyalty	0.069
Smart Tourism Technology <-> Local Culture	0.067
Tourist Experience <-> Destination Loyalty	0.248
Tourist Experience <-> Local Culture	0.063
Tourist Experience <-> Smart Tourism Technology	0.306
Tourist Satisfaction <-> Destination Loyalty	0.251
Tourist Satisfaction <-> Local Culture	0.179

Source: Processed data (2025)

Since the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HT/MT) ratio is more accurate in identifying discriminant issues, it is used as the final assessment of measurement model analysis to examine the discriminant validity. In the initial step of the HT/MT computation, dimensional analysis in PE and PSC was examined. The HT/MT ratio should be less than 0.9 [119]. It was determined that every indicator in this research model had been adequately discriminated against to measure their respective constructs, as shown by the first-stage discriminant validity calculation results with HT/MT ratio, shown in Table 3.

Table 4. Model fit (SRMR) analysis

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.059	0.066
d_ULS	0.656	0.825
d_G	0.206	0.21
Chi-square	378.876	380.883
NFI	0.801	0.8

Source: Processed data (2025)

Model fit indices are critical in ensuring the proposed theoretical framework aligns well with the observed data, reinforcing our findings' credibility and reliability [120] (Table 4).

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is a key goodness-of-fit statistic in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), indicating how well the model reproduces the observed correlation matrix, with values

≤ 0.08 generally considered acceptable [121]. In this study, the Saturated Model has an SRMR of 0.059. In contrast, the Estimated Model has an SRMR of 0.066, both within the acceptable range, suggesting a good model fit with minimal residual discrepancies. The discrepancy measures, d_ULS (0.656 and 0.825) and d_G (0.206 and 0.21) indicate small deviations, supporting a reasonably good fit. The Chi-square values (378.876 and 380.883) reflect model complexity, with minor differences between the two models. In contrast, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) values (0.801 and 0.8) indicate a moderate fit, as values above 0.80 are generally acceptable in exploratory research [120]. Overall, the model demonstrates an acceptable fit based on SRMR and related indices, though future refinements such as incorporating additional predictors or improving measurement reliability could further enhance model performance.

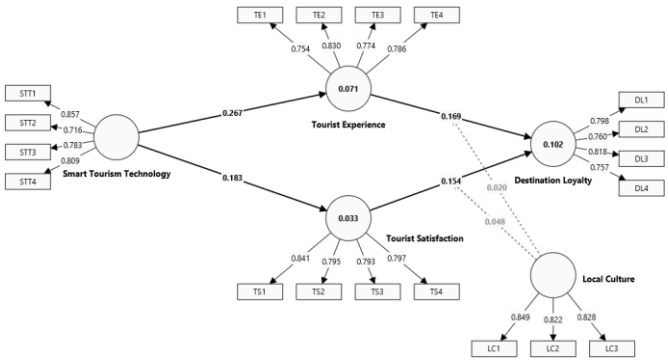

Figure 2. Outer model

Table 5. R-Square analysis

Variable	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Destination Loyalty	0.102	0.086
Tourist Experience	0.071	0.068
Tourist Satisfaction	0.033	0.03

Source: Processed data PLS-SEM (2025)

The R-squared values in Table 5 represent the percentage of variance explained by the independent variables for each dependent variable, such as destination loyalty, tourist experience, and tourist satisfaction. For destination loyalty, the R-squared of 0.102 and adjusted R-squared of 0.086 indicate that only 10.2% of the variance is explained by the predictors, with minor adjustments for the number of predictors and sample size. The tourist experience also has flat scores of 0.071 (R-squared) and 0.068 (adjusted R-squared), such that only a bit more than this model accounts for 7 percent of the variance. On the other hand, tourist satisfaction has the lowest explanatory power with an R-squared of 0.033 and adjusted R-squared = 0.03, meaning that only a 3% variance is explained by your predictors. Ultimately, these findings suggest the model may not be generalized. This indicates that adding more predictors or revisiting the theoretical model may be necessary to capture these underlying factors more pragmatically (Table 5).

