

Article

The Influence of a Country's Sustainable Development on Likeability, Intention to Travel, and Country Image: A Case Study from Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: This paper discusses the impact of sustainable development on place likeability, intention to travel, and country image. The paper aims to find out whether the UK's sustainable development encourages people in Saudi Arabia to visit the UK. A self-administered questionnaire was used, which 320 respondents were asked to complete. The collected data were analysed using SPSS software. The results showed that the country's sustainable development has a major influence on place likeability and intention to travel. The results also indicated that country image leads to country attachment. This paper provides a guideline for managers and policy makers who would like to consider the influence of the environment on their organisations. Additionally, managers can benefit from this paper by considering that country image, intention to travel, and happiness are correlated constructs that are influenced by sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainable development; place likeability; intention to travel; country image



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1. Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the influence of a country's sustainable development on visitors' place likeability, intention to travel, and the country's image. In addition, the author proposes that the country image concept leads to country attachment and happiness. Sustainable development is expected to become a vital construct that plays an important role in mediating the proposed relationship between likeability and intention to travel as well as the relationship between intention to travel and country image.

Sustainable development is a major concept that aims to achieve sustainable society, environment, and natural resources [1]. Recently, the interests of the sustainability concept have increased to encompass consumption patterns, as consumers are expected to adjust their consumption behaviour for the sake of future generations [2]. Moreover, Palazzo et al. [1] indicated that sustainable development became a vital concept after the coronavirus pandemic as customers began to pay attention to resource availability for the next generation and therefore started changing their consumption patterns accordingly.

In this regard, sustainable development has been considered within the tourism literature by a number of scholars [3–5], and it has been linked with several constructs such as hospitality [5], purchase intention, and intention to re-visit a country [1].

On the other hand, the place likeability concept has been studied within the marketing literature by numerous scholars [6,7]. Due to the high influence of the likeability construct, it has also been discussed within the tourism literature, and it has been linked with other constructs such as purchase intention, loyalty, and happiness [7–9]. Moreover, the concept of likeability has been linked with place, which has developed a construct known as place likeability [7]. Therefore, place likeability as a new construct needs to be further investigated by examining its influence on intention to travel.

According to Hultman et al. [10], London, New York, and Amsterdam are favourable destinations for tourists. Therefore, tourism decision-makers have started to allocate big

budgets to promote them, considering the concepts of place branding, place image, and place identity [11]. As a result, this research uses the UK as a place that tourists can like, visit, and become attached to. In addition, during 2021, the UK was visited by around seven million people [12]. The UK was found to be a suitable context for the current study, as the government employs a high standard of sustainable business that it encourages all parties within the country to follow [13]. In this regard, the UK government has waived the visa requirements for a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia, in order to increase the number of tourists [14]. On the other hand, Saudis consider the UK as one of their favourite destinations; in 2019, more than 200,000 people visited the UK, and the number is expected to increase [15]. Therefore, Saudi tourists were considered as a suitable sample to test the research phenomena.

The current study builds on the previous literature of sustainable development and examines its impact on likeability, intention to travel, and country image. It also answers the following research questions: (1) whether a country's sustainable development impacts visitors' intention to travel, (2) whether a country's sustainable development impacts the country image, (3) whether visitors' place likeability influences intention to travel, and (4) whether country image leads to country attachment. To answer the research questions, the next section explores the key literature on the topic and research hypotheses as well as the conceptual model.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

In order to answer the research questions, this section will discuss the key related literature of the sustainable development construct and other related constructs, e.g., place likeability, intention to travel, and country image. In addition, the research hypotheses will be stated based on the investigated literature.

2.1. Place Likeability, Intention to Travel, and Country Image

According to [7], place likeability is a newly developed construct that is derived from the likeability construct and discussed in the field of marketing. The likeability concept was originally defined within the field of psychology as a self-presentation scheme [16]. In addition, likeability is considered as an influential construct on numerous factors such as customer loyalty, satisfaction, and word of mouth [6,8,9]. Similarly, the concept of likeability was linked with other concepts such as branding. Landwehr et al. [17] investigated the influence of likeability on brands, and the findings suggested that an individual's perception toward a brand should be investigated by decision makers. In addition, Nguyen et al. [8] built on their study and examined place likeability as a core construct, considering different antecedents and consequences. Furthermore, place branding is becoming a vital concept for marketers and tourism decision makers, as they are keen to building a mutual relationship with tourists, investors, and visitors [10]. In this regard, Foroudi et al. [6] investigated the influence of London's image on tourists and found that tourists who have visited London are more likely to re-visit it.

