

Integrative Project Leadership for Sustainable Tourism Development: The Roles of Cultural Intelligence, Multicultural Team Dynamics, and Financial Decision-Making

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Abstract

Purpose: The development of sustainable tourism is becoming more based on complex projects with culturally diverse stakeholders and geographically spread teams. Nevertheless, current studies on tourism leadership are still divided on the basis of leadership theory, multicultural team dynamics, and financial governance perspectives. This research will create a framework to be empirically tested to explain the role of project leadership in the success of sustainable tourism projects by using collaborative and strategic decision-making processes.

Methodology: The research design used in the study is a quantitative and multi-source research design that will involve project leaders and team members involved in international tourism development projects. A structured survey was used to gather data, and structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the relationship between integrative project leadership, multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, quality of financial decision-making, and sustainable tourism project success.

Findings: The results indicate that integrative project leadership improves the multicultural team dynamics to an enormous extent, and it consequently improves the quality of financial decision-making and results in sustainable project success. Cultural intelligence is also a factor that enhances the performance of leadership by enhancing teamwork and reducing cultural conflicts in multicultural project teams. The findings indicate that leadership plays an important role in determining the sustainability outcomes through indirect processes, which are connected to the collaborative and governance processes.

Originality: The study is relevant to the body of scholarship in tourism management because it incorporates behavioural, cultural, and financial aspects in a single theoretical framework of tourism project leadership. The results offer useful information to tourism organisations and policymakers who want to improve sustainability performance by developing leadership, cross-cultural competence, and open financial governance in global tourism ventures.

Keywords: Integrative leadership; sustainable tourism development; cultural intelligence; multicultural teams; tourism projects; financial decision-making; project management; sustainability

1. Introduction

The development of global tourism is becoming more dependent on complex projects, which include the involvement of different stakeholders, cross-border cooperation, and multidimensional sustainability

goals. The multinational actors involved in the culturally diverse settings that are required in large-scale tourism projects like destination redevelopment, heritage conservation programmes, eco-tourism ventures, and tourism infrastructure investments demand coordination. With the increasing internationalisation of tourism organisations, project leaders are supposed to not only deal with the operational implementation but also to organise intercultural cooperation, distribute resources in a strategic manner, and achieve long-term sustainability results. These pressures have heightened academic interest in the study of leadership in the context of tourism and projects, especially with the ongoing redefinition of tourism development by global mobility, cultural diversity, and environmental responsibility.

Regardless of such developments, tourism projects are still typified by high levels of uncertainty and management complexity. Multicultural teamwork tends to cause problems of communication barriers, cultural differences as well as varied work practices which can undermine coordination and team performance. In the meantime, the development of sustainable tourism implies the necessity to find a balance between the economic performance, environmental protection as well as the expectations of the stakeholders. As a result, project leaders have to solve behavioural and strategic issues at the same time by combining interpersonal leadership skills and culturally adaptive behaviours with financially informed decision-making. Practically, though, most tourism initiatives fail due to the fact that leadership strategies are inclined to focus on either relational coordination or financial governance, and not on the combination of both dimensions into a consistent managerial system.

Theoretically, the existing leadership research in tourism remains to be split into a number of disciplinary streams. Many other studies are on leadership styles such as transformational or servant leadership as independent predictors of employee outcomes or project performance without giving much concern to the overall organisational and strategic context on which leadership operates. Similarly, research on multicultural teams is typically focused on the outcomes of diversity, communication, or development of trust without explicitly relating these processes to the leadership structures that typify team cooperation. In spite of the fact that cultural intelligence (CQ) is gaining recognition as a valuable skill in global work environment, it has been observed at the individual level rather than being approached as a strategic leadership tool that has the potential to influence the performance of the entire project. Besides, decisions made on financial matters in tourism projects tend to be regarded as technical managerial undertaking, which is not dependent on behavioural and cultural processes, despite being central in determining the sustainability of a project, and value creation in the long-term perspective.

This disintegration makes a tremendous disparity between theory and practice. The tourism projects are conducted at the crossroads of leadership processes, multicultural collaboration, and strategic allocation of resources; nevertheless, the study of tourism management seldom incorporates these aspects into a single conceptual framework. Consequently, there is no detailed knowledge about the role of leadership in ensuring sustainable tourism outcomes based on culturally informed team processes and strategic financial decisions by scholars and practitioners. This gap is especially crucial to be filled in tourism settings, where sustainable development involves a trade-off between economic feasibility and social and environmental factors among various stakeholders.