While these values may seem low, they are meaningful within the context of tourism studies, where behavioural outcomes are often influenced by a complex interplay of psychological, social, and contextual factors beyond the variables included in the model [120]. Prior research suggests that R-squared values between 0.02 and 0.13 are common in consumer behaviour and tourism studies, particularly when examining satisfaction and loyalty constructs shaped by many personal and environmental influences [122]. To further justify the explanatory power of our model, we will incorporate a discussion of similar empirical studies that have reported comparable R-squared values, reinforcing the validity of our findings within the broader tourism literature. To enhance the robustness of our model, additional analyses, such as effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) tests, assess the practical significance and predictive capability of the relationships [121].

Table 6. Post hoc analysis

Path Analysis	R-Squared (R^2)		
	Total Sample n=300	Segment 1 n=246	Segment 2 n=54
Destination Loyalty	0.102	0.163	0.685
Tourist Experience	0.071	0.020	0.829
Tourist Satisfaction	0.033	0.002	0.704

The post hoc analysis (Table 6) was conducted by segmenting the total sample (n = 300) into Segment 1 (n = 246) and Segment 2 (n = 54) to explore whether heterogeneity in the data influenced the explanatory power of the model. The R^2 values in the total sample indicate relatively weak explanatory power for Destination Loyalty (0.102), Tourist Experience (0.071), and Tourist Satisfaction (0.033), suggesting that additional factors may be influencing these constructs. However, the segmented data showed a significant variation in R^2 values between the two subgroups. In Segment 1, the model's explanatory power remains low, with Destination Loyalty (R^2 = 0.163), Tourist Experience (R^2 = 0.020), and Tourist Satisfaction (R^2 = 0.002), indicating that in this subgroup, the independent variables have minimal influence on the dependent constructs. Conversely, Segment 2 shows a substantial increase in R^2 values, with Destination Loyalty (0.685), Tourist Experience (0.829), and Tourist Satisfaction (0.704), demonstrating that the model performs significantly better in this subgroup. This suggests underlying differences in demographics, psychographics, or behavioral factors may moderate the model's relationships.

Table 7. F Square analysis

Path Analysis	F Square	Result
Local Culture -> Destination Loyalty	0.03	Small effect size
Smart Tourism Technology -> Tourist Experience	0.077	Small effect size
Smart Tourism Technology -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.035	Small effect size
Tourist Experience -> Destination Loyalty	0.031	Small effect size
Tourist Satisfaction -> Destination Loyalty	0.025	Small effect size
Local Culture x Tourist Satisfaction -> Destination Loyalty	0.002	No effect size
Local Culture x Tourist Experience -> Destination Loyalty	0.000	No effect size

The F-square analysis (Table 7) provides insight into the effect size of each predictor on the dependent variables. The results indicate that most relationships exhibit a small effect size, with Local Culture influencing Destination Loyalty (f^2 = 0.03), Smart Tourism Technology influencing Tourist

Experience (f^2 = 0.077) and Tourist Satisfaction (f^2 = 0.035), as well as Tourist Experience (f^2 = 0.031) and Tourist Satisfaction (f^2 = 0.025) influencing Destination Loyalty. These small effect sizes suggest that while the independent variables contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent constructs, their impact is relatively weak. Notably, the interaction effects between Local Culture and Tourist Satisfaction (f^2 = 0.002) and Tourist Experience (f^2 = 0.000) on Destination Loyalty show no significant impact, indicating that Local Culture does not moderate these relationships meaningfully.

Table 8. Q-Square analysis

Variable	Q-Square Predict	Result
Destination Loyalty	0.050	Small predictive relevance
Local Culture	0.000	No predictive relevance
Smart Tourism Technology	0.000	No predictive relevance
Tourist Experience	0.039	Small predictive relevance
Tourist Satisfaction	0.018	Small predictive relevance