The current study adopts a place likeability definition developed by [7] as the assessment of appeal that a customer has for a firm, considering the degree of experience of stakeholders with a high level of connection to a particular place. The definition indicates that past experience is one of the determinants of place likeability. In addition, visiting a place is associated with different psychological factors such as social pressure, perceived quality, and attitude [7,8].

In this regard, intention to revisit a place has been found to be influenced by different constructs such as past experience, perceived quality [18], and social pressure [7]. Similarly, the place likeability construct is known as the customer's assessment of their prior experience, social pressure, and reference groups. Moreover, place likeability has been examined as a determinant of revisit intention within the retail context and has been considered to be an influential factor [7,8]. Based on the discussion above, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. *There is a positive correlation between place likeability and intention to travel.*

According to [19], intention to travel is known as the individual's desire to travel to a certain country to participate in certain travel activities. In addition, intention to travel has been discussed within the field of tourism and has been considered to be an inner psychological process [20]. It has been suggested that intention to travel is associated with culture, including the influence of reference groups [20,21]. However, Gnoth [22] argued that people travel seeking pleasure and thus tend to choose their travel destination without being influenced by others. Therefore, individuals' travel behaviour is associated with how travellers perceive themselves [23].

On the other hand, country image has received great interest in the recent literature. Moreover, it is suggested that marketing managers should consider how customers perceive their products, as customers evaluate a product they intend to purchase based on its country of origin [24]. Similarly, when it comes to visiting a certain country, visitors tend to make their decision independently [25]. Country of origin is considered as a purely cognitive process, where individuals have their own perception toward a country [26]. The perception of a certain country is formed by a combination of economic, cultural, and political components [27]. According to [24], country image is defined as the mental representations of a country's people, products, culture, and national symbols. As mentioned above, country image encompasses different aspects such as culture, perceived quality, and purchase intention [28]. In relation to the context of the current study, Hultman et al. [10] examined the influence of country image on both suppliers and consumers in the city of Leeds. Leeds is considered as the second largest UK city in terms of providing financial services [10]. They found that the impact of place image is a combination of physical and psychological factors. Similarly, Ageeva and Foroudi [11] studied the influence of place image on place identity and place branding by interviewing tourists from Europe and the UK; they stated that place image is associated with a number of physical factors, such as the nature of the city, cultural places, and use of products. Additionally, it has been found that country image is associated with the likelihood of purchase [24]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2. *There is a positive correlation between intention to travel and country image.*

2.2. Mediation Role of the Sustainable Development between Place Likeability-Intention to Travel, and Intention to Travel-Country Image

Recently, interest in the sustainable development concept has significantly increased, as individuals have started paying attention to resource availability for future generations [29]. Furthermore, sustainable development has been found to be a key concept that guarantees a beneficial developed business for future generations in a way that does not harm the environment [5]. In addition, the sustainable development concept is a shared concept as it requires the involvement of different parties, namely the economy, provided goods, and government institutes [23].

Sustainable development has been linked with the tourism field and has been found to be an influential concept that impacts travellers' decision making [5]. Moreover, tourists are becoming more conscious about the environment, especially when it comes to travel activities, as they are willing to pay additional money to consume environmentally friendly products [30,31]. According to Yousaf et al. [5], sustainable development can be defined as the advanced methods used for the optimal utilisation of assets, for making reasonable investments, and for enhancing technological development and corporate revolution according to the existing demands. This definition indicates that sustainable development is a broad concept that encompasses different aspects, including customers, technology, and economy.

In relation to this study, it is expected that travellers would like to visit a place that considers the environment [32]. In addition, place likeability includes customers' judgement of a place [7]. Finally, the image of a certain country is associated with different

aspects such as culture, politics, and economy [24], which indicates that sustainable development also plays an important role in country image. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3. *Sustainable development mediates the relationship between place likeability and intention to travel.*

H4. *Sustainable development mediates the relationship between intention to travel and country image.*

2.3. Country Image, Country Attachment, and Happiness

The current study defines country attachment as the degree to which travellers view a country as a part of themselves and reflecting who they are. This definition is based on the one stated by [33], who linked attachment with the branding concept and asserted that consumers tend to become attached to the brand that reflects their behaviour. In addition, attachment occurs when individuals are attached to a brand, place, or partner that express themselves [34]. Creating an emotional connection with customers is found to be a fundamental goal of marketers as it leads to loyalty, likeability, and love [7].

