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# ROLE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY, CULTURAL TENDENCY AND AWARENESS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE IN DEVELOPING DESTINATION LOYALTY

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linkages among cultural identity, cultural tendency, place attachment, and destination loyalty in the heritage tourism context. The research explores how cultural identity affects tourists' cultural tendency and subsequently their destination loyalty. The study further investigates the mediating effect of cultural tendency and moderating influences of place attachment and cultural heritage awareness on these linkages. A quantitative study design was utilized, with information gathered from 212 tourists at different heritage sites. A pre-tested questionnaire based on validated scales in earlier research was utilized to assess crucial constructs. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using ADANCO was used to analyze the data, ensuring rigorous examination of direct, mediating, and moderating effects in the conceptual framework proposed. The findings support the fact that cultural identity has a positive effect on cultural tendency, hence boosting destination loyalty. Cultural tendency mediates the relationship between cultural identity and destination loyalty. Furthermore, place attachment enhances the relationship between cultural identity and cultural tendency, whereas cultural heritage awareness positively moderates the influence of cultural tendency on destination loyalty. This research adds to heritage tourism literature with empirical evidence on psychological and cultural factors that affect destination loyalty. The results yield practical recommendations for tourism policymakers and marketers to create culturally engaging activities that maximize tourist involvement and affinity.

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**KEYWORDS:** Cultural Identity, Cultural Tendency, Destination Loyalty, Heritage Tourism, Place Attachment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural identity is crucial in determining how individuals view, behave, and prefer things when it comes to perceptions of tourism and destination loyalty. Cultural identity is applied to describe the sense of belonging to a certain cultural group, encompassing shared values, traditions, and historical events that characterize individuals' views of the world (Oorgaz-Agüera et al., 2025). It highly impacts how individuals participate with the destination, especially cultural and historical ones (Gautam, 2022). As globalization expands, it has been more crucial to hold on to cultural identity and advance cross-cultural interaction, so it is a hot topic in tourism studies (Ghosh et al., 2025). Cultural tourism, or travel to experience and engage with the heritage, arts, and traditions of an area, has experienced phenomenal growth over the past decades (Kusnayain & Hussein, 2025). The cultural tourism phenomenon has provoked a number of relevant questions regarding the position of cultural identity in shaping tourists' decision, behavior, and long-run loyalty to a destination (Fan et al., 2025). Among the important notions that share an intimate connection with cultural identity is the concept of cultural tendency, meaning that an individual has a tendency to adopt and enjoy cultural traits in an environment (Basal et al., 2025). Cultural tendency can be determined by a variety of factors, such as experience, self-concept, and social influence (Xu et al., 2025).

Besides, scholars contend that cultural propensity serves as a mediator between a chain of behavioral outcomes, such as destination loyalty, and cultural identity (Chen et al., 2025). Destination loyalty, deeply established in tourism research, is conceived to be the inclination of a tourist to revisit a destination and encourage others to visit the destination (Chu & Shi, 2025). Since cultural tendency and cultural identity have a bearing on tourists' interests and behaviors, destination loyalty consciousness is important to cultivate proper cultural tourism strategies (Kang et al., 2025). Place attachment is also a strong variable that can reinforce or alter the influence of cultural identity in cultural tendency (Sasongko et al., 2025). It is the cognitive and affective bond humans form with certain locations, usually as a result of personal experience or cultural attachment (Luong, 2025). The attachment has been found to increase cultural behavior and activity at heritage sites. Also, cultural heritage consciousness helps in generating a higher level of knowledge and awareness of a destination, which helps in deepening destination loyalty (Choi et al., 2025). These concepts have been very much studied, and they still call for an integrative model of how cultural identity, cultural tendency, place attachment, and cultural heritage awareness are connected in the formation of destination loyalty. Several studies have tested the testability of the connection between cultural

identity, cultural tendency, and destination loyalty and underlined the relevance of these concepts in tourist research (Emadlou et al., 2025).

Cultural identity has been viewed broadly as a key motivator of tourist behavior, shaping travel inspiration, tourist destinations, and interaction levels with the hosting culture (Chan et al., 2025). For instance, Ramadania et al. (2025) confirmed that those with higher cultural identity would tend to seek destinations corresponding to their heritage and culture. Evangeline et al. (2025) also reported further that cultural identity also increases tourists' affective connections to destinations, thereby generating higher satisfaction and repeat visitation intentions. This study indicates towards cultural identity's crucial role in shaping travel destinations and tourist experiences (Li et al., 2024). Cultural tendency, i.e., individuals' orientation towards experiencing culture, has also been accorded enormous amounts of research. Researchers have found that cultural tendency is a mediator between cultural identity and other behavioral outcomes among tourists (Çifçi et al., 2024). For example, Elshaer et al. (2024) confirmed that tourists with high cultural tendency engaged in cultural festivals, heritage site visits, and traditional activities. Furthermore, Lee et al. (2024) referred to the fact that cultural tendency strengthens tourists' desire for cultural experience, hence their allegiance to culturally endowed destinations. This suggests the operations of cultural tendency as a catalyst between tourism behavior and cultural identity.

Destination loyalty, both its attitudinal and behavioural forms, is been heavily debated by the literature in tourism (Huang & Zhang, 2024). Previous research has established that cultural value perceived, affective affiliation, and cultural participation are among those factors that yield core contributions to destination loyalty (Kusumah, 2024). Rezapouraghdam et al. (2024) discovered in their study that culture-driven tourists would return to culture-enriched destinations and recommend others to follow suit. Besides, empirical evidence attests that place attachment deepens the culture tendency-culture identity relationship by creating an affective bond with the destination (Ferreira da Silva et al., 2024). Alongside, cultural consciousness has been recognized to increase visitors' engagement with cultural experience for long-term consumption with a place (Baniya et al., 2024). Under the conditions of comprehensive cultural tendency, cultural identity, and destination loyalty, there are various silences found in the extant literature (Sthapit et al., 2024). To start with, while previous studies have examined the direct influence of cultural identity on destination selection, there are few that have taken into account the mediating role of cultural tendency in this context (Obradović, 2024).

