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INFLUENCE OF RICH CULTURAL TOURISM ON BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: ROLE OF IDENTIFICATION AND SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated how rich cultural tourism experiences influence tourists' behavioral intentions and the sustainable use of cultural heritage in Saudi Arabia. It specifically examines the mediating role of destination identification in the relationship between rich cultural tourism experiences and tourists' behavioral intentions as well as their sustainable use of cultural heritage. In addition, the study explores the moderating role of tourist satisfaction on the relationship between destination identification and both behavioral intentions and sustainable use of cultural heritage. A quantitative survey approach was adopted, collecting data from 375 international tourists through self-administered questionnaires at major cultural heritage sites in Saudi Arabia during the peak season from November 2024 to January 2025. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS Macros to test the hypothesized mediation and moderation effects. The results show that rich cultural tourism experiences have a significant and positive impact on destination identification ($p < 0.001$). Destination identification mediates the relationship between rich cultural tourism experiences and tourists' behavioral intentions ($p < 0.05$), as well as between rich cultural tourism experiences and sustainable use of cultural heritage ($p < 0.001$). Tourist satisfaction significantly moderates both the destination identification–behavioral intention linkage ($p = 0.031$) and the destination identification–sustainable cultural heritage use linkage ($p = 0.047$). The findings suggest that policymakers should prioritize fostering destination identification through high-quality, authentic cultural experiences, as this psychological connection is a key driver of tourist loyalty and commitment to heritage preservation. Tourist satisfaction plays an essential role in enhancing service quality and enabling identified tourists to fully express pro-social and pro-loyalty behaviors. The study contributes theoretically by validating a comprehensive moderated-mediation model that advances understanding of how identity and affective evaluations jointly shape tourist behavior in cultural heritage contexts. Key limitations include the use of a cross-sectional survey design, which constrains causal inferences, and reliance on self-reported data that may introduce bias. Additionally, the findings reflect the cultural and demographic characteristics of tourists in Saudi Arabia and may not be fully generalizable without further comparative research across diverse international destinations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism provides economic prosperity, generates income, and creates employment opportunities for countries around the world (Qin & Zhang, 2025). It is estimated that by 2030 there will be approximately 1.8 billion tourists worldwide, making it one of the most important elements in many countries' social and economic activities (Aloufi, 2025). Also, a growing recognition that the travel industry can significantly benefit a country, has created a sense of urgency to develop the attractiveness of travel destinations regardless of their current popularity. Global tourism impacts on economic, cultural, and social contexts of the economy and culture of the countries they serve, and the demographic characteristics of visitors to a destination will affect a destination's ability to attract visitors (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024). The increase in international tourism to Saudi Arabia, due to the growth of Saudi citizens abroad, has also led to the emergence of a new travel market segment. Travel has grown due to diversification of the Saudi economy, encouraging Saudi citizens to travel outside their country (Alyoubi, 2024). Aloufi (2025) by these individuals are indicative of a transition from a more general focus on travel to one which is closer to a reciprocal balance between religion and culture with travel. At the same time, the internet is impacting the way tourists think about, and ultimately decide on, where they will travel (Rehman et al., 2023). Therefore, it is critical to understand the unique needs and desires of Saudi tourists if tourism operators are to successfully attract these visitors; many of their needs and desires may be different than those of other groups of international visitors (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024).

The worldwide expansion in tourism development, cultural heritage is now a central focus of tourism development (Qin & Zhang, 2025). This applies to all regions around the world, especially Emerging Markets such as Saudi Arabia. Vision 2030 is the name of the Kingdom's strategic plan for diversifying the economy and establishing the kingdom as a global tourism hub (Pai et al., 2025). Understanding how tourists will behave and what drives them to do so is critical in this new economic environment. It is important to understand a tourist's willingness and ability to behave responsibly toward cultural heritage and environmental resources at heritage sites so that they are appropriately preserved and protected for future generations (Ye et al., 2024). Examples of responsible behavior would be to respect the local customs of heritage sites, minimize waste generated while visiting, adhere to restrictions imposed by heritage sites on visitors, and economically support small, local businesses that remain committed to the conservation of heritage sites (Elshaer et al., 2024). Tourists' behavioral intentions also refers to the value proposition of a destination, giving this value to a tourist through repeat visitation, positive word-of-mouth and willingness to pay more for services (Lim et al., 2024). These behavioral intentions represent a direct and measurable outcome of providing an exceptional tourist experience and are essential for sustaining the tourism destination long-term (de Oliveira et al., 2024; Mehra, 2023; Son et al., 2023).