Therefore, the theory of self-congruence was employed by [33] to explain how individuals see themselves. The self-congruence theory helped marketers link their products/brands with customers by understanding how they see themselves and what inspires them [35]. It has been suggested that image, loyalty, and attachment can be a result of the self-congruence theory [33]. In addition, country image is a mental representation of a country [24] and includes psychological concepts such as attitude, behaviour, and loyalty [36]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5. *There is a positive correlation between country image and country attachment.*

2.4. Country Trust Mediates the Relationship between Country Image and Country Attachment

The concept of consumer trust has received great attention from scholars within the marketing literature [37]. Recently, Grosso et al. [38] have studied the trust concept within the tourism literature and linked it with a place to represent the country trust construct. In addition, country trust is associated with travellers' loyalty, as once individuals trust a place, they tend to re-visit it [39,40]. The current study adopts the trust definition generated by [41], which defined trust as an overall belief that the retailer will take actions that will result in positive outcomes for the customers.

The definition of trust indicates that individuals' trust is gained as a result of a cognitive evaluation, as belief is a behavioural component of the mental decision-making process [42]. In relation to the current study, attachment is also considered as a behavioural concept that requires individuals to mentally process the object before becoming attached to it [43]. Moreover, both concepts (attachment and trust) are the result of individuals' satisfaction [38], which indicates that trust is an influential factor on attachment.

Country trust is associated with country image, as both constructs represent how individuals see themselves [33]. In addition, country trust and country image both lead to similar consequences such as loyalty and attitude [35,38]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H6. *Country trust mediates the relationship between country image and country attachment.*

The concept of happiness is derived from the field of psychology and is found to be a part of emotions [44]. On the other hand, Bradburn [45] defines happiness from a hedonistic perspective as the process of balancing between negative and positive affects. Recently, [46] defined happiness within the marketing field as the consumer's greatest emotional fulfilment, i.e., a moment-based experience of pleasant high and low arousal emotions induced at different brand contact points (e.g., via purchase, consumption, or advertisements).

Due to high competition, companies are searching to create attractive products that attract customers and encourage them to become attached to the company [33], Park et al. [43]. In addition, customers who are attached to a product/brand tend to develop a strong emotional connection with it [33,34]. Similarly, Park et al. [43] found that emotional attachment occurs as a result of a combination of self-congruence, attitude, and behavioural factors. Therefore, the level of product involvement plays an important role in determining the level of customer attachment [33].

The current literature indicates that both concepts (attachment and happiness) include similar determinants such as emotions, affection, and liking [46,47]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H7. *There is a positive correlation between country attachment and happiness.*

2.5. The impact of Income as a Moderator

Income is considered as one of the major indicators that determine the purchase power of an economy [48]. In addition, income is found to be the main determinant used to estimate the demand for a certain product/service [49]. For marketers, income is a tool that can be used to effectively divide the market into segments [48]. In relation to the current study, income is a key factor that shapes individuals' behaviour towards purchasing a product/service [50]. Similarly, Roslow and Nicholls [9] stated that purchase intention and individuals' behaviour are strongly associated with income. It has been found that individuals with high incomes tend to try new products more than individuals with low incomes [49].

According to Huaman-Ramirez and Merunka [51], income plays a significant role in individuals' attachment toward a brand. In addition, income is considered as a determinant of loyalty and satisfaction [52]. Similarly, income plays an important role in determining customers' level of likeability, as customers with high incomes tend to favour luxury brands [53]. Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H8. *Income moderates the relationship between place likeability and intention to travel.*

The conceptual model is constructed based on the discussion for all of the above eight discussed relationships and includes the proposed relationships (see Figure 1).

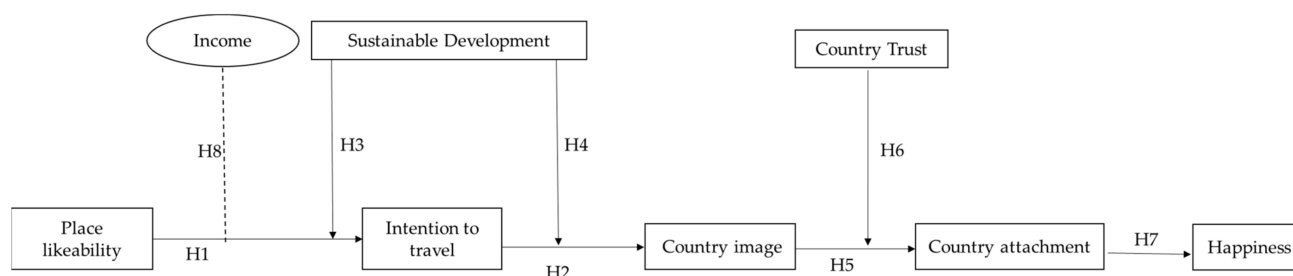


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection

The current study employed a probability sampling technique to collect data in the form of a self-administered questionnaire [54]. The data were collected from respondents within public areas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 1 November 2022 and 3 December 2022. In addition, the sample population is defined as a group of elements selected from the population [55]. According to [56], this sampling technique aims to ensure that the data collection method is in line with the research objectives and that the findings are sufficient to answer the research questions [56]. In addition, the sample population is defined as “the universe of units from which the sample is to be selected” ([56], p. 182). The definition includes the term ‘units’; this indicates that the sampling technique