Most of the previous studies have investigated the direct effect of cultural identity on tourist behavior

without taking into account the mediating role of cultural tendency as an important bridging mechanism (Ye et al., 2024). This mediating role must be found for the construction of a more sophisticated model of cultural tourism behavior (Kim et al., 2024). Second, while it is a field of widespread study in environmental psychology and tourism theory, there is a great deal to be learned regarding place attachment's role in the cultural tendency-cultural identity nexus (Rodrigues et al., 2024). Although researchers have already proven that place attachment enables cultural engagement, little empirical work has been done on its role in moderating the transition from cultural identity to cultural tendency (Dandotiya & Aggarwal, 2023). Analysis of this moderating effect may further explicate how cognitive and affective attachment to a destination affects cultural behaviors (Fu & Luo, 2023). Third, the cultural heritage consciousness interface and the destination-cultural tendency loyalty relationship is poorly studied (Zhao & Li, 2023). Scholars have highlighted cultural sensitivity increases tourists' satisfaction; however, a very few authors have tried to investigate how cultural sensitivity operates as a moderator influencing the outcome of loyalty (De Cicco et al., 2023). It is worth filling this research gap in ascertaining how knowledge and appreciation of cultural heritage influence long-term tourist engagement. Moreover, the majority of previous researches have been conducted on one culture alone, hence limiting cross-sectional generalizability across different categories of tourist populations (Perry, 2024). More cross-cultural assessment is needed in ascertaining the broader influence of such correlations. The interlinkages between cultural identity, cultural tendency, destination loyalty, place attachment, and cultural heritage awareness can be explained by Social Identity Theory (Li & Wang, 2023) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Al-Azab & Abulebda, 2023). Social Identity Theory explains why individuals develop a sense of self belonging to a specific culture, which influences their attitude and behavior (Mo et al., 2023).

The theory serves as a premise to comprehend the influence of cultural identity on cultural tendency and destination loyalty. Those who identify with a culture will try to sample what is fitting for their identity and thus strengthen their activity in cultural destinations (Al-Azab & Abulebda, 2023). Theory of Planned Behavior (Li & Wang, 2023) explains how attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavior control influence individuals' decision-making. Cultural tendency in the context of cultural tourism also refers to an attitude of a tourist that stimulates their intention and cultural experience behaviors (Mo et al., 2023). Awareness of cultural heritage and place attachment are also extrinsic motivators influencing tourists' cognitions and behaviors (Perry, 2024). These theoretical foundations are revealed to explain intricate relationships among cultural tendency,

destination loyalty, and cultural identity. The main aims of this study are: (1) to investigate the effect of cultural identity on cultural tendency, (2) to investigate the mediating effect of cultural tendency on the relationship between cultural identity and destination loyalty, (3) to investigate the moderating effect of place attachment on the relationship between cultural identity and cultural tendency, and (4) to investigate the moderating effect of cultural heritage awareness on the relationship between cultural tendency and destination loyalty. Through the attainment of these goals, this research seeks to bridge research gaps and provide a deeper insight into cultural tourism behavior.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural identity is fundamental to forming tourists' affective relations with destinations and influencing their attachment and feelings of belonging (Mo et al., 2023). Empirical evidence has shown that cultural identity is rooted in long-lasting affinity for places that reflect the cultural heritage, traditions, and customs of the tourists (Li & Wang, 2023). Tourists are attracted to destinations with their cultural tales, be it through cultural sites, host traditions, or native events. According to De Cicco et al. (2023), cultural familiarity enhances perceived authenticity, which strengthens tourists' emotional attachment and encourages return visits. A sense of belonging may be particularly potent within diaspora communities who seek to reconnect with their heritage by way of return visits to ancestral homelands (Fu & Luo, 2023). Moreover, cultural identity impacts what tourists place value on in terms of symbolic value in a destination, with culturally similar ones having greater place attachment and destination loyalty (Rodrigues et al., 2024). However, tourists with different cultures might develop attachments founded on cultural appreciation instead of cultural identity similarity, suggesting that intrinsic and extrinsic cultural links determine loyalty (Ye et al., 2024). These results emphasize the importance of cultural congruence in destination branding and tourism development policies.

In addition, cultural identity influences not only tourists' attachment to destinations but also their behavioral intentions and advocacy (Sthapit et al., 2024). Tourists with strong cultural ties to a destination are more inclined to participate in positive word-of-mouth promotion, revisit intentions, and heritage preservation activities (Ferreira da Silva et al., 2024). This loyalty is not limited to personal experiences, as culturally affiliated tourists tend to refer the destination to similar peers, forming a chain of repeat travelers with common cultural values. Kusumah (2024) discovered in a study that cultural identity enhances tourists' resistance to small service failures, as they value emotional and cultural satisfaction over transactional experiences. Moreover, cultural identity promotes greater enjoyment of home ways, resulting in better tourism attitudes and

a desire to support the local economy (Lee et al., 2024). Those destinations which have successful integration of cultural identity into tourist behavior and marketing language are capable of generating long-term loyalty, resulting in a sustainable, culturally rich tourism industry (Çifçi et al., 2024). Therefore, it is crucial for destination marketers, policymakers, and stakeholders who are keen on formulating strategies that will attract culturally driven tourists to comprehend the complex relationships between cultural identity and destination loyalty.

### 2.1. *Hypotheses of the Study*

Cultural identity is an integral, deeply rooted aspect of one's identity, which influences perceptions, values, and social behaviors (Evangeline et al., 2025). Various studies indicate that individuals with high cultural identity are more likely to maintain, practice, and advance their cultural values and traditions. For example, Chan et al. (2025) discovered that cultural identity has an important role to play in affecting people's attitudes towards culturally rooted practice, with increased liking for activities and choices concerning their heritage. Similarly, the research conducted by Mohamed et al. (2025) emphasized that the more cultural identities a person possesses, the more they will internalize and perpetuate cultural norms in an effort to transmit tradition from one generation to the next. In the context of tourism, scholars have portrayed that cultural identity is accountable for influencing tourists' choice in determining participation in activities based on cultural significance and visiting heritage sites (Luong, 2025). In addition, social identity theory would also explain that people are innately compelled to act in manners that reinforce their group belongingness, and therefore solidify cultural inclinations in those individuals who have a strong cultural identity (Kang et al., 2025). Taken collectively, prior research confirms that cultural identity is an important determiner of cultural orientations and acts (Gautam, 2022).