Qin & Zhang (2025) suggested that cultural tourist experiences are not simply visiting a location for cultural reasons, but representing the most intimate exploration of a culture through active engagement on multiple levels and in a multi-dimensional way through a variety of experiential means, such as; by combining learning, enjoyment, and escapism, with a host of rich, one-of-a-kind and unique, 'authentic' interactions with the culture of the area (Aloufi, 2025). When examining ancient archaeological sites like Hegra and historic areas like Al-Balad in Jeddah, the cultural tourism experience becomes a very rich and immersive experience for a tourist as the tourist develops a strong connection between himself/herself and the cultural past, traditions and people of the destination (Rehman et al., 2023); therefore creating an opportunity for an intense personal development or memorable learning experience that is highly likely to lead to deep psychological attachment to the destination. The beginning of this profound experience leads to a better understanding of the destination for tourists and will help create stronger psychological connections with it (Ryan & Zhang, 2024).

Destination identification is the psychological state where a tourist identifies or belongs to the destination and connects to the destination as part of his/her self-concept or belief about him/herself (Amani, 2025). As tourists become more engaged in the experience of cultural tourism through rich interactions with the history and culture of a destination, they begin to assimilate the culture and beliefs into themselves, thus connecting the destination to their own personal identity (Son et al., 2023). This creates a strong cognitive connection between the self and the destination, which will give rise to a more permanent connection to that destination, thus leading to increased advocacy and positive behaviours in the future (Sustacha et al., 2023). While tourist satisfaction is a measure of post-consumption feelings regarding the extent to which

the travel experience met or exceeded their expectations, the psychological attachment a person feels for a destination is a more long-term, deep connection formed over time. Satisfaction measures how satisfied someone is with their trip after they return from it, with regards to whether their experience met or exceeded his expectations (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024).

The research being examined is of particular significance in Saudi Arabia, where tourism literature can benefit from the addition of a moderated mediation approach to explore how experience, identification, satisfaction and sustainable behaviour interact. The results will provide an insight into the precise way(s) in which subjective experiences lead to responsible long-term behaviours. Moreover, the study provides a comprehensive roadmap that will allow destination marketers to make informed decisions regarding where to invest their resources by investing strategically in products and services that improve the authenticity and immersive nature of cultural offerings (Amani, 2025; Qin & Zhang, 2025). Additionally, the study will provide destination marketers with valuable insights into tourist satisfaction to improve visitor management and ensure that Saudi Arabia's rapidly growing tourism sector continues to respect and preserve the kingdom's rich and ancient heritage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Rich Cultural Tourism Experience and Destination Identification

It has been shown through many studies that having an experience rich culture tourism, which has a depth of Knowledge and an immersive nature, where you learn from and interact with both tangible and intangible heritage, contributes to tourists having positive experiences after they have visited a destination (Aloufi, 2025; Kahraman & Cifci, 2023; Ryan & Zhang, 2024). The unique characteristics associated with cultural experiences whether by having a historical relationship with the place, through participating, or having spiritual connections are all contributors to a strong emotional response; this is also referred to as cognitive response. The positive emotional and cognitive responses generated by these types of experiences are of value beyond just satisfaction (Qin & Zhang, 2025). Studies that focus on the experience within a cultural heritage site (e.g. major factors such as the authenticity of a heritage site and the ability to learn about local culture) show that having high quality cultural experiences will shape how a tourist

ultimately views and evaluates that location (Sustacha et al., 2023; Wei et al., 2023). The full interaction of a tourist and a culturally identifiable museum or heritage site will create the first link in the formation of a tourist's identity to the attending city or area thus ensuring that they will wish to return for the next experience (Son et al., 2023).

Destination identification, defined by social identity theory, indicates that a tourist integrates where he/she vacations into his/her self or personal identity (e.g., he/she feels connected to that location and the values or characteristics of that location after a period of time) (Kusumah, 2024). A tourist is no longer just a visitor but rather considers themselves part of the destination's community psychologically (Elshaer et al., 2024). By having a positive experience at the destination, this process has been shown to be more likely to occur (Alyoubi, 2024; Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024). Cultural tourism provides the opportunity for visitors to gain knowledge of the region, see the beauty of the area, and emotionally connect with the area's history, therefore creating a stronger sense of belonging or identifying with that destination (Gorji et al., 2023; Kahraman & Cifci, 2023).

Engaging with this complete meshwork of connected pieces as a tourist (not only through understanding the history of these places but through your involvement in the continuing evolution of the culture and their relationship with the environment) leads to active participation, thus elevating the experience to one beyond passive participation (Duong et al., 2022). Alvarez et al. (2022) show that cultural immersion benefits from the rich traditions found in narrative forms and that the RCTE provides a deep and a cohesive connection to that narrative. Additionally, by having an additional dimension to the cultural experience in the form of spiritual experiences (Bhatti and Alshiha, 2024), creates an emotional connection that allows the tourist to bridge the gap between their intellectual appreciation of the culture and their emotional connection to it. Through experiencing a destination in this way allows the tourist to internalize the destination's values and characteristics, which supports a stronger sense of belonging to the destination and that the tourist can connect with the destination on a more personal level (Sustacha et al., 2023). A connection to a destination creates a profound, multi-dimensional engagement by the tourist which supports a connection to the place, creating an opportunity for a direct, positive impact on the destination identification the key psychological driver for establishing long-term loyalty and attachment (Amani, 2025; Kusumah,

2024). Thus;

H1: Rich cultural tourism experience has direct impact on destination identification.