The Q^2 predict values indicate the predictive relevance of the model's endogenous constructs using the PLS-SEM methodology. According to Shmueli et al. [120], Q^2 value greater than zero suggests that the model has predictive relevance, while values closer to zero or negative indicate a lack of predictive capability. In this study, the Q^2 predict results demonstrate the predictive relevance of the model's endogenous constructs in the context of Smart Tourism Technology, Local Culture, Tourist Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty. Based on the findings, Destination Loyalty (Q^2 = 0.050) and Tourist Experience (Q^2 = 0.039) exhibit small predictive relevance, suggesting that while the model provides some explanatory power, it remains limited in effectively predicting these constructs. Similarly, Tourist Satisfaction (Q^2 = 0.018) also falls within the small predictive relevance category, implying that additional variables may be required to enhance the model's explanatory strength. These results indicate that while the constructs have some level of predictability, their impact is relatively weak. However, Local Culture (Q^2 = 0.000) and Smart Tourism Technology (Q^2 = 0.000) show no predictive effect, indicating that the model does not effectively explain variations in these constructs (Table 8).

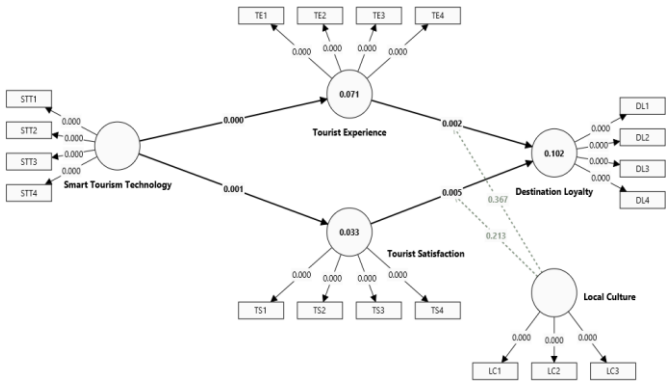

Figure 3. Inner model

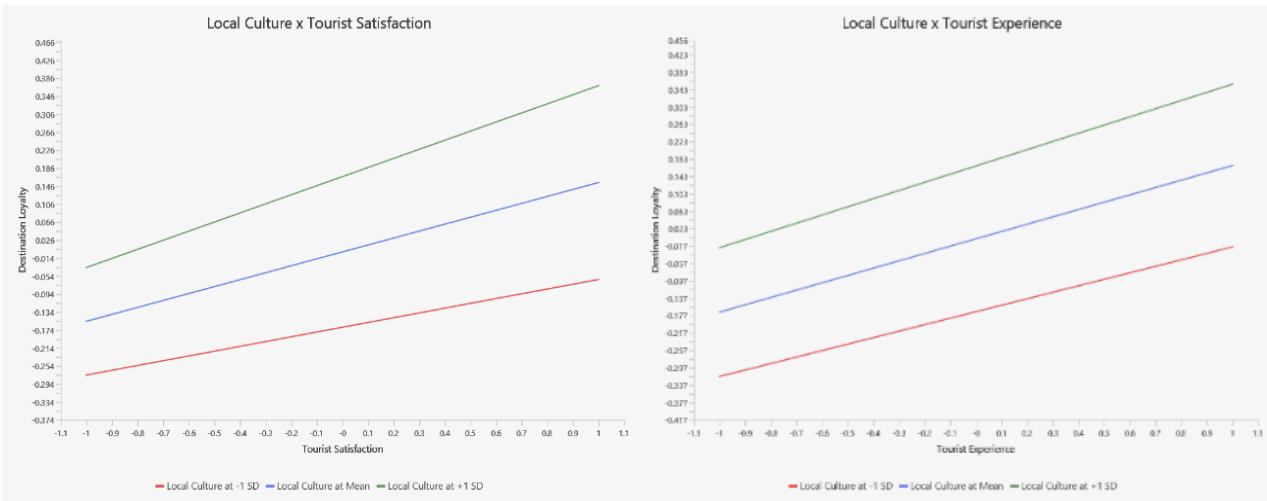

Figure 4. Simple slope analysis

Table 9. Hypothesis analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Local Culture -> Destination Loyalty	0.168	0.059	2.837	0.002
Smart Tourism Technology -> Tourist Experience	0.267	0.053	5.063	0.000
Smart Tourism Technology -> Tourist Satisfaction	0.183	0.057	3.185	0.001
Tourist Experience -> Destination Loyalty	0.169	0.058	2.909	0.002
Tourist Satisfaction -> Destination Loyalty	0.154	0.06	2.585	0.005
Local Culture x Tourist Satisfaction -> Destination Loyalty	0.048	0.06	0.795	0.213
Local Culture x Tourist Experience -> Destination Loyalty	0.02	0.057	0.34	0.367