is a broad concept and goes beyond collecting data from people, as it encompasses nations, firms, or cities [7,50]. Therefore, the findings can be generalised on the whole population of the country where the study is taking place. Relatively, the current study aimed to investigate the mediating role of sustainable development on place likeability, intention to travel, and country image within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The sample of a research study should be suitable to the research objectives [57]. Therefore, the sample of the current study included citizens and foreigners living in Saudi Arabia aged over 18 years and from both sexes (male and female). In order to provide the population equal opportunity, the probability sampling technique was employed [56,57]. To ensure that the data collection process is suitable for the research, an appropriate sampling technique should be used [56,58]. The probability sampling technique was found to be suitable for the current case study as it helps represent a case study of people living in Saudi Arabia. In addition, it has been advised that the researcher should select the respondents randomly [59]. Therefore, a self-administered questionnaire was randomly distributed in the three main cities in Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah, and Khobar), as recommended by [56].

This study examined the influence of sustainable development on place likeability, country image, and intention to travel to a place. In addition, it investigated how Saudi travellers perceive sustainable development while visiting the United Kingdom. According to the [12] report, more than 6.8 million visitors visited the UK in 2021; the number of visitors gradually increased due to the loosening of travel restrictions during the post-COVID period. Specifically, Saudi tourists consider the UK as one of their favourite destinations, as more than 221 thousand visitors visited the UK in 2019 [14]. In addition, the number of Saudi tourists visiting the UK is expected to increase [15].

In accordance with [54], the questionnaires were randomly distributed to every fifth individual entering the place where the data were collected. The researcher used popular public areas such as shopping malls, universities, and football stadiums (during match days); these areas have been found to be the best places to collect data from Saudi Arabian respondents [7,60]. In addition, the culture in Saudi Arabia is considered to be a collectivistic culture [7,61,62], and the best way to collect data in a collectivistic culture is through meeting people in public areas such as shopping malls [7,60,62].

The ideal number of participants should be determined by the researcher, as the previous literature have shown different views. It is suggested that if the research uses structural equation modelling (SEM) for the data analysis, the sample should be between 150 and 400 participants [58]. According to [63], the sample should be adequate, otherwise the results will not be accurate, as a sample of less than 50 participants leads to a poor outcome; it is suggested that in order to obtain a very good outcome, the sample should range between 300 and 500 participants [63]. Therefore, the current study considered a sample size of 300 participants, which is found to be suitable for investigating a case study [7,58].

3.2. Measurement Items

The current study examined the influence of sustainable development on place likeability, country image, and country attachment. In addition, the influence of country trust as a mediator between country attachment and happiness was also examined. All constructs used were measured while considering the existing measurements generated from the current literature [58]. The research objectives were assessed through a conceptual model, which included eight research hypotheses, as recommended by [58].

The data used to test the research hypotheses were collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire used was structured based on a seven-point scale including eight options ranging between 0 and 7 (with 0 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree). Before distributing the questionnaires, the respondents were informed that the questionnaire would take 10–15 min to be completed. In addition, the researcher

verified the questionnaire to ensure that it was free from errors by asking academics and experts to complete the questionnaire and state their opinion about it [6,58].

In order to address the research objectives of the current study, the researcher used the back-translation technique. Because the current study examines the perception of individuals living in Saudi Arabia toward the influence of sustainable tourism on place likeability, country image, and country attachment, all measurement items used in the questionnaire were translated into Arabic [64]. Then, experts were asked to translate the items into English in order to ensure that all items were free from errors [64].

4. Results and Analysis

This section explains the techniques used in order to answer the research questions, which tested all the paths between the seven constructs. Moreover, all analysis techniques that were employed to analyse the collected data are explained. The current study collected data from 320 respondents who completed the distributed questionnaire; the respondents' demographic details are explained next.

Females represented around 60% of the respondents, while 40% were males. In relation to education levels, 56% of the respondents were Bachelor's degree holders, 32% held a post-graduate degree, and 12% had a high school degree. The respondents were categorised into six income groups; the majority group was earning a monthly income ranging between SAR 13,000 and 18,000, representing 43% of the sample, while 14% were earning more than SAR 30,000. The rest of the respondents were fairly evenly distributed between the four groups. Detailed information about the respondents is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile (N = 320).