2.2. Destination Identification as Mediating

The transition from experiencing a positive event to actually participating in a behaviour in the future, e.g. by suggesting that someone visit a location or returning there is a gradual and complex journey involving psychological processes (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024). This area has been well researched within tourism research and experts have generally agreed that while positive, immersive experiences provide a basis for future consumer loyalty and behaviours, they do not directly lead to consumer loyalty; a mediator psychological mechanism between the two must exist (Sustacha et al., 2023). Kahraman and Cifci (2023), destination identification plays a crucial role in creating such a mediating influence between RCTE and future consumer loyalty. DI represents the development of a deep emotional, cognitive and affective bond with a destination, whereby a consumer incorporates the identity of the destination into their self-concept (Gorji et al., 2023). Due to the experience of engaging with RCTE (especially through the historical, spiritual and folk dimensions of the destination), the destination becomes an extension of the individual's self and therefore provides the emotional "foundation" for generating future consumer loyalty (Bhatti & Alshiha, 2024).

Empirical studies have verified the intervention through which constructs of destination identification affect outcomes associated with memorable experience, including future behavioural intentions (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Studies demonstrating that the unique attributes of the destination (cultural and/or destination image) influence the strength of the connection formed with the tourist, so as to be a significant indicator for future re-visiting and positive word of mouth (Hassan et al., 2022; Kastenholz & Gronau, 2022). For example, the sense of belonging and connection derived through tourist-destination identification has been shown to positively influence destination love and travel intentions (Alahakoon & Udunuwara, 2022). The rationale is that the identified tourist has a prop of belonging to the success and reputation of the destination, further strengthening that psychological attachment. Ultimately, the positive effects of an RCTE on desirable behavioural outcomes, such as loyalty, is largely indirect as it is first through the establishment of psychological attachment and identity to the cultural heritage destination (Rehman et al., 2023; Son et al., 2023).

Thus;

H2: Destination identification has mediating relationship between rich cultural tourism experience and tourists' behavioral intentions.

One major problem in cultural tourism is how to make sure all the good things that happen to visitors while they are there can turn into real responsible actions around how we use cultural heritage responsibly sustainable use of cultural heritage (Ye et al., 2024). Rich cultural tourism experience gives you an initial push or experience that gives you opportunities to experience and learn about the cultural heritage that will ultimately be what keeps you coming back as a visitor (Qin & Zhang, 2025). The destination identification, where you become the steward of the cultural heritage and work to protect it. According to de Oliveira et al. (2024), identification is an internalization process: when a tourist identifies a location, particularly a cultural heritage site, they feel the obligation to protect it as part of their moral duty. The deep multi-dimensional engagement with a location offered by RCTE creates strong connections with users, which leads to positive environmental/social behaviours (Mzembe et al., 2023).

Additionally, when locals encourage tourists to visit and experience cultural heritage sites in a sustainable fashion or promote the responsible use of tourism resources and practices, it can be assumed that locals will act as ambassadors of goodwill for their respective communities through the promotion of tourism products and services (i.e., features and attractions) to potential visitors (Kastenholz & Gronau, 2022). It is not uncommon for these tourists to exhibit behaviours consistent with those of other tourists in that same destination setting based solely on what they perceive as typical behaviour for that location. Therefore, it may be posited that cooperation between locals and visitors is an important element of sustainability within respect to cultural heritage sites (Ryan & Zhang, 2024). Tourists DI refers to an individual's physiological state in which the tourist recognizes similarities between their locational identification and self-identity (Amani, 2025). Furthermore, according to Elshaer et al. (2024), as individuals communicate their sense of self, they tend to form social identities in addition to a personal identity. Kahraman and Cifci (2023) that for a tourist to meet their own criteria for self-identification within the context of a tourism destination, that tourist must also form a sense of self-identification with that locality.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the important part that identity constructs play in

generating sustainable behaviours (Kusumah, 2024). In studies on heritage and protected places, research has demonstrated that when tourists feel a greater degree of attachment to a place, they will be more likely to comply with conservation rules, lower their negative impact on that area, and support local sustainability programs (Mzembe et al., 2023; Rehman et al., 2023). Specifically, motivations for identification-based reasons have been shown to be more powerful and stable than motivations based solely on awareness or satisfaction (Pai et al., 2025; Ye et al., 2024). For example, an RCTE may educate a tourist about the fragility of the desert ecosystem, but it is the development of identification that leads to the tourist taking responsibility for observing waste reduction measures. Thus;

> H3: Destination identification has mediating relationship between rich cultural tourism experience and tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage.