This link between cultural identity and cultural tendency is well attested to in psychological and sociological research, which posits that identity acts as a base for patterns of behavior. Empirical evidence demonstrates that those who have strong cultural identities not only participate in cultural practices but also pursue experiences affirming their cultural self-concept (Chen et al., 2025). In tourism, scholars contend that cultural identity drives taste for heritage food, festivities, and other related experiences, given that people naturally seek culturally familiar settings (Basal et al., 2025). Cultural identity also ups the likelihood that an individual will feel belongingness, and that increases people's likelihood of adopting cultural propensities in their decision-making, for example, tourist behavior (Kusnayain & Hussein, 2025). Based on this evidence, there is a basis to hypothesize that cultural identity

greatly contributes to determining cultural tendencies, where behaviors are promoted that are consistent with one's cultural background and beliefs.

H1: Cultural identity significantly influences the cultural tendency.

Cultural tendency, which is a measure of the tendency of an individual to interact with cultural aspects, has been extensively researched in the context of tourism behaviors, especially destination loyalty (Al-Azab & Abulebda, 2023). Research shows that high cultural tendency tourists prefer destinations that are culturally similar to their own, hence building loyalty based on perceived authenticity and cultural compatibility (Perry, 2024). Research confirms that high-culture tendency tourists create strong affective and cognitive relationships with destinations rich in culture, leading to repeat visits and word-of-mouth (Zhao & Li, 2023). For instance, Dandotiya and Aggarwal (2023) confirmed that cultural discovery values tourists create deep relationships with cultural heritage attractions, leading to greater repeat visit rates. Similarly, Kim et al. (2024) also stressed that cultural participation enhances satisfaction, which, in turn, enhances destination loyalty. This, therefore, means that cultural predisposition is a significant determinant of tourists' destination loyalty, particularly destinations with experiential cultural products (Obradović, 2024).

Consumer theories of behavior anticipate that culturally disposed individuals would prefer to respond as brand or destination loyal due to ingrained cultural affiliations (Baniya et al., 2024). Empirical proof exists in evidence that verifies repeated visits and lasting commitment in places are due to cultural motivators (Rezapouraghdam et al., 2024). Tourists who proactively seek cultural experiences develop a place identity, resulting in destination loyalty and advocacy for places that are aligned with their values (Huang & Zhang, 2024). In addition, cultural tendency increases tourists' emotional attachment to destinations, as they become more tolerant of service failures and supportive of recommending the place to other people (Elshaer et al., 2024). Because cultural aspects take a focal point in creating the entire tourist experience, tourist destinations that conform to tourists' cultural orientations will have a better chance of enduring long-term loyalty. Hence, cultural tendency is assumed to be an important driver of destination loyalty.

H2: Cultural tendency significantly influences the destination loyalty.

Some studies have investigated the mediating effect of cultural tendency on the interaction between cultural identity and destination loyalty, highlighting the indirect channels through which identity influences loyalty (Li et al., 2024). Evidence in a study conducted by Ramadania et al. (2025) states that while cultural identity sets the foundation for a subject's engagement in cultural practice, it is cultural tendency that determines the

extent of congruity in behavior against tourism practice. In addition, research already published highlights the phenomenon that travelers who have firm cultural identities might not necessarily exhibit loyalty to the destination except that what their cultural natures drive them to undertake happens to reinforce the identity (Emadlou et al., 2025). Choi et al. (2025) established that despite cultural identity having an influence on travel motivation, the behavior of destination commitment has its roots in cultural immersion as well as frequent engagement in activity involving cultural connection. Additionally, Sasongko et al. (2025) conceptual framework of dimensions of culture reinforces the notion that cultural tendencies provide a behavioral bridge between internal embedded identities and expressions such as destination choice and loyalty.

Empirical evidence indicates that cultural tendency is an intervening process that allows for cultural identity to be converted to destination loyalty (Chu & Shi, 2025). Although a cultural identity forms an intrinsic appreciation for tradition and heritage, the manner in which individuals engage in cultural activities forms their attachment to a destination (Xu et al., 2025). Researchers postulate cultural tendencies allow tourists to integrate culture meanings within touristic contexts, validating their identification with heritage sites of shared origin (Fan et al., 2025). Second, testimony is that those who have high cultural tendencies engage in pro-cultural identity behavior, for example, actively engaging in indigenous traditions or actively campaigning for culture preservation (Ghosh et al., 2025). As destination loyalty is inclined to grow out of long-run interaction, cultural tendency can serve as mediator between cultural identity and destination loyalty by bridging cultural self-concept and tourism behavior.

H3: Cultural tendency significantly mediates the relationship of cultural identity and destination loyalty.

Place attachment is a cognitive and affective relationship between individuals and specific locations, influencing their behavior and perception (Oorgaz-Agüera et al., 2025). Prior studies have established that place attachment enhances the effect of cultural identity on cultural engagement, as individuals with place attachment tend to exhibit cultural patterns that are congruent with the specific place (Kusnayain & Hussein, 2025). Xu et al. (2025), for instance, determined that places rich in heritage and those which are emotionally attached usually reassert their cultural identity through heritage-related activities. Kang et al. (2025) also proposed that place attachment reinstates cultural behavior by imbuing a strong feeling of belongingness, and thus people will become increasingly inclined to perform regular behaviors. Furthermore, studies in tourism have shown that highly place-attached tourists perceive culturally meaningful places as their extension of their own self, and such attachment makes them more likely to maintain and preserve cultural practices in such

spaces (Choi et al., 2025). The said findings suggest that place attachment serves as an incentivizing factor in the process of converting cultural identity into concrete cultural habits.

Empirical research shows that place attachment increases the link between cultural tendency and cultural identity through the creation of a sense of emotional security and continuity in culture (Chan et al., 2025). Empirical research has proved that if people form strong attachments to a culturally symbolic location, they are likely to participate in those activities that are associated with their identity (Li et al., 2024). Place attachment also enhances psychological commitment to cultural customs, so the chances of an individual showing cultural behaviors in known or significant places are higher (Lee et al., 2024). Additionally, studies have shown that people who have strong attachments to a place consider it to be a reflection of their cultural identity and, therefore, tend to show cultural behaviors there (Rezapouraghdam et al., 2024). In contrast, place attachment must act as a mediator of the influence of cultural identity on cultural inclination and boost the position of identity above cultural practices.

H4: Place attachment significantly moderates the relationship of cultural identity and cultural tendency.