Source: Processed data PLS-SEM (2025)

Figures 1-4 show the moderating effect of local culture on (1) tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty and (2) the relationship between tourist experience and destination loyalty. In both graphs, the three lines represent the influence of local culture at low (-1 SD), medium, and high (+1 SD) levels on tourist satisfaction, with the positive relationship with destination loyalty strengthening as the level of local culture increases. This is evidenced by the steeper slope at higher (+1 SD) levels of local culture. Similarly, for the tourist experience, higher levels of local culture also increase the positive relationship with destination loyalty. These results suggest that local culture enhances the impact of tourist satisfaction and experience on destination loyalty, highlighting its important role in promoting destination loyalty. Effective visualization is essential for accurately conveying statistical relationships and ensuring that readers can interpret the findings without ambiguity [123].

The hypothesis analysis (Table 9) shows significant relationships between several constructs. Local culture positively impacts destination loyalty ($O = 0.168$, $T = 2.837$, $p = 0.002$), suggesting it directly promotes loyalty. Smart tourism technologies have a significant impact on both tourist experience ($O = 0.267$, $T = 5.063$, $p < 0.001$) and tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.183$, $T = 3.185$, $p = 0.001$), which plays an essential role in creating tourism and spreading positive perceptions among tourists. Both tourist experience ($O = 0.169$, $T = 2.909$, $p = 0.002$) and tourist satisfaction ($O = 0.154$, $T = 2.585$, $p = 0.005$) significantly increase destination loyalty, indicating their importance in promoting repeat travel. The moderating effect of local culture on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty ($O = 0.048$, $T = 0.795$, $p = 0.213$), as well as the relationship between tourist experience and destination loyalty ($O = 0.02$, $T = 0.34$, $p = 0.367$), is not statistically significant. This suggests that local culture does not significantly modify these particular relationships in the current model.

4.2 Discussion

This study examines the interplay between Smart Travel Technology (STT), traveler satisfaction, and destination loyalty while incorporating cultural value as a moderating factor. The findings provide nuanced insights into how digital innovations interact with traveler experiences and cultural contexts, influencing satisfaction and long-term engagement with destinations.

The results confirm that STT significantly enhances traveler satisfaction, aligning with prior studies on the role of technology in tourism [12, 124, 125]. Digital tools such as AI-powered recommendations, virtual assistants, mobile booking platforms, and immersive experiences streamline the travel process, reduce uncertainties, and enhance convenience. This finding suggests that the seamless integration of digital services positively shapes tourists' perceptions of their experiences, reinforcing the importance of technological innovation in destination management.

The study supports the hypothesis that traveler satisfaction directly contributes to destination loyalty, consistent with expectation-confirmation theory [101, 126]. Satisfied tourists revisit destinations, share positive reviews, and recommend experiences through word-of-mouth and social media engagement. This underscores the need for destinations to prioritize service excellence, digital personalization, and experiential offerings to sustain competitive advantages.

The direct effect of STT on destination loyalty was relatively weaker than its effect on satisfaction. While Technology enhances convenience and efficiency, loyalty is often driven by deeper emotional and experiential factors. This suggests that while digital innovations can act as enablers, long-term loyalty requires a combination of memorable experiences, authenticity, and emotional engagement. Future strategies should integrate personalized, culturally immersive elements within STT platforms to strengthen traveler-destination relationships [127-129].

The moderating effect of cultural value on STT and traveler satisfaction was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). One possible explanation is that technological adoption in tourism has become more universal, reducing the influence of cultural differences. Additionally, the homogeneity of the sample could have limited the variability in cultural perceptions of STT. However, qualitative evidence suggests that travelers still seek culturally rich, localized content when engaging with digital tourism platforms, reinforcing the need for culturally adaptive digital services [95, 96].