2.3. Tourist's Satisfaction as Moderating

Literature states that tourists` satisfaction, refers to the immediate, emotional post-consumption evaluations (Xia et al., 2024), which serve to significantly moderate how Destination identification translates into future loyalty behaviours. DI represents an emotional attachment (a deep, stable mental connection) to the destination (Lim et al., 2024), whereas TS is an immediate emotional evaluation of whether or not the experience or service provided by the inbound tour operator was satisfactory (meaning within or above expected levels). Therefore even though a tourist is strongly attached to a cultural heritage site, a lower TS rating during the visit (due to e.g. poor service, logistical issues) will negatively impact the Tourist's willingness to respond immediately to their identification with the site (e.g. will not recommend or revisit the site) (Yu et al., 2023); conversely, a higher TS rating will enhance the impact of DI (Kusumah, 2024).

Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022) conducted using empirical methods provide evidence of the enhancing effect of satisfaction on the identity-behavior relationship. As indicated by the findings of previous empirical studies (Dumitraşcu et al., 2023; Kahraman & Cifci, 2023), when tourists identify strongly with a destination and have high levels of satisfaction, their behavioral intentions to return are significantly greater than those of tourists who identified with the destination but were not satisfied. For example, in the case of tourists who visit a cultural or niche tourism destination, a tourist who

identifies very strongly with a destination and has a very high level of satisfaction will develop an exceptionally higher TBI than that of a tourist who identifies with a destination but is dissatisfied (Rehman et al., 2023). It therefore follows that satisfaction has a significant mediating effect in translating cognitive attachment into actual behavior (Liu et al., 2023). Thus, the relationship between DI and TBIs would suggest that in order for a tourist to fully realize the potential benefits associated with identifying with a destination, destination managers must not only create a deep, lasting connection between themselves and the tourist through providing rich cultural experiences, but also must continuously provide excellent service in order to achieve a high level of satisfaction among tourists (Abdou et al., 2022; Xia et al., 2024). Thus;

> H4: Tourist's satisfaction has moderating role on destination identification and tourists' behavioral intentions.

The commitment to sustainable use of cultural heritage from tourists generally results from a strong destination identifier (Qin & Zhang, 2025). In order for the psychological attachment of a tourist towards a heritage site to convert to pro-environmental and pro-social action, the tourist must first experience the quality of their immediate travelling experience of tourist satisfaction (Kusumah, 2024; Rehman et al., 2023). Tourists with high DI will feel committed to the moral obligation to protect the heritage culture (Dumitraşcu et al., 2023); however, in order for this commitment to become active, the tourist must be in an optimal state of mind. If there have been poor experiences from their last visit (e.g., unclean facilities, incorrect information, poor service) these negative feelings may inhibit them from pursuing the more demanding conservation activities and supporting local sustainability efforts (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023).

The tourism industry's goal is to foster long-term attachment from visitors through several factors, which is an indicator of how much visitors' love their destination (Dumitraşcu et al., 2023). Past research has provided evidence of a link between "destination identification" and "destination love" (Amani, 2025). Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022) believe that developing positive perceptions of destinations can encourage positive behaviours among visitors (e.g., travelling to a destination frequently) and that the way visitors identify with and love a destination impacts on their view of that destination and how they will behave towards it when they visit the destination. If a tourist relates emotionally to a destination, they may view their personal connection to the destination

differently than if they do not feel connected to it at all. Those who have developed an emotional connection to the destination will be more likely to be concerned about it and feel responsible for protecting the destination (Elshaer et al., 2024). In addition, tourism researchers and practitioners have defined sustainable tourism behaviour in a number of different ways: sustainable tourism behaviour includes voluntary actions that benefit the built, natural and social environments and reduce antagonistic behaviours toward them. Sustainable tourism behaviour is frequently used as a synonym for conservation behaviour, eco-friendly behaviour, pro-environmental behaviour and ecologically responsible behaviour (Kahraman & Cifci, 2023).

Empirical research demonstrates that satisfaction is a significant accelerator and strengthens the relationship between identity-related constructs and specific responsible behaviors (Amani, 2025; Elshaer et al., 2024; Kahraman & Cifci, 2023). Environmental

psychology and sustainable tourism research support the assertion that greater satisfaction yields greater perceived capability and confidence in the management of a destination, thus increasing the likelihood that identified tourists will engage in responsible behavior through greater effort (Mousazadeh et al., 2023). On the other hand, dissatisfaction may create feelings of disassociation or lack of interest with regard to tourists' attempts to be responsible because tourists may question the reason for being responsible if the destination's management fails to deliver what it promised (Kusumah, 2024; Ye et al., 2024). Thus;

H5: Tourist's satisfaction has moderating role on destination identification and tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage.