Cultural heritage knowledge plays an important role in shaping tourist behavior, that is, in advancing long-term commitment and engagement towards cultural destinations (Sthapit et al., 2024). Research has shown that individuals with high cultural heritage awareness are likely to create long-term emotional and mental connections with places that are rich in heritage, thereby enhancing the level of their loyalty (Kim et al., 2024). Fu and Luo (2023) research set that to establish the fact that the more cultured and historically aware tourists are about a destination, the more loyal they become to the same because they achieve higher significance with the tourist activity. Similarly, Perry (2024) argued that cultural consciousness maximizes the enjoyment of cultural experiences and leads to repeat visits and sustained interest. In addition, heritage tourism studies have demonstrated that high cultural awareness visitors tend to enjoy authentic and experiential cultural experiences that further strengthen their destination attachment (Mo et al., 2023). This new body of research reveals that cultural heritage awareness strengthens the relationship between cultural tendency and destination loyalty by making tourists loyal to culturally attractive destinations.

Empirical studies support the thesis that cultural heritage awareness enhances the impact of cultural tendency on destination loyalty by enhancing tourists' understanding and attachment towards cultural destinations (Al-Azab & Abulebda, 2023). Studies have proven that individuals who possess high cultural knowledge will tend to engage in behaviors that complement their sense of attachment to a destination, such as participating in initiatives

of conservation of heritage and/or cultural tourism promotion (De Cicco et al., 2023). Research also posits that cultural awareness enhances the sense of worth that a destination possesses, and visitors are likely to return and recommend it to others (Dandotiya & Aggarwal, 2023). Additionally, scholars argue that cultural knowledge fosters affective bonds towards destinations, improving tourists' long-term loyalty (Ye et al., 2024). Since cultural tendency influences tourism behavior through the conditioning of cultural experience engagement, cultural heritage awareness is expected to intervene as a moderator and amplify the effect of cultural tendency on destination loyalty.

H5: Awareness of cultural heritage significantly moderates the relationship of cultural tendency and destination loyalty.

## 2.2. Theoretical Foundation of the Research Model

The theoretical framework draws on Social Identity Theory (Baniya et al., 2024) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Kusumah, 2024). Social Identity Theory

assumes that people gain a self-concept based on group membership, which further shapes their behaviors and tastes. Social identity in the tourism context is analogous to cultural identity, and hence people feel inclined to achieve cultural continuity through engaging in tourism. Furthermore, the Theory of Planned Behavior illustrates how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavior influence the intention to behave in a particular manner, solidifying cultural tendency as that which mediates identity and destination loyalty (Elshaer et al., 2024). Additionally, Place Attachment Theory (Evangeline et al., 2025) also describes how people form emotional connections with culturally meaningful destinations that maintain destination loyalty. By combining these theories, the developed model offers a holistic framework explaining how cultural tendency, cultural identity, and destination loyalty interact and how place attachment and cultural heritage awareness perform their moderating roles (see figure 1).

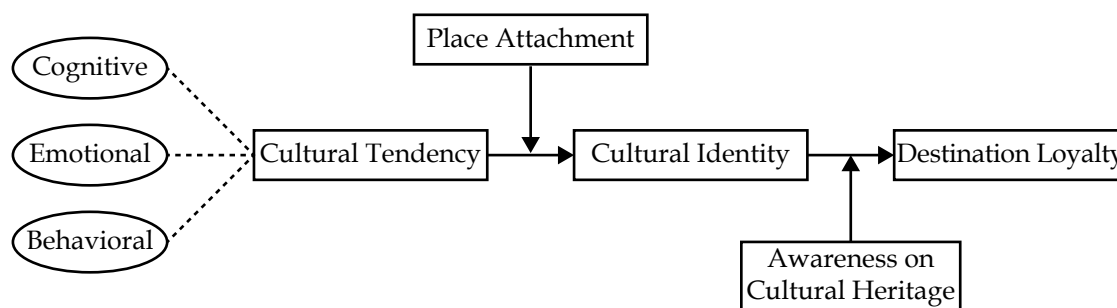


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Research.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research Design

This research used a quantitative design to explore the correlations among cultural identity, cultural tendency, place attachment, and destination loyalty of heritage tourists. This research sought to develop and test a structural model of how cultural identity affects the cultural tendencies of tourists and its effect on destination loyalty, while exploring the mediating and moderating roles of certain psychological constructs. Due to the research goals' nature, a survey method was employed, enabling the gathering of standardized answers from a heterogeneous sample of heritage tourists. The study design enabled systematic investigation of the hypotheses proposed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via ADANCO software, with a strong statistical verification of the conceptual framework.

### 3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The target population for this study comprised

tourists visiting various heritage sites. A total of 212 tourists were surveyed across different heritage destinations to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. The sampling strategy was designed to ensure representation across various demographic backgrounds, travel motivations, and cultural affiliations. A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed because respondents were easily accessible in heritage sites to facilitate effective data gathering. Respondents were sought at specific visitor points, and any who were willing to participate were given a guided questionnaire. To improve the reliability of answers, participants were invited to respond based on personal experience at the heritage site they were visiting. The process of data collection took a number of weeks, guaranteeing that the answers represented a wide range of tourist experiences in various heritage locations.

### 3.3. Measurement Instruments

Validated scales from existing research studies were used in this study to quantify major constructs. Cultural

identity was measured through a multi-dimensional scale (twelve items) that captured identification with cultural heritage in terms of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects (Fu & Luo, 2023). Cultural tendency was assessed using four items that capture tourists' willingness to participate in and enjoy cultural experiences (Xu et al., 2022). Destination loyalty was investigated using four items measures of revisit intention and intention to recommend the heritage site to others (Tian et al., 2020). Place attachment was measured through nine items scale as an emotional connection tourists have with heritage sites (Lewicka, 2011). Awareness of cultural heritage was used as a moderating variable, capturing tourists' recognition and appreciation of cultural heritage; and it was measure on an eight items scale (Shimray & Ramaiah, 2019). All questions were measured using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to allow for comparable and interpretable answers. The scales used were piloted and pretested prior to the final survey to test for clarity and contextual applicability in the heritage tourism environment.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The data were processed utilizing ADANCO, a PLS-SEM specific software for analyzing the data, enabling us to test complex relationships between the latent constructs. The processing was done in several steps. Data screening was first done to check for missing values and outliers. Lastly, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out

in order to estimate measurement constructs' reliability and validity of measurement constructs such as internal consistency (composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha) and convergent validity (average variance extracted). Discriminant validity was analyzed by the use of Fornell-Larcker criterion as well as Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The structural model was then used in order to check the posited relationships based on path coefficients, effect size, and predictive relevance ( $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  statistics). Mediation and moderation tests were conducted to investigate indirect and moderating effects in the model. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to evaluate path coefficients significance. The analytical method guaranteed strict testing of the theoretical framework postulated, lending empirical implications on the cultural identity dynamics, tourist participation, and heritage destination loyalty.