Sample Size (N)	N	%
Age		
18 to 25 years	36	11
26 to 35 years	147	46
36 to 45 years	97	30
46 to 55 years	37	11
56 to 65 years	1	0.3
66 years old or more	2	0.7
Total	320	100
Gender		
Male	128	40
Female	1193	60
Total	320	100
Education		
High school	38	12
Undergraduate	179	56
Postgraduate and above	103	32
Total	320	100
Income		
SAR 5000 or less	31	9
SAR 6000–12,000	37	11
SAR 13,000–18,000	134	43
SAR 18,000–23,000	36	11
SAR 24,000–29,000	37	11
SAR 30,000 or more	45	15
Total	322	100

It is suggested that once all data are collected from the respondents, the data need to be screened in order to ensure that they are free from errors [65]. In addition, the data screening techniques guarantee that the data are complete and consistent [1]. Therefore,

the current study used the SPSS software package before conducting the analysis, as it tests the accuracy of the data and prepares the data for the analysis [4]. Before conducting the multivariate analysis, the dataset was screened in order to: (1) ensure that there were no factors misleading the relationships between the variables; (2) ensure that the dataset was fit [4]; and (3) assess the adequacy of the sample to the variables. Thus, the current study conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for all measurement items as it offers an initial judgement of the data [66]. To achieve a suitable exploratory factor analysis results, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) technique is recommended, as this method assesses the sample’s adequacy of sphericity using Bartlett’s test [67]. It is suggested that the KMO measurement needs to be higher than 0.6 for a significant correlation between the items, and thus for the data to be appropriate for the EFA to result in parsimonious correlated variables [4]. In addition, Bartlett’s test for sphericity showed that the correlation between the items was greater than 0.3, which indicated that the results were appropriate for the EFA [58]. The KMO and Bartlett’s tests are explained in Table 2. The results showed an acceptable level of KMO 0.792, and the adequacy of the sample size was greater than 0.6, which also indicates an acceptable level. The BTS result was significant under the criteria of [4] (equal to or less than 0.001).

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett’s test.

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.792
Approx. chi-square	15,382.412
df	1596
Sig.	0.000

The present study conducted an EFA for all items used. Thus, 65 measurement items were examined by the EFA to reflect the seven constructs, and all measurement items showed an acceptable reflection on the constructs, as explained in Table 3.

Table 3. Study constructs, scale items, mean, factor loadings, and standard variation.

Construct and Measurement Items				
Place Likeability	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
<i>Positivity</i>				
I strongly believe that this place can keep its promise to me.	5.573	1.5676	0.897	[2,7]
I feel that I am favoured and given priority by this place.	5.548	1.5266	0.871	
I believe that this place continues to get better and better.	5.591	1.5348	0.866	
<i>Interaction</i>				
I feel attached to this place.	5.563	1.5396	0.894	[2,7]
This place openly shares information with me	5.646	1.5832	0.867	
I have a continuous interaction with this place.	5.588	1.5765	0.866	
<i>Personified quality</i>				
I would describe this place as friendly.	5.566	1.4658	0.877	[2,7]
I would say that this place is approachable.	5.586	1.5234	0.876	
This place is very attractive.	5.439	1.5431	0.859	

Table 3. Cont.

<i>Contentment</i>	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
Overall, I approve of this place.	5.353	1.5648	0.832	[2,7]
I feel cheerful when visiting this place.	5.569	1.5232	0.822	
This place takes care of everything for me.	5.145	1.5633	0.873	
I am grateful for this place's service offering.	5.596	1.5363	0.820	
Sustainable Development	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
Competitiveness				
We have established strong technological resource back-ups.	5.541	1.5692	0.839	[5]
We can handle major competitors in the market.	5.570	1.5966	0.828	
We are able to manufacture cost-effective products to fulfil the customer's requirements.	5.517	1.5297	0.871	
Our current market share is sufficient to cope with competition.	5.573	1.5676	0.897	
Our competitive position will be raised in the next financial year through technological exploits.	5.548	1.5266	0.871	
Our investment in image, brand, and communication has yielded the desirable business outcomes.	5.591	1.5348	0.866	
We outsourced the production processes to reduce the price of products/services.	5.573	1.5676	0.897	
We have maintained the quality and performance of products/services in diverse situations.	5.548	1.5266	0.871	
Business Performance Enhancement	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
(a) Our hotel conducts productivity analysis on a regular basis.	5.549	1.5487	0.887	[5]
(b) Technological exploits have been facilitated in our hotel to enhance productivity.	5.585	1.5814	0.831	
(c) We are successful at continuously modifying the design of our products/services.	5.573	1.5676	0.897	
(d) We systematically measure and manage actual productivity goals.	5.561	1.5279	0.888	
(e) We successfully continue to enter into new markets.	5.578	1.5397	0.876	
(f) We accomplish cost reduction/production improvement through new technology.	5.580	1.5677	0.892	
(g) We have improved logistics and delivery methods.	5.569	1.5693	0.884	
(h) We make and improve policies to deliver products/services.	5.548	1.5266	0.892	
(i) Our hotel established and executes an effective business sustainability plan.	5.597	1.5387	0.879	

Table 3. Cont.