In light of the previously mentioned literature and theories, Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model of this study.
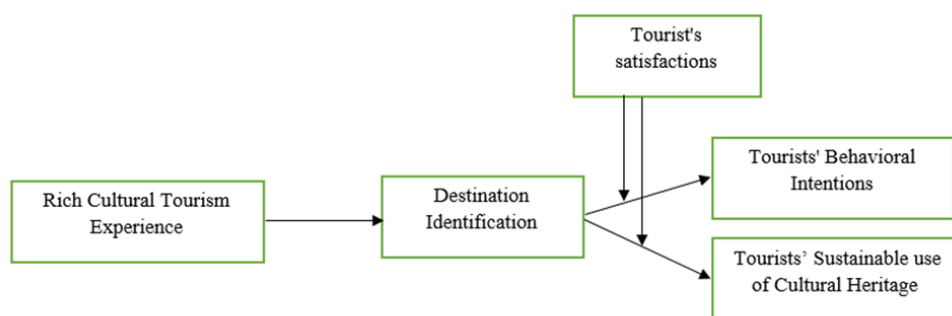

Figure 1: Conceptual Model.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection and Participants

As cultural tourism has been identified as a primary area of focus within the framework of Vision 2030 for Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom represents an excellent and emerging setting for understanding the relationships being examined. Convenience sampling was used to collect data which included the distribution and collection of the questionnaire via a drop-off and pick-up method at a number of key cultural heritage sites including AlUla (Hegra) and Historical Jeddah (Al-Balad). The data was gathered during the peak months of tourism between November 2024 and January 2025. The survey was given to tourists at cultural heritage sites with the assistance of local partners to facilitate effective distribution and collection of the survey; thus, the questionnaires were completed voluntarily and the anonymous responses were kept confidential. In the

present study, 500 questionnaires were distributed to tourists, and 375 responses were received after careful review. Of these 375 completed surveys were valid for analysis purposes, resulting in an overall response rate of about 75%. Therefore, the final sample size of 375 respondents is sufficient for fulfilling statistical requirements for complicated structural equation modelling.

3.2. Measures

The five-point Likert scale system for responses (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used to capture the survey responses (with the exception of demographic information). The survey was constructed so that demographic items appeared prior to the constructs included in the research model. Existing measurement scales were adapted from the previous works of others to ensure the validity and reliability of each construct; each adaptation was slightly modified to ensure relevance to Saudi Arabia. Rich cultural tourism experience

(RCTE) was assessed using a five-item scale (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). Destination identification (DI) employed a four-item scale (Su & Swanson, 2017). Tourist satisfaction (TS) was measured using seven items (Alazaizeh et al., 2019). Tourists' behavioral intentions (TBI) were assessed with a four-item scale (Li et al., 2016). Tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage (SUCH) was assessed with eight items (Alazaizeh et al., 2019).

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Demographics Profile

The demographic data (Table 1) for participants in this study shows an extreme imbalance concerning gender distribution, which is an important factor to consider when interpreting results. The total valid sample size of 375 respondents.

Table 1: Gender.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	294	78.4	78.4	78.4
Valid	Female	81	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

The results from the age distribution (Table 2) of the tourists who participated in this study clearly demonstrate a dominance of younger to middle-aged adults within the total valid sample of 375 respondents. The largest age population among the participants was 25-35 years (121 participants, or 32.3% of the sample). The second largest population within the age demographics was 35-45 years (109 participants, 29.1%). Together, these two age demographics accounted for more than 61% of all tourists surveyed. The youngest age group, which is below 25 years, made up 20 percent (75 respondents) of the sample. The least represented age demographics were the 45-55 years age category, which accounted for 13.6 percent (51 respondents) of the total survey population, and those over 55 years of age accounted for 5.1 percent (19 respondents) of all respondents surveyed.

Table 2: Age.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Below 25	75	20.0	20.0	20.0
	25-35	121	32.3	32.3	52.3
Valid	35-45	109	29.1	29.1	81.3
	45-55	51	13.6	13.6	94.9
	Above 55	19	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

Based on a sample of 375 tourists, descriptive statistics (Table 3) were created for five key variables. The mean (M) score for tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage (TSCH) was 4.5203 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.57162, implying that most tourists have a very strong intention or actual practice of sustainable behavior within sites being visited; however, the low variance indicates that the vast majority were similar/same (in terms of density).