Similarly, cultural value did not significantly moderate the satisfaction-loyalty relationship. This could be attributed to the increasing global standardization of tourism experiences, where satisfaction is primarily driven by service quality, authenticity, and emotional fulfillment rather than cultural predispositions. However, prior studies [75, 81, 82] suggest that cultural dimensions such as collectivism and uncertainty avoidance may still shape post-travel behaviors. Future research should consider alternative cultural constructs and segmentation approaches to capture the role of culture in fostering destination attachment.

The relatively low R-squared values indicate that the model explains only a modest proportion of the variance in traveler satisfaction (0.033), tourist experience (0.071), and destination loyalty (0.102). This suggests that additional predictors such as perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, and WOM effects should be incorporated to improve explanatory power. For instance, prior research highlights the role of sensory experiences, nostalgia, and hedonic motivations in shaping tourist perceptions and repeat visits [130, 131].

The post hoc analysis explored potential variations in the model's explanatory power across different segments. The results reveal significant differences in R^2 values between the total sample and segmented groups, indicating that the relationships among variables may be more pronounced within specific subgroups. For the total sample ($n = 300$), the R^2 values for Destination Loyalty (0.102), Tourist Experience (0.071), and Tourist Satisfaction (0.033) suggest a weak overall explanatory power. However, when examining Segment 2 ($n = 54$), there is a substantial increase in R^2 values, with Destination Loyalty (0.685), Tourist Experience (0.829), and Tourist Satisfaction (0.704) exhibiting strong explanatory power. This suggests that the model is highly predictive for a specific subgroup, whereas for Segment 1 ($n = 246$), the predictive power remains relatively weak (Destination Loyalty = 0.163, Tourist Experience = 0.020, Tourist Satisfaction = 0.002). These findings indicate high heterogeneity in the dataset, where the model's ability to explain variance is significantly stronger within a smaller subgroup. This suggests that certain contextual factors, behavioral patterns, or external influences may drive stronger relationships among variables in Segment 2.

The presence of high heterogeneity suggests that unobserved moderating variables or subgroup-specific factors

are influencing the relationships in the model. One possible explanation is that tourists in Segment 2 may have distinct behavioral patterns, cultural backgrounds, or levels of engagement with Smart Tourism Technology (STT), leading to a stronger impact on loyalty and satisfaction. This aligns with prior research indicating that individual differences in technology adoption, cultural identity, and experiential preferences can significantly shape tourist outcomes [83, 84]. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of conducting subgroup analyses in tourism research, as aggregated results may mask significant effects within specific groups. Future studies should explore potential moderators such as demographic characteristics, prior travel experiences, or psychological factors to better understand the underlying reasons for this heterogeneity. Additionally, incorporating more granular measurement approaches, such as cultural subdimensions (e.g., uncertainty avoidance, power distance), could provide deeper insights into how cultural and technological factors interact to influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty [96, 97, 129].

STT is an innovative tool that helps improve travel efficiency, privacy and overall experience. These technologies include mobile apps, virtual reality augmented reality, travel assistance using artificial intelligence, and big data analysis. Academics are increasingly aware of their role in shaping tourist behaviour, especially in increasing traveler satisfaction, experience, and loyalty. This study focuses on understanding the complex relationship between STT and tourist satisfaction. Travel experience destination loyalty and the moderating role of local culture, the adoption of STT positively impacts tourist satisfaction. STT effectively responds to tourists' needs by providing convenience. Previous studies found that STT reduces uncertainty during travel and increases satisfaction [78, 80, 81]. Satisfaction comes from a smooth experience at the institute. It enables travelers to plan and enjoy their travels more efficiently. Tourism experience is essential in mediating the relationship between STT and tourism satisfaction. Travel experiences include sensory, emotional, and cognitive aspects that affect the overall perception of the trip.