Technological Development	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
(a) We are successful at using the latest technology.	5.540	1.4688	0.920	[5]
(b) We use sustainable techniques in an effective manner.	5.525	1.5388	0.884	
(c) We develop technologically competitive products/services with prolonged life cycles.	5.588	1.5675	0.869	
(d) We have effectively used upgraded technologies and improved control systems.	5.566	1.5272	0.891	
(e) Our technology is upgraded and stimulates sustainable growth.	5.580	1.5350	0.876	
(f) We are successful at effecting technological improvement in the existing products/services.	5.577	1.5690	0.877	
(g) We have successfully evolving environment-friendly technologies.	5.560	1.5277	0.888	
(h) We minimise environmental impacts while maintaining social and economic benefits.	5.588	1.5738	0.891	
Customer Satisfaction	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
(a) We effectively deal with customers' suggestions.	5.393	1.5130	0.889	[5]
(b) We effectively act upon the feedback obtained from the customers.	5.568	1.5653	0.869	
(c) We pay particular attention to the key concerns of customers.	5.566	1.5934	0.883	
(d) We successfully achieve customer satisfaction.	5.589	1.5376	0.889	
(e) We are able to effectively meet and streamline customers' requirements.	5.569	1.5682	0.869	
(f) We provide value-added services to customers.	5.560	1.5286	0.869	
(g) We effectively communicate about new products/services with customers.	5.580	1.5673	0.887	
(h) Our customer ordering/tracking system is user-friendly and flexible.	5.569	1.5486	0.891	
Intention to travel	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
I would like to visit the UK.	5.580	1.5677	0.889	[18,68]
I would be interested in visiting the UK.	5.569	1.5284	0.869	
I would recommend others to go to the UK.	5.593	1.5387	0.877	

Table 3. Cont.

Country Image	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
I visit the UK due to the tourism atmosphere and services provided.	5.598	1.5683	0.879	[28]
I visit the UK due to the stability of the economic and political situation.	5.569	1.5284	0.891	
I visit the UK due to the cultural environment.	5.589	1.5741	0.875	
I visit the UK due to the hospitality offered.	5.582	1.5693	0.869	
Country Trust	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
I feel confident that the UK would be a good tourist destination.	5.584	1.5687	0.889	[69]
The UK would be a destination that meets my expectations.	5.579	1.5281	0.869	
The UK would guarantee tourist satisfaction.	5.588	1.5391	0.889	
The UK would be a destination that never disappoints me.	5.588	1.5693	0.887	
Country Attachment	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
I feel passionate about visiting the UK.	5.586	1.5697	0.878	[33,47]
I feel connected to the UK.	5.573	1.5389	0.893	
I feel affection when I visit the UK.	5.588	1.5658	0.877	
Happiness	Mean	SD	Cronbach	Adapted from
Visiting the UK makes me joyful.	5.596	1.5816	0.891	[46]
Visiting the UK makes me proud.	5.581	1.5376	0.872	
Visiting the UK makes me invigorated.	5.578	1.5694	0.888	
Visiting the UK makes me peaceful.	5.5935	1.5734	0.883	

Testing the reliability of the measurement items used is useful for removing poor items before conducting the analysis [70]. The current study examined all constructs and used items using SPSS version 21.0 to ensure that they met the expected reliability level [58]. The results showed an acceptable reliability level for all variables (Table 3). In addition, the results indicated that the coefficient alpha was higher than 0.7, which indicated a suitable level, as recommended by scholars [1,58,66].

In order to examine how the measurement items were grouped, the factor loading test and composite reliability test were employed. The construct reliability test aims to indicate how constructs relate to the latent variable. The results indicated an acceptable reliability level (higher than 0.7) as recommended by [58]. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha was employed to examine the reliability of all constructs. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. The outcome of factor loading for all measurement items is explained in Table 3, while the AEV (average extracted variance), reliability, and correlation matrix values are presented in Table 4.

As recommended by [55,71], the current study employed the common method variance through a one-factor test. The test was employed through a comparison of the chi-square of the original model and the controlled one in order to find out if there were any dissimilarities. In addition, the non-response bias was examined through a Mann–Whitney U test as it compares the difference between late and early responses by the mean of all factors. The results showed that all factors have a probability value of greater than 0.5; thus, there was no non-response bias indicated in the current study.

Table 4. Correlation matrix, reliability, and AVE.