Conversely, the mean (M) score for rich cultural tourism experience (RCTE) was 1.7349 (SD = 0.67676), tourists' behavioural intentions (TBI) was 1.4467 (SD = 0.57797), tourists' satisfaction (TS) was 1.4419 (SD = 0.53328), and destination identification (DI) was 1.5160 (SD = 0.59975). The finding that most tourist respondents scored low on rich cultural tourism experiences, satisfaction, identification, or intention suggests that there is less support for these areas than there is for sustainable use of the cultural heritage of sites being visited.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RCTE	375	1.00	4.40	1.7349	.67676
TSCH	375	2.50	5.00	4.5203	.57162
TBI	375	1.00	4.00	1.4467	.57797
TS	375	1.00	3.29	1.4419	.53328
DI	375	1.00	3.50	1.5160	.59975
Valid N	375				

4.3. Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the overall reliability (Table 5) of the measurement instrument, and it showed a level of internal consistency that is acceptable. Across all 28 items measuring the five latent constructs of RCA, TSCH, TBI, TS and DI, the alpha value was 0.753, which is above the commonly accepted cut-off value of 0.70 for research in social sciences (Mustafy & Rahman, 2024).

There are various ways to measure reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient being the most prevalent measure used.

The alpha coefficient measures how well a group of items works together to measure a construct and provides an indication of the reliability of the group of items, with higher alpha coefficients indicating a greater level of reliability.

Table 4: Reliability Statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.753	28

4.4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

The KMO Test (Table 5) assesses both the sample's sufficient size for factor analysis and the strength of correlation among variables (Mustafy & Rahman, 2024). A KMO value can range from 0 to 1, where values near 1 indicate that the sample's data are appropriate for factor analysis. When a KMO's p-value is below 0.05, this denotes that the correlations in the correlation matrix do not follow a normal pattern (known as an identity matrix). In Table 5, the KMO value of 0.844 is near 1, indicating that the sample's data are appropriate for use in factor analysis, and thus, the Bartlett Test should yield a statistically significant result.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.844
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1318.671
	df	10
	Sig.	.000

4.5. Correlation Test

A correlation test (Table 6) is a statistical technique that describes the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables. The correlation test also provides information on whether an association exists between the two variables and if so, whether the relationship is positive or negative (Mustafy & Rahman, 2024). While there are a number of different types of correlation tests, the most widely used is the Pearson correlation coefficient. The Pearson correlation coefficient assesses the linear association between two continuous variables and takes a value between -1 and +1, where -1 represents a perfect inverse correlation, 0 indicates no correlation, and +1 represents a perfect direct correlation.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis.

		RCTE	TSCH	TBI	TS	DI
RCTE	Pearson Correlation	1	-.639**	.671**	.735**	.695**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	375	375	375	375	375
TSCH	Pearson Correlation	-.639**	1	-.796**	-.694**	-.478**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	375	375	375	375	375
TBI	Pearson Correlation	.671**	-.796**	1	.780**	.542**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	375	375	375	375	375
TS	Pearson Correlation	.735**	-.694**	.780**	1	.612**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	375	375	375	375	375
DI	Pearson Correlation	.695**	-.478**	.542**	.612**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	375	375	375	375	375
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).						

4.6. Regression Analysis (Direct Effect)

The hypothesis (H1) that rich cultural tourism experience has a direct, positive effect on destination identification was supported by the linear regression

analysis at a statistically significant level (p-value = .000) and a large t-value of 18.681. From a magnitude point of view, the impact of RCTE is expressed as a Standardized Coefficient (beta) of 0.695; this means that an increase in one standard deviation (SD) in the rich cultural experience for a tourists will generate an increase in his/her destination identification of about

7/10 of a standard deviation (Mustafy & Rahman, 2024). Thus, the significant empirical evidence substantiates the notion that the quality of the rich cultural experience that a tourists has with a destination creates a psychological bond and connection to their destination (Table 7).

Table 7: Direct Effect.

Relationship	Coefficient (β)	T-value	P-value	Finding
RCTE → DI	0.695	18.681	0.000	Supported

4.7. Mediation Analysis

A statistical method called mediation analysis (Table 8) how an independent variable may have an indirect impact on a dependent variable through one or more mediators. A statistical approach known as mediation is used to examine the indirect impact of an independent variable on a dependent variable through one or more mediating variables (Sürücü et al., 2023). As indicated that destination identification serves as an important mediator in the relationship between a rich cultural tourism experience and two dependent variables. The indirect effect of RCTE on

tourists' behavioral intentions (H2) was highly statistically significant, with an estimated coefficient of 0.876 (t = 10.5275, p < 0.001), thus supporting H2. The indirect effect of RCTE on tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage (H3) was also highly statistically significant via DI, with an estimated coefficient of 0.468 (t = 10.7288, p < 0.001), supporting H3. Therefore, these results indicate that a high level of a rich cultural experience can create loyalty intentions and sustainable behavior, mainly through the psychological connection and identity that a tourist has with the destination (DI).