### 4. RESULTS

Table 1 reports the reliability and validity indices for all the constructs applied in this study. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are the primary indicators scrutinized to establish internal consistency and convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha for all the constructs is above the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, which establishes sufficient reliability. The highest is found for Place Attachment (0.890) and Destination Loyalty (0.865), indicating strong internal consistency in the items that are used to measure these constructs.

*Table 1: Variables Reliability and Validity.*

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Awareness of cultural heritage	0.704	0.835	0.628
Cultural tendency	0.791	0.842	0.574
Destination loyalty	0.865	0.893	0.548
Place attachment	0.890	0.916	0.645
Cultural identity	0.764	0.864	0.680
Cognitive	0.720	0.714	0.523
Emotional	0.780	0.774	0.600
Behavioral	0.739	0.733	0.588

On the other hand, Awareness of Cultural Heritage (0.704) and Cognitive (0.720) have relatively lower, but still adequate, reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) for all the constructs exceeds the threshold 0.70, further ensuring the reliability of the scales. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores for the majority of the constructs are above the suggested value of 0.50, establishing convergent validity. Of particular interest are Cultural Identity (0.680) and Place Attachment (0.645) having high AVE values, which suggests that a large percentage of variance in the construct indicators is explained. In general, the results establish that the measurement model is reliable and valid (see figure 2).

Table 2 presents the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results, assessing factor loadings strength for every indicator. All factor loadings, standardized,

are above 0.60, validating item quality. For Cultural Identity, cognitive dimension loadings are strong, from 0.666 to 0.753, accompanied by corresponding high t-statistics, which guarantee statistical significance. The emotional dimension also shows robust loadings, with CI6 (0.733,  $t=42.592$ ) and CI7 (0.724,  $t=27.210$ ) being strongest indicators. The behavior aspect is similar, with loadings being always over 0.60. The Awareness of Cultural Heritage construct has slightly less acceptable loadings, ACH1 (0.618) and ACH4 (0.633), which are on the threshold of acceptability but have significant t-values in their favor for them to be retained. The Cultural Tendency indicators have strong loadings, specifically CT2 (0.755,  $t=14.817$ ) and CT4 (0.749,  $t=18.063$ ), which indicate robust representation of the construct. Equally, Destination Loyalty and

Place Attachment demonstrate stable and consistent factor loadings across their respective indicators, supporting their construct validity. The results affirm

that the measurement model adequately measures the theoretical constructs with statistically significant factor loadings.

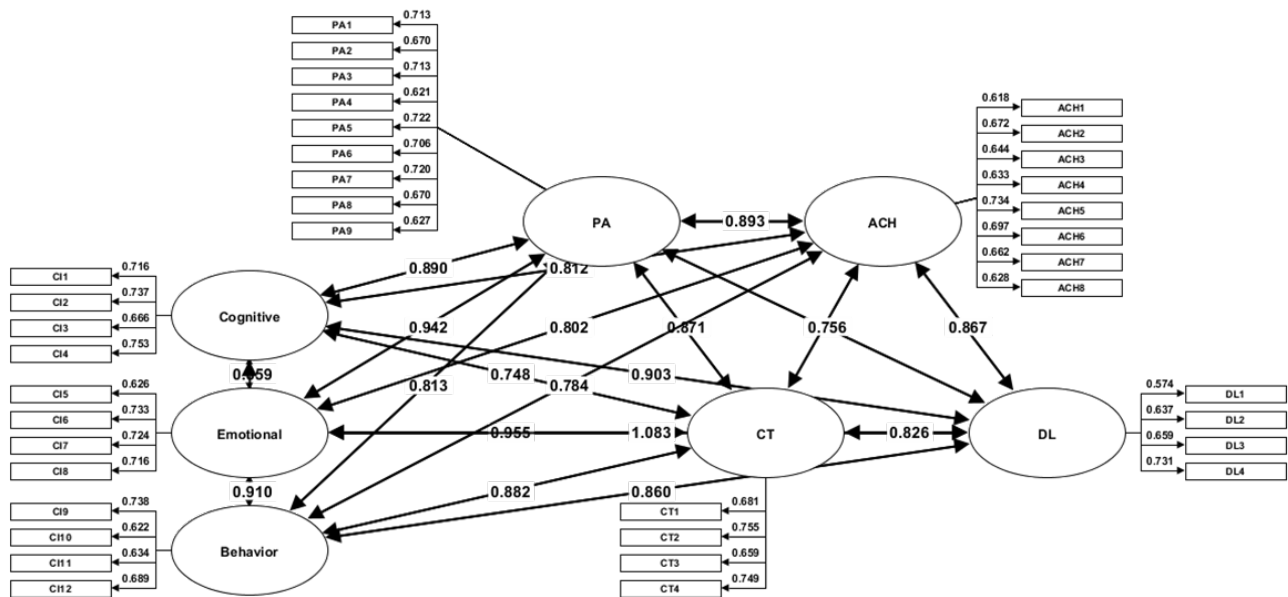


Figure 2: Estimated Model.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Variable	Indicator	Loadings	T Statistics
<b>Cognitive</b>			
Cultural identity	CI1	0.716	28.185
	CI2	0.737	32.551
	CI3	0.666	31.504
	CI4	0.753	25.881
<b>Emotional</b>			
Cultural identity	CI5	0.626	33.898
	CI6	0.733	42.592
	CI7	0.724	27.210
	CI8	0.716	17.262
<b>Behavioral</b>			
Cultural identity	CI9	0.738	34.857
	CI10	0.622	31.508
	CI11	0.634	39.574
	CI12	0.689	23.245
Awareness of cultural heritage	ACH1	0.618	10.386
	ACH2	0.672	10.506
	ACH3	0.644	15.392
	ACH4	0.633	7.736
	ACH5	0.734	18.867
	ACH6	0.697	11.732
	ACH7	0.622	15.683
	ACH8	0.628	11.064
Cultural tendency	CT1	0.681	7.548
	CT2	0.755	14.817
	CT3	0.659	14.039
	CT4	0.749	18.063
Destination loyalty	DL1	0.574	21.456
	DL2	0.637	18.145
	DL3	0.659	22.214
	DL4	0.731	24.328
Place attachment	PA1	0.713	20.296
	PA2	0.670	15.600
	PA3	0.713	9.794
	PA4	0.621	27.960
	PA5	0.722	32.290
	PA6	0.706	31.252
	PA7	0.720	25.674
	PA8	0.670	9.953
	PA9	0.627	33.627