Construct	Cronbach	PL	SD	IT	CI	CT	CA	HP
PL	0.84	1.00						
SD	0.86	0.523	1.00					
IT	0.82	0.539	0.549	1.00				
CI	0.91	0.531	0.658	0.391	1.00			
CT	0.87	0.489	0.152	0.381	0.137	1.00		
CA	0.88	0.522	0.544	0.296	0.288	0.16	1.00	
HP	0.82	0.541	0.561	0.358	0.341	0.192	0.271	1.00

In order to examine the unidimensionality of both reliability and validity, the current study employed a two-step approach as recommended by [58,72] using AMOS 21. In addition, the two-step approach was used to test the paths between the variables; the first step examines the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while the second examines the structural equation modelling (SEM).

The validity of the measurement model was examined in the first step, and the outcomes indicated a satisfactory fitness level of the observed data. The consistency of the measurement model was examined by the fit indices through the covariance matrices. The goodness-of-fit procedure was used to confirm the applicability of the model [73]. The unidimensionality of the constructs was assessed by Cronbach's alpha as it helps to examine the relationship between the measurement items and the constructs [74]. The measurement model was assessed by the fit indices to examine the fitness level [4,58,75]. The current study employed three different techniques to evaluate the measurements model, namely the model absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimony fit indices.

The second step encompasses an examination of the paths between the constructs; this step includes a clear assessment of all proposed paths within the model; the results indicated an acceptable level $0.941 > 0.90$, as recommended by Hair et al. (2006) and [4]. In addition, the root mean squared approximation of error (RMSEA) showed a satisfactory level ($0.067 < 0.08$) as recommended by [58]. The incremental fit index (IFI) and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) tests showed acceptable results of 0.931 and 0.953, respectively, which were >0.90 . Overall, the results indicated that the model fit level was satisfactory under the recommendations of [58].

All eight hypotheses were tested through an assessment of the causal paths between the constructs. The outcomes of the paths assessment are presented in Table 5; the results indicated that six hypotheses were significant, and two hypotheses were rejected. The rejected hypotheses were the mediation influence of country trust on the relationship between country image and country attachment (H6) and the moderator influence of income on the proposed path between place likeability and intention to travel. The final model explains the supported hypotheses (Figure 2).

Table 5. Results of the hypotheses testing and mediator effect.

Standardised Regression Paths				Estimate	S.E	C.R	<i>p</i>	Hypothesis
H1	IT	<—	PL	0.543	0.078	4.665	***	Supported
H2	CI	<—	IT	0.393	0.073	4.957	***	Supported
H5	CA	<—	CI	−0.019	0.054	−0.245	0.778	Supported
H7	HP	<—	CA	0.107	0.051	2.576	0.030	Supported

Table 5. Cont.

Sustainable development as a mediator									
H3a	SD	<—	PL	0.083	0.050	1.086	0.269	Supported	
H3b	IR	<—	SD	0.075	0.085	1.471	0.153	Supported	
H4a	SD	<—	IT	0.083	0.040	1.046	0.281	Supported	
H4b	CI	<—	SD	0.075	0.075	1.561	0.154	Supported	
Country trust as a mediator									
H6a	CT	<—	CI	0.063	0.030	1.046	0.267	Not Supported	
H6b	CA	<—	CT	0.075	0.045	1.321	0.151	Not Supported	
Income as a moderator									
Low income					High income				
				Estimate	<i>p</i>	Estimate	<i>p</i>	z-score	Hypothesis
H8	IT	<—	PL	0.091	0.053	0.093	0.019	0.019	Not Supported

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$; PL: place likeability; SD: sustainable development; IT: intention to travel; CI: country image; CT: country trust; CA: country attachment; HP: happiness.

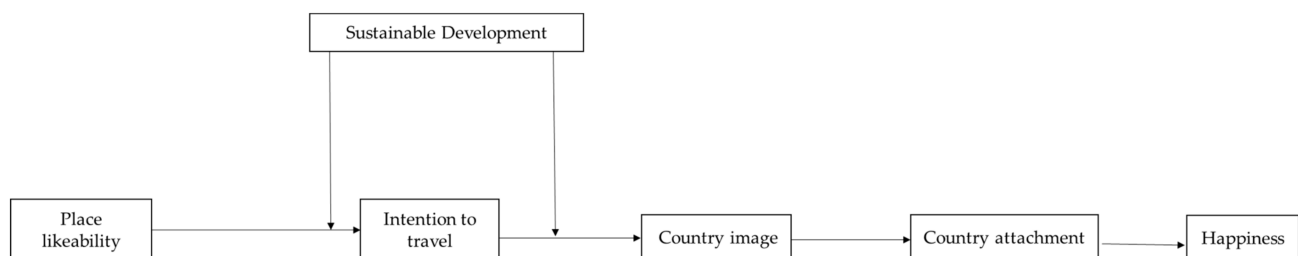


Figure 2. Final model.