STT improves these experiences by offering immersive solutions such as augmented reality travel guides and customized recommendations. Previous studies emphasize that tourists using STT value the unique experiences offered, which leads to increased satisfaction [79, 83]. Traveler experiences drive destination loyalty beyond satisfaction. This relationship is mediated using STT. Tourists who use STT tend to be more deeply connected to a destination's offerings. This results in stronger emotional connections. Virtual tours showcasing hidden and cultural attractions can encourage repeat visits [10], and it was found that increased emotional connection stemming from experiences strongly indicates loyalty.

Tourist satisfaction is a key determinant of destination loyalty. When tourists feel that their needs and expectations are met or exceeded, they are more likely to recommend the destination and return in the future. Oliver's expectancy disconfirmation theory [132] supports this, suggesting that satisfied customers have higher loyalty. Recent studies have shown that satisfaction with STTs leads to positive word-of-mouth and repeat visits [8, 10].

The findings suggest that while STT plays a crucial role in modern tourism experiences, cultural integration remains an area for further exploration. Although cultural values did not moderate strongly, localized digital content, immersive storytelling, and AI-driven personalization could enhance the cultural relevance of smart tourism platforms. Incorporating emotional and experiential factors such as tourist delight, perceived authenticity, and community engagement may provide deeper insights into how technology fosters meaningful travel experiences.

Recognizing that cultural preferences shape technology adoption, user experience, and engagement [95]. One practical approach is developing localized digital content, which includes multi-language support, culturally relevant imagery, and region-specific recommendations. This ensures travelers can interact with STT familiarly and comfortably, increasing their engagement and satisfaction [14, 18]. Additionally, culturally adaptive AI chatbots can be incorporated into tourism platforms to provide personalized recommendations, real-time assistance, and culturally appropriate communication styles, enhancing service quality and responsiveness [133, 134].

Furthermore, immersive Virtual Reality (VR) heritage tours offer an innovative way to preserve and promote local cultures digitally, allowing travelers to experience cultural landmarks, traditions, and folklore before or during their visit. Such initiatives enhance emotional engagement by fostering a deeper appreciation of the destination's cultural identity [135, 136]. Additionally, gamification elements such as augmented reality (AR) treasure hunts featuring historical sites or local storytelling experiences can create interactive and memorable experiences reinforcing cultural connections. Policymakers should also consider collaborating with local artisans, cultural institutions, and tourism stakeholders to ensure that STT platforms authentically represent and respect local traditions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the crucial role of cultural value in the digital age by examining the integration of STT with traveler satisfaction and loyalty. Our findings highlight that while STT enhances the travel experience, cultural factors significantly shape its effectiveness. Specifically, we demonstrate that traveler satisfaction is a key mediator in strengthening destination loyalty, while local cultural values influence the perception and adoption of digital innovations in tourism. However, the moderating effect of cultural values on STT and satisfaction/loyalty was insignificant, suggesting that digital adaptation may transcend cultural boundaries in certain travel contexts. Despite this, the study reaffirms that authenticity, emotional engagement, and personalized experiences remain vital in fostering stronger tourist relationships with destinations. Future research should explore more nuanced cultural dimensions and alternative technological enablers to better capture the evolving interplay between STT and cultural value in travel experiences.

From a practical perspective, this research provides valuable insights for destination managers, tourism businesses, and policymakers aiming to enhance digital tourism strategies while preserving cultural authenticity. First, localized digital content and culturally adaptive AI-driven services should be developed to ensure smart tourism solutions resonate with diverse traveller expectations. Integrating AI-powered chatbots that reflect local languages, customs, and etiquette can improve engagement and satisfaction. Second, immersive technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) should be leveraged to interactively showcase

cultural heritage sites and traditions, strengthening emotional connections between tourists and destinations.

From a managerial standpoint, hotels, travel agencies, and tourism platforms should focus on co-creating digital experiences with local communities, ensuring that technological advancements do not overshadow cultural authenticity. Implementing personalized recommendation algorithms based on cultural preferences and travel behaviors can further enhance the relevance of smart tourism offerings. Training tourism professionals on digital and cross-cultural competencies will be crucial in balancing technology-driven efficiency with culturally immersive travel experiences. Policymakers should advocate for sustainable digital tourism policies, ensuring technological innovation aligns with cultural preservation efforts and fostering economic and social benefits for local communities.

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