Table 3 tests discriminant validity of constructs through Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Diagonal elements of the Fornell-Larcker matrix (AVE square root values) are greater than their correlation with other constructs, establishing discriminant validity. Awareness of Cultural Heritage (0.745) and Cultural Identity (0.725) possess strong discriminant characteristics. The inter-construct correlations are high to moderate, with the highest being between Cultural Identity and Place Attachment (0.661), and between Cultural Tendency

and Place Attachment (0.608). The HTMT values also validate discriminant validity since all the values are below the 0.85 level. The highest HTMT value is for the correlation between Cultural Identity and Cultural Tendency (0.549), indicating a strong but different association. The lowest HTMT scores are observed for Destination Loyalty and Emotional (0.215), reflecting weaker relationships. These findings confirm that each construct retains uniqueness while reflecting significant relationships with corresponding constructs.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity.**

Fornell-Larcker Criterion								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Awareness of cultural heritage	0.745							
Cultural tendency	0.381	0.716						
Destination loyalty	0.521	0.539	0.552					
Place attachment	0.453	0.608	0.635	0.627				
Cultural identity	0.490	0.543	0.615	0.661	0.725			
Cognitive	0.447	0.620	0.238	0.770	0.551	0.194		
Emotional	0.393	0.569	0.155	0.730	0.513	0.175	0.578	
Behavioral	0.388	0.293	0.306	0.333	0.346	0.224	0.295	0.219
Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)								
Awareness of Cultural Heritage								
Cultural tendency	0.672							
Destination loyalty	0.344	0.646						
Place attachment	0.471	0.487	0.499					
Cultural identity	0.409	0.549	0.573	0.566				
Cognitive	0.442	0.490	0.555	0.597	0.655			
Emotional	0.404	0.560	0.215	0.695	0.497	0.175		
Behavioral	0.355	0.514	0.140	0.659	0.464	0.158	0.522	

Table 4 shows the explanatory power and predictive validity of the model using  $R^2$ , Adjusted  $R^2$ , and  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$ . Cultural Tendency has a strong  $R^2$  value of 0.819, indicating that a large percentage of its variance is accounted for by the predictor variables. Likewise, Destination Loyalty has a strong  $R^2$  value of 0.827, affirming the model's strength in explaining this dependent variable. Adjusted  $R^2$  values are almost the

same, supporting the robustness of the model. The predictive relevance ( $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$ ) in Cultural Tendency (0.068) is a positive predictive power.  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  is not given for Destination Loyalty, but the high value of  $R^2$  presupposes a good explanatory power. RMSE (0.056) and MAE (0.067) values for Cultural Tendency also reflect an acceptable margin of prediction error, confirming the goodness of fit of the model.

**Table 4: R-square Statistics Model Goodness of Fit Statistics.**

Construct	Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )	Adjusted $R^2$	$Q^2_{\text{predict}}$	RMSE	MAE
Cultural tendency	0.819	0.821	0.068	0.056	0.067
Destination loyalty	0.827	0.831			

Table 5 lists the structural model's path coefficients, standard error, t-statistics, and p-values. All the assumed relationships are statistically significant, as p-values are less than 0.001. Cultural Identity has a direct effect on Cultural Tendency ( $\beta=0.130$ ,  $t=2.321$ ), ascertaining its influence in forming cultural orientation. The linkage between Cultural Tendency and Destination Loyalty is also very robust ( $\beta=0.301$ ,  $t=4.355$ ), as the result shows that those with strong cultural orientation tend to have more destination loyalty (see figure 3).

Mediation analysis shows that Cultural Tendency strongly mediates between Cultural Identity and

Destination Loyalty ( $\beta=0.225$ ,  $t=4.210$ ), establishing it as a middleman in generating loyalty. Additionally, Place Attachment also strongly moderates between Cultural Identity and Cultural Tendency ( $\beta=0.230$ ,  $t=4.302$ ), which shows how attachment to places matters. In the same way, Awareness of Cultural Heritage moderates between Cultural Tendency and Destination Loyalty ( $\beta=0.307$ ,  $t=4.449$ ), upholding the conclusion that awareness of heritage strengthens cultural inclination's role in loyalty. These results authenticate all proposed associations and emphasize interrelatedness between cultural awareness, identity, and destination loyalty (see table 5).

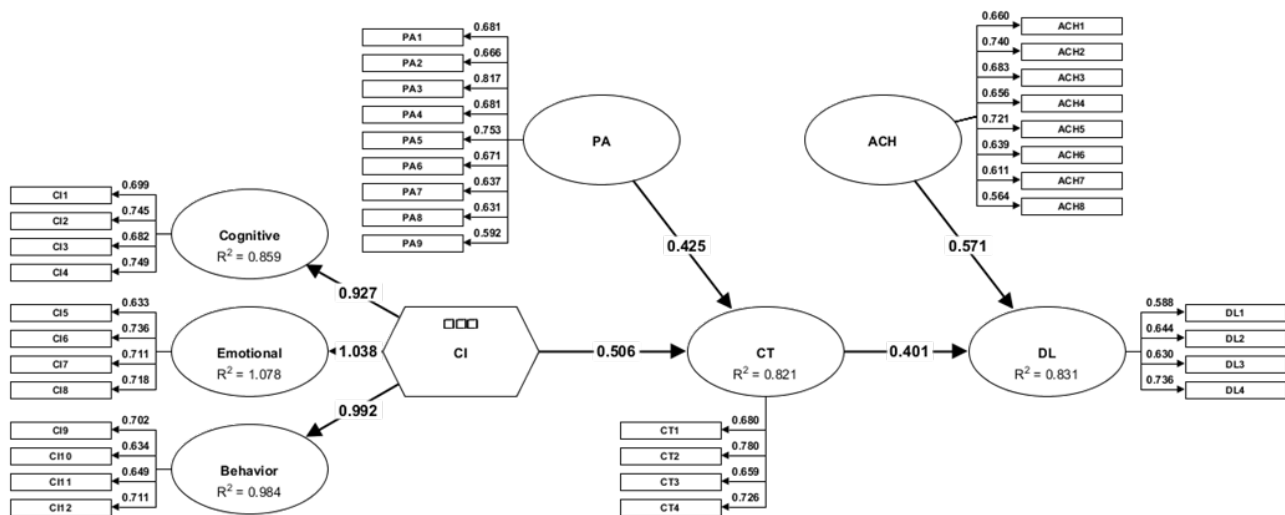


Figure 3: Structural Model for Path Analysis.