To counter this, this paper formulates an integrative view of project leadership that cuts across the leadership theory, multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, and financial decision-making in the context of sustainable tourism development. Instead of defining leadership as a behavioural style, the study identifies integrative project leadership as an ability that helps leaders to coordinate interpersonal cooperation, cultural knowledge, and financial management in accordance with collective project goals.

This approach to thought contributes to the literature of tourism management in the sense that it dwells upon the concept of leadership as a coordinating system that shapes social interactions and strategic decisions within the complex project contexts.

There are three research questions that are covered in the study. To begin with, what is the effect of integrative project leadership on multicultural team dynamics in tourism development projects? Second, how does cultural intelligence contribute to enhancing leadership performance in culturally diverse projects? Third, what is the joint contribution of multicultural team processes and financial decision-making mechanisms to the success of sustainable tourism projects? The empirical design of these questions is a multi-source one, which includes international tourism development projects, and it enables studying not only the behavioural but also the strategic aspects of the project leadership.

This research has three main contributions to the research on tourism management. First, it contributes to theory through the development of an integrative model that links leadership, cultural intelligence, multicultural team dynamics, and financial decision-making in one model of sustainable tourism project success. Second, it addresses the call to conduct more holistic studies of tourism project management by studying several behavioural and strategic processes at the same time in multicultural settings. Third, it provides useful information to tourism organisations and policymakers by showing how leadership skills, cross-cultural competence, and open financial management can enhance sustainability in international tourism development initiatives.

The rest of the paper continues in the following way. The following section is a review of the literature related to the topic of leadership in tourism projects, multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, financial decision-making, and sustainable project success. On the basis of this review, an integrative theoretical framework and hypotheses are formulated. This is followed by the methodology, results, and discussion section, and finally, the theoretical, managerial, and policy implications of sustainable tourism project management.

2. Literature Review and Theory Development

2.1 Leadership in Tourism Projects

The importance of leadership has been largely identified as a major determinant of project success in complicated organizational setups. Leadership plays a specific role in tourism development projects since these projects are usually characterized by temporary organizational structures, various stakeholders, and varying institutional contexts (Muller and Turner, 2010; Turner and Muller, 2005). The re-development programmes of destinations, heritage conservation initiatives, eco-tourism developments, and infrastructure investments are the typical tourism projects that involve the cooperation of the public authorities, private organizations, community groups, and international partners (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2019). It follows that leadership in tourism projects should not be limited to the conventional hierarchical management, but should rather focus on coordination, flexibility, and alignment of stakeholders.

A lot of the current literature on leadership within tourism and hospitality settings relies on the theory of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders have an impact on organizational performance by articulating vision, inspirational motivation, and personalized attention to the team members (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Empirical research in tourism organizations has shown that transformational leadership has the potential to increase employee engagement, organizational commitment, and service innovation (Chen, 2011; Karatepe, 2013; Wu et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the

project-based setting demands leaders to carry out other functions that are not limited to inspirational influence. Tourism development projects are usually run in an environment of environmental uncertainty, changing demand, and various expectations of stakeholders (Ruhanen et al., 2015; Sigala, 2020). Consequently, leaders have to integrate motivational leadership and proper coordination and governance systems.

The recent scholarship has been focusing more on shared and distributed leadership perspectives. These strategies imply that the processes of leadership can be generated through the interactions of the team members and not be concentrated in one individual (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce and Conger, 2003; Bolden, 2011). Collaborative leadership is especially applicable to tourism projects, which often have cross-functional teams and actors located in different geographic areas (Scott et al., 2008; Fyall and Garrod, 2020). However, the studies show that distributed leadership per se might not be a sufficient condition to ensure that the project is governed effectively unless it is complemented by the mechanisms that can combine strategic priorities and financial decision-making (Müller et al., 2018; Too and Weaver, 2014).

The adaptive leadership theory has more information on leadership within a complex project setting. This school of thought focuses on the capacity of leaders to act in response to changing challenges through encouraging learning, experimentation, and problem-solving (Heifetz et al., 2009; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). These adaptive abilities are specifically applicable in the context of tourism development when leaders need to deal with sustainability issues, stakeholder demands, and economic limitations at the same time (Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Gosling et al., 2018). However, the scholarship of tourism leadership is more inclined to observe the stakeholder engagement and innovation issues in general and pay minimal or no attention to financial governance tasks that project leaders must manage (Hall, 2011; Baggio and Sainaghi, 2016).