Table 8: Mediation Analysis (Hypothesis 2, 3).

Relationship (Model4)	Coefficient (β)	T-value	P-value	Finding
RCTE → DI→TBI	0.876	10.5275	0.000	Supported
RCTE → DI→TSCH	0.468	10.7288	0.000	Supported
Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000				

4.8. Moderation Analysis

The moderation that was conducted using Model 1 from Hayes' PROCESS found statistically significant evidence that, consistent with Hypothesis H4, TS moderates the relationship between DI and TBI. In addition, the analysis of moderation conducted using Model 1 from Hayes' PROCESS (Sürücü et al., 2023) found statistically significant evidence that, consistent with Hypothesis H5, TS

moderates the relationship between DI and TSCH. The coefficients for both interaction terms were negative which suggests that there is an unexpected inverse effect; thus, as Tourist Satisfaction increases, the strength of the positive association between destination identification and both TBI and TSCH diminishes or, more probably given the low means on the correlation table, the negative association between DI and both TBI and TSCH gets stronger at higher levels of tourist satisfaction.

Table 9: Moderation Analysis (Hypothesis 4, 5).

Relationship (Model1)	Coefficient (β)	T-value	P-value	Finding
TS * DI→TBI	-0.198	-2.9788	0.031	**Supported**
TS * DI→TSCH	-0.154	-2.8473	0.047	**Supported**
Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000				

5. DISCUSSION

In this research, the author has explored the multiple psychological routes through which the experience of the rich cultural tourism impacts

tourist's behavioural intentions and the sustainable use of cultural heritage. The author's model utilized destination identification as a mediator and tourist's satisfaction as a moderator, producing results that provide significantly new insight into the

relationship between RCTE and TBI and TSCH, and confirms and contradicts existing research findings of other studies in the field of tourism. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that for a destination such as Saudi Arabia, where cultural tourism is developing, the first step in encouraging Responsible Behaviour and Loyalty is to provide a quality, immersive experience, and the mechanisms through which this experience influences those behaviours are complex and very much dependent on the satisfaction level of the tourists.

The data corroborate H1, establishing that rich cultural tourism experience is a significant factor influencing how closely tourists identify with a destination. This finding is consistent with numerous prior studies conducted within a variety of cultures that indicate that when tourists have an authentic, multi-dimensional and deep connection to a destination through their engagement with its aesthetic, educational, and interpersonal aspects, they have an experience that is transformative, rather than just an ordinary stopover (Qin & Zhang, 2025). The various cultural tourism experience in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia demonstrate the efficacy of this tourist-development philosophy; therefore, as a result of the Kingdom's commitment to authentic heritage promotion, tourists will relate positively to Saudi Arabia's identity and values.

The findings supported hypothesis 2 (H2) and found that destination identification was a partial mediator between the relationship of rich cultural tourism experience and tourist behavioral intentions. This aligns with the literature on place attachment and loyalty; a positive experience must be converted into future loyalty through a cognitive and emotional bond (Qin & Zhang, 2025). The partial mediation indicates that while RCTE encourages loyalty through direct influences, DI provides an additional layer of "connectivity" to the destination and therefore significantly enhances the likelihood of individuals exhibiting advocacy behaviors towards Saudi Arabia.

The findings of Hypothesis H3 provide strong support for the hypothesis regarding the mediating role played by destination identification in the relationship between the rich cultural tourism experience and the tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage. A substantial coefficient for the indirect effect indicates that an immersive and high-quality cultural experience motivates a visitor to be committed to the sustainable utilization of cultural heritage, as it first connects them psychologically to the destination (DI). This finding supports existing conceptual frameworks, which contend that responsible behaviors are not simply the result of knowledge but are also driven by a sense of moral responsibility derived from a bond with the cultural heritage for example, (Ye et al., 2024). As a result, in Saudi Arabia, a rich and multi-faceted cultural experience provides visitors with a sense of collective identity at heritage site(s), which is further manifested by their increased commitment to participate in conservation and sustainable behaviours.

Tourist Satisfaction's moderating role on the relationship between destination identification and tourists' behavioral intentions was confirmed. This implies that while destination identification create a strong and stable relationship between them over time, Tourist Satisfaction influences how much consumers identify with the brand on an ongoing basis (Xia et al., 2024). The negative sign implies that tourist satisfaction is so high that after consumer has developed high satisfaction with the destination, the effect from further increasing tourist satisfaction decreases. The negative interaction suggests that tourist satisfaction can also be seen as a form of diminishing returns. At extremely high levels of tourist satisfaction, further increases in tourist satisfaction may create diminishing returns in terms of their relationship with the brand. At the extremely high levels of tourist satisfaction, increases in the tourist's identification with the brand will have less impact than they would if the levels of tourist satisfaction were lower.

The results of this analysis supported the hypothesis that tourist satisfaction significantly moderates the relationship between destination identification and tourists' sustainable use of cultural heritage. This finding emphasizes the importance of maintaining service quality in order to effectively convert a tourist's psychological attachment to a destination into responsible behaviour. The results for this hypothesis also support the previous findings for H4 by showing that the negative coefficient suggests that destination identification and sustainable behaviour are negatively correlated with each other and depend upon the immediate experience quality of the tourist. For example, in the clinical context of this study, low satisfaction may play a significant role in inhibiting the motivation of tourists who have fully integrated their DI with the sustainable use of cultural heritage. This implies that these tourists may feel that the management of the site is not worthy of their conservation efforts. Thus, one of the most important practical implications for DMOs in Saudi Arabia is to maximise the pro-conservation motivation of tourists who identify

with a cultural heritage through ensuring that the management of tourism destinations provides high-quality service and infrastructure to enable the full mobilization of their motivation to act in a sustainable manner (Xia et al., 2024).

6. IMPLICATIONS

These findings have significant implications for policymakers, and tourism stakeholders with regard to Saudi Arabia's cultural tourism, offering a road map through which rapid tourism growth can balance with heritage conservation. This requires quality and authenticity of the visitor experience at all five dimensions-historical, modern, folk, spiritual, and ecological-to be strategically invested in for Policy and Practice. Policymakers must focus on creating immersive, narrative experiences over passive viewing, ensuring Hegra and Al-Balad become deep cultural exchange venues, not simply places of sightseeing (Aloufi, 2025). Policies need to ensure this sense of belonging is fostered through cultural programming, interpretation, and local interaction. Importantly, the confirmed moderating role of tourist satisfaction underlines operational excellence. Even a deeply identified tourist's positive intentions can be undermined if they experience poor service, inadequate infrastructure, or logistical issues. Thus, policies should ensure that strict quality control in hospitality, logistics, and site management is in place to mobilize identification to loyalty and sustainable behavior effectively.

The results of this study significantly enhance our understanding of the psychological mechanisms driving sustainable tourism. Confirming the full model, this research succeeds in establishing that destination identification is the critical, identity-based conduit by which high-quality, multidimensional experiences are converted into long-run behavioral outcomes that extend destination image theory into the domain of active responsible behavior. The fact that tourist satisfaction moderates the relationship between identification and both loyalty and sustainability represents a contribution to the literature on identity and place attachment. The affective evaluation of a single visit is a powerful contingency factor; the strength of the long-term bond is not constant but depends on the quality of the immediate experience. Future studies employing this moderated-mediation framework will be better able to capture the complex dynamics by which emotional state interacts with cognitive attachment to predict complex tourist conduct, offering rich insights for the conservation of cultural assets in other rapidly developing markets.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research has contributed significantly to an understanding of the psychological drivers of cultural tourism outcomes in Saudi Arabia. First, it relied solely on a cross-sectional and quantitative survey design administered to 375 tourists at one point in time. This approach will inherently limit the ability to establish conclusive evidence of causal relationships between variables; while relationships were hypothesized and tested using established frameworks such as Hayes' PROCESS macros in SPSS, the cross-sectional nature of the data will inherently limit inferences drawn to associations rather than definitive causality. Second, reliance on self-reported data introduces potential threats from common method bias and social desirability bias. In reporting on sensitive topics, tourists may over-report their engagement in socially desirable behavior, hence artificially inflating the mean score of TSCH, which could suppress the true magnitude of the relationships, as suggested by observed counterintuitive correlation patterns. Lastly, the sole focus on international tourists visiting Saudi Arabia presents limitations to generalizing the present findings. Different destinations possess unique socio-cultural, economic, and operational characteristics that may affect how rich experiences translate into identification, satisfaction, and sustainable behaviors; this creates difficulty in applying these findings directly to other cultural heritage contexts without further validation.

Future research should also try to integrate objective measures-such as direct observation of tourist behavior or foot traffic analysis-or secondary data-such as waste generation records or donation data-to corroborate the potentially biased self-report measures. In this respect, one fruitful avenue for future research involves comparative analyses across different demographic and behavioral segments. For example, tests of the proposed model across new versus repeat visitors may yield valuable information about how the strength of destination identification unfolds over time. Comparing tourists with prior knowledge versus a lack of knowledge about the importance of a specific heritage site could provide insights into how knowledge moderates the development of the rich cultural tourism experience. Finally, additional variables from the existing psychological perspective- environmental attitudes, perceived control over behavior, or social norms-should be studied in order to gain a full understanding of the processes driving sustainable tourism practices beyond identity and satisfaction.

8. FUNDING

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