Table 5: Path Analysis.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Cultural identity significantly influences the cultural tendency.	0.130	0.132	0.046	2.321	<0.000
Cultural tendency significantly influences the destination loyalty.	0.301	0.302	0.057	4.355	<0.000
Cultural tendency significantly mediates the relationship of cultural identity and destination loyalty.	0.225	0.227	0.044	4.210	<0.000
Place attachment significantly moderates the relationship of cultural identity and cultural tendency.	0.230	0.232	0.045	4.302	<0.000
Awareness of cultural heritage significantly moderates the relationship of cultural tendency and destination loyalty.	0.307	0.309	0.058	4.449	<0.000

## 5. DISCUSSION

It is essential to understand the complex interaction between cultural identity, cultural tendency, and destination loyalty in the process of developing cultural tourism knowledge. Tourism is not just an economic process but a cultural process that interweaves people's sense of identity with their travel practices and long-term loyalty to destinations. This research offers a holistic analysis of how cultural identity influences tourists' tendencies toward cultural experiences and eventually their destination loyalty. Through incorporating the moderating and mediating elements of place attachment and cultural heritage awareness, the study contributes an in-depth explanation of cultural experience conversion to durable destination loyalty. The conclusions uphold the predicted hypotheses, underlining theoretical groundwork along with supplying applicative ideas to destination marketers, policymakers, and cultural tourism strategists. The support of all hypotheses underscores the important part that cultural identity plays in triggering cultural involvement, the role that cultural tendency works as the primary explanatory mechanism, and the manner in which contextual variables moderate these associations. This discussion places the findings in the context of previous literature, emphasizing the implications for practice and theory as well as illuminating new directions for future investigation.

The validity of the first hypothesis, which posits the direct impact of cultural identity on cultural tendency, is consistent with existing research that emphasizes the function of identity in determining cultural participation. Cultural identity, as a strong psychological construct, drives people to seek experiences that reflect their values, traditions, and historical loyalties. The research in this paper finds that people with high cultural identity are much more likely to have a preference for cultural aspects, be it visiting cultural heritage sites, attending traditional celebrations, or partaking in local cultural activities. This conclusion aligns with Emadlou et al. (2025) past study, which confirmed that highly culturally belonging tourists prefer to engage in culturally rich settings. The strong relationship indicated in the current study validates the argument that cultural identity is a motivating force, where people are motivated to seek culturally meaningful interactions. The results further reveal that cultural identity not only influences individual behavior but also instills a common attitude of cultural appreciation and preservation, which is greatly relevant to sustainable cultural tourism. The inference from this outcome is that places visited by tourists to attract culturally inclined tourists must put priority on dimensions that resonate with visitors' cultural orientation in terms of cultivating stronger emotional and psychological ties in order to enhance engagement.

The second hypothesis, which establishes a strong

relationship between cultural tendency and destination loyalty, also supports the argument that the tendency of a person towards experiencing culture is instrumental in deciding his or her long-term loyalty to a destination. The results suggest that people looking for cultural experiences are highly likely to be destination loyal, i.e., revisit and recommend the destinations. This is supported by past research conducted by Luong (2025), in which cultural participation and engagement had a positive effect on tourists' feeling of emotional attachment and satisfaction, fostering greater loyalty. The results indicate that cultural tendency is a predictor of behavior that fills the gap between early cultural engagement and long-term tourist loyalty. Furthermore, the high cultural tendency-destination loyalty correlation suggests that tourists who are culturally inclined do not visit destinations for isolated events but develop lasting emotional and cognitive connections that increase their probability of returning. This has a direct implication on tourism marketing in that destinations must emphasize developing culturally rich experiences in order to appeal to tourists with high cultural tendency. Moreover, the study shows that fostering cultural propensity among visitors can assist in sustaining heritage destinations through continuous visitor interest and word-of-mouth promotion.

Verification of the third hypothesis that cultural tendency mediates partially the impact of cultural identity on destination loyalty brings new perspectives on how identity-based motivations are converted into real tourism behavior. Evidence suggests that cultural identity has no direct impact on destination loyalty; rather, its impact is mediated significantly by cultural tendency. This is in agreement with earlier studies, like those of Chu and Shi (2025), that highlighted the fact that identity-based motivations need an intermediary process to transform cultural similarity into behavioral participation. The findings indicate that cultural identity gives the initial motivation to pursue cultural experiences, but it is the inherent tendency to participate in cultural aspects that enhances the probability of fostering loyalty towards a destination. This supports the contention that identity by itself is unable to forecast loyalty; however, it has to be used in tandem with an active behavioral factor. The mediating function of cultural tendency underlines the necessity for promoting cultural contacts at tourist destinations so that visitors can meaningfully interact with heritage and traditions. This result also points to the imperative that policymakers and destination marketers have to craft approaches that maximize tourists' cultural tendency, hence strengthening their long-term loyalty to heritage tourism.

The fourth hypothesis, that place attachment serves as a strong moderator of cultural tendency impact of cultural identity, further develops the theory of the influence of affective attachment to destinations on

culture. The findings indicate that high place attachment has a stronger relationship between cultural identity and cultural tendency, suggesting that emotional bonds towards a place intensify the likelihood of cultural involvement. This is in agreement with earlier studies by Basal et al. (2025), who posited that place attachment increases cultural tendency by promoting individuals' psychological and emotional connection to cultural sites. The findings indicate that tourists with a sense of place belongingness are likely to interact more actively with the culture of the destination, hence increasing the effectiveness of cultural tendency in the prediction of destination loyalty. This has some applied implications for destination management in the sense that it stresses the importance of building place attachment through place stories, place immersion, and neighborhood involvement programs. By enhancing the emotional attachment of visitors to a place, tourist destinations can increase the effect of cultural identity on cultural tendency, which in turn will lead to higher destination loyalty.