5. Conclusions and Theoretical Implications

The main objective of this study was to find out whether the UK's sustainable development impacts the relationships between place likeability and intention to travel and between intention to travel and country image. The study examined the perception of Saudis who were willing to travel to the UK. The findings of the current study indicated that place likeability plays an influential role in determining travellers' chosen destination. Therefore, the outcomes contribute to the existing literature with respect to place likeability, loyalty, and happiness, as sustainable development is an influential concept for the mentioned constructs.

Similarly, the current study contributes to the existing literature by considering sustainable development's mediation role on the relationship between place likeability and intention to travel, considering the fact that sustainable development plays an important role in shaping consumption patterns. Both constructs (intention to travel and place likeability) should be measured while considering sustainable development.

Another theoretical contribution is that the country image construct is examined within the field of tourism while considering the UK's sustainable development level. The results indicate that sustainable development influences country image. Therefore, this study contributes a new scale to measure country image, considering that travellers nowadays are becoming more conscious about the environment and tend to re-visit environmentally friendly places.

The findings also showed that intention to travel is a determinant of country image. This result indicates that individuals' travel behaviour is associated with how travellers perceive themselves. Furthermore, country image is associated with other aspects, including purchase intention.

In addition, attachment can be a consequence of different antecedents, such as partner, brand, or place. The current study investigated the relationship between country image and country attachment; the outcomes showed that country image is a determinant of country attachment. Therefore, this study contributes to the consumer behaviour literature in terms of country image being a mental representation of a country and encompassing attitude, behaviour and loyalty.

The concept of happiness was found to be influenced by attachment. Therefore, this study contributes to the previous literature on happiness by providing attachment as an antecedent. Similarly, it has been found that customers who are attached to a product or place tend to be happy with it. Finally, the findings of the current study indicate that the moderation role of income on place likeability and intention to travel is insignificant. However, previous literature has indicated that purchase power is highly influenced by income [48]. Additionally, Roslow and Nicholls [9] stated that purchasing intention and individuals' behaviour are strongly associated with income. Similarly, income is considered to be a determinant of loyalty and satisfaction [52].

6. Implications, and Future Research

The current study examines the influence of sustainable development on the following constructs: place likeability, country image, and intention to travel. Therefore, it provides different implications for both levels (theoretical and practical). Theoretically, this study examines the impact of sustainable development's mediation role on the relationships between place likeability and intention to travel by considering people living in Saudi Arabia. Because the culture in Saudi Arabia is collectivist [61], all constructs used in the scale are suitable for collectivistic cultures.

Another theoretical contribution is the role of mediation that sustainable development plays. Sustainable development has been considered within the field of tourism by numerous scholars [29–31]; however, it has not been tested as a mediator. The current study contributes to the sustainable development construct by examining it as mediator of two relationships (place likeability and intention to travel; intention to travel and country image). In addition, the concept of country image was examined in the current study by considering intention to travel and place likeability. Therefore, this study contributes to the country image construct by considering new antecedents.

On the other hand, this study can be useful for both managers and policy makers, specifically for managers who are seeking to understand how tourists behave towards visiting a certain place or country. Furthermore, managers who would like to understand how tourists are influenced by a country's level of sustainable development can benefit from the findings of this study. Another managerial contribution is for managers who would like to expand into Saudi Arabia, as this study provides a deep investigation of the consumption patterns of people living in Saudi Arabia (both Saudi and non-Saudi). This research can also benefit managers who are seeking to build a long-term relationship with customers, as attachment, trust, and happiness lead to loyalty.

The current study investigates the impact of sustainable development on place likeability, country image, and intention to travel. The research objectives were addressed by a scale that was developed from previous research. Therefore, there are some limitations that need to be highlighted for future research. First, the data were collected while considering a single country (Saudi Arabia); thus, the findings cannot be generalised on other countries, and the outcomes could vary if another country is used. Second, the scale used to measure all constructs was adapted within the context of Saudi Arabia; the outcomes might be different if the scale were adopted in a different country. Third, the data were collected using a quantitative technique, as this is useful for collecting a larger sample; whereas a qualitative technique can provide deep insights into the topic. Fourth, the sustainable development concept is not generally easily understood by respondents; it would be easier if the research was directed towards professional and higher education levels. Fifth, the

sample of the collected data represents a case study; therefore, the outcomes could be different if a larger amount of data was collected.

In future research, the sustainable development concept needs to be investigated in different contexts. Furthermore, it is advised that future studies should employ a mixed-method data collection technique as it provides a better understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, as this study examined Saudi tourists who were willing to visit the UK, it is advised that future research investigate the phenomenon between different countries [75–79].

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