As a result, the need to combine behavioural influence with coordination and strategic decision-making is becoming a topic of growing interest among the project leadership scholars (Aga et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2009). In tourism development projects, the effectiveness of leadership might not be as much reliant on certain leadership styles as reliant on the ability to coordinate multicultural collaboration with strategic resource management. Nevertheless, tourism studies continue to focus on leadership as a unilateral predictor of organizational performance instead of a process that influences team processes and decision-making contexts (Ren et al., 2021; Kim and Qu, 2020). This shortcoming shows the necessity of a more integrative conceptualization of leadership in tourism project environments.

2.2 Multicultural Team Dynamics

Multicultural teams have become a common occurrence in tourism development projects due to globalization. Tourism projects often imply the cooperation of people of various national, cultural, and professional orientations (Stahl et al., 2010; Adler, 2008). This diversity may lead to significant positive outcomes, such as access to more knowledge, greater creativity, and the ability to solve problems (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Nielsen and Nielsen, 2013). Multicultural cooperation is especially useful in the context of tourism since development projects usually include stakeholders who have different views on destination identity, sustainability concerns, and visitor experiences (Reisinger, 2009; Jamal and Camargo, 2014).

Despite existence of these benefits, multicultural teams have serious problems as well. The differences in communicational style, cultural approaches, and demands on power or decision-making might add to the misunderstanding and reduce the cohesion of the team (Lauring and Selmer, 2012; Matveev and Nelson, 2004). This is particularly challenging in temporary project teams, where team members may not have

time to establish trust and working patterns with each other (Gibson and Gibbs, 2006; Hinds et al., 2011). Tourism projects tend to worsen these dynamics due to the fact that the team members may represent different institutions, organizations, and community members who might have different priorities, and influence (Aas et al., 2005; Timur and Getz, 2008). The studies of team effectiveness emphasize that cohesion, psychological safety, and open communication contribute to collaborative performance (Edmondson, 1999; Bradley et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017). Leaders are important in establishing conditions where team members feel free to share ideas and have constructive dialogue (Burke et al., 2006; Hoch and Kozlowski, 2014). Such environments allow the different perspectives to be used in innovative solutions and better decision-making in multicultural tourism project teams. Diversity in multicultural teams can bring both beneficial and detrimental results. Task-related conflicts may give rise to creativity and better quality of decisions, but relational conflict may tend to destroy trust and lower the effectiveness of a team (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Simons and Peterson, 2000). Development projects of tourism often include complicated sustainability discussions that can escalate these processes (Saarinen, 2014; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Leadership is thus necessary in order to turn cultural diversity into a strategic strength and not an organizational conflict.

2.3 Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the ability of a person to perform well in a culturally diverse setting (Earley and Ang, 2003; Ang et al., 2007). With organizations becoming more and more active in international contexts, CQ has emerged as a significant construct in global leadership research. Cultural intelligence is generally defined as a set of four dimensions, including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral abilities (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015; Rockstuhl and Van Dyne, 2018). These dimensions help people to read cultural cues, comprehend cultural variations, and behave in cross-cultural communication in the most suitable way. Cultural intelligence is especially applicable in the context of tourism development since tourism projects often include international teams, culturally diverse populations, and international markets of visitors (Reisinger and Turner, 2003; Livermore, 2015). High-CQ leaders are in a better position to read cultural expectations, modify communication strategies, and establish trust across cultural borders (Groves and Feyerherm, 2011; Eisenberg et al., 2013). Such abilities can be used to minimize misunderstandings and create more inclusive team environments. It has been demonstrated in the past that cultural intelligence leads to better cross-cultural communication, negotiation results, and expatriate adaptation (Ng et al., 2009; Lee and Sukoco, 2010; Bücken et al., 2016). Besides, cultural intelligence can be applied to improve leadership performance. In culturally diverse teams, leaders with a culture that is adaptable are better placed to build trust, reduce relational conflict, and encourage teamwork (Lisak and Erez, 2015; Chua et al., 2012). The leadership skill of cultural intelligence becomes very critical in tourism projects where the processes of making decisions may involve culturally sensitive issues such as heritage conservation and community participation.

2.4 Financial Decision-Making in Tourism Projects

One of the aspects of project governance that entails defining resource allocation, risk management, and investment priorities in the project life cycle is financial decision-making (Kerzner, 2017; Meredith et al., 2019). The budgetary decisions in tourism development projects are particularly complex because they must coordinate the economic performance and the sustainability objectives on the whole (Dwyer, 2018; Gössling et al., 2018). Infrastructure, destination development, and environmental management projects are mostly the long-term tourism projects. Unlike most organizational projects, the major aim of which is

to generate short-term financial payoffs, tourism development projects are often aimed at generating long-term value to different parties, including local communities, governments, and private investors, as well as visitors (Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