Confirmation of the fifth hypothesis that cultural heritage awareness highly moderates cultural tendency to destination loyalty affirms cultural knowledge to further explain tourist behavior. Findings suggest that those who possess high levels of cultural awareness within a destination's heritage demonstrate stronger correlation between cultural tendency and destination loyalty. This resonates with earlier work by Ghosh et al. (2025), which put the tone that cultural awareness heightens tourists' value for cultural sites, thus providing them with greater satisfaction and revisit inclination. The research indicates that well-informed tourists regarding the cultural value of a destination tend to form strong affinity for the same. The incentive therefore should be targeted to tourism places where they should be ready to invest towards educational programs, heritage interpretation systems, and sensitization campaigns aimed at imparting the culture appreciation and inner meaning of heritage assets. By enhancing higher cultural awareness, destinations are able to anchor the influence of cultural tendency on loyalty and secure long-term visitor contact and advocacy.

The results of this research collectively verify a greater comprehension of the function of cultural tendency, cultural identity, and a framework of moderating variables in the establishment of destination loyalty. The confirmation of all the hypotheses enhances the theoretical structure and provides strong empirical proof upholding the function of cultural participation in tourist actions. This study not only confirms prior evidence but further extends by bringing into focus the mediating and moderating processes that organize cultural tourism experience. The results underscore the significance of developing tourists' cultural inclination, with place attachment and cultural sensitivity as the major drivers of sustainable destination loyalty. Practically, these conclusions

provide useful input for tourism industry stakeholders that extending tourists' cultural experiences, increasing their emotional engagement with destinations, and raising awareness of heritage may play a powerful role in fostering destination sustainability. In the future, more studies should investigate further psychological and environmental factors that are likely to extend these relationships toward a deeper, more nuanced cultural tourism understanding.

### **5.1. Implications of the Study**

This study makes important theoretical contributions by building on the knowledge of the relationships between cultural identity, cultural tendency, and destination loyalty in the context of heritage tourism. By combining several psychological and behavioral constructs such as place attachment, cultural heritage awareness, and emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions. This research broadens the theoretical framework through which cultural tourism behaviors are viewed. The results validate the theoretical assumption that cultural identity is a key factor in determining tourists' cultural tendencies, which further affect their loyalty to heritage destinations. In addition, the mediating effect of cultural tendency between cultural identity and destination loyalty indicates the significance of intermediary psychological processes in heritage tourism experiences. The moderating role of place attachment and cultural heritage awareness adds another layer of richness to the theoretical discussion, underlining the contingency of cultural tourism behaviors. The research enhances existing theories of tourism by combining psychological and sociocultural approaches and providing a rich multidimensional model that reflects the richness of heritage tourism decision-making. These findings complement and build on existing consumer behavior, tourism research, and cultural psychology research, showing the necessity of accounting for both internal and external influences in determining tourists' experience and loyalty to heritage sites.

The findings of this research have important practical implications for tourism policymakers, destination managers, and cultural heritage stakeholders seeking to enhance visitor participation and loyalty. Having knowledge that cultural identity is a strong determinant of tourists' cultural inclinations means that tourism promotion campaigns and marketing strategies must be designed to appeal to the cultural heritage and identity-driven motivations of visitors. Destination managers can benefit from this understanding by designing personalized experiences that form stronger emotional and cognitive bonds with heritage destinations. The research also outlines the role of place attachment and cultural heritage consciousness in reinforcing the bond between cultural identity and tourism activity. This implies that the enrichment of tourist experiences

through interactive displays, narratives, and immersive cultural experiences can strengthen place attachment, thereby promoting higher destination loyalty. Also, the moderation impacts reveal that cultural heritage awareness campaigns can be deployed strategically in order to enhance tourist cultural interests promotion and loyalty for cultural heritage destinations. This means that the government and tourist boards should invest in education programs, online activations, and preservation campaigns as a way of endeavoring to build a long-term connection between travelers and cultural heritage sites.

### **5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Aside from its strengths, the study has limitations that provide potential avenues for future research. One is that the study's dependence on self-reported data poses the risk of biases in terms of social desirability or lack of recall precision, which undermines the quality of the response. Future research may employ a mixed-methodology, such as observational or qualitative interview approaches, to triangulate the findings and increase the confidence of the research results. Second, the study was conducted in one particular geographical and cultural setting, and this may constrain the external validity of the findings to other groups. Replication of this research in diverse cultural contexts and tourism environments may provide comparative data and determine the universality of the hypothesized relationships. Additionally, even as this research employed cross-sectional data, cultural identity and tourist behavior are dynamic constructs that evolve over time. Future research could make use of longitudinal study designs to examine the development of cultural identity, place attachment, and destination loyalty over long-term duration and across a range of conditions of tourism.

In addition, the research focused mainly on heritage tourism, providing an avenue for further exploration of similar models in other types of tourism, including adventure tourism, eco-tourism, or urban tourism. An examination of whether cultural identity has similar impacts across various tourism sectors may provide insight into the potential generalizability of the model. In addition, no consideration was made for possible moderating effects of demographic factors such as age, education level, or previous trip experience, which might yield better insights into behavior within segments. Future studies may want to integrate these variables for more effective segmentation-based marketing and destination management policies. Furthermore, as technology increasingly transforms the tourism experience, subsequent research could investigate how online participation, virtual reality, and social media usage shape cultural identity, place attachment, and destination loyalty, presenting a modern reflection on heritage tourism involvement.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the complex interrelations between cultural identity, cultural tendency, place attachment, and destination loyalty within heritage tourism. With the inclusion of mediating and moderating effects, the study offers a holistic approach that explains the psychological and behavioral processes underlying tourists' involvement with cultural heritage places. The results confirm the relevance of cultural identity as a force that influences tourists' cultural tendencies, subsequently impacting their loyalty to destinations. Further, the moderating effect of place attachment and cultural heritage awareness emphasizes the value of participatory and identity-sustaining experiences in the development of stronger bonds between tourists and heritage destinations. These findings add to the literature in tourism research, cultural psychology, and consumer behavior in terms of theoretical contribution and real-

world application to tourism stakeholders. With the pace of change accelerating in the world of tourism, it is vital to understand how cultural identity and attachment affect destination loyalty in ways that can inform the continued maintenance and development of heritage tourism. This study emphasizes strategic destination management practices that emphasize cultural relevance, affective connections, and tailored experience. The contributions reach beyond scholarly circles to policy makers, advertisers, and conservators of the cultural heritage concerned with developing loyal long-term repeat visitors and empathy for cultural legacy. Through promoting an environment that promotes tourists' cultural attachment and identity to heritage sites, stakeholders are able to ensure sustainable and development of cultural tourism, thereby contributing to the protection and commemoration of cultural heritage for generations to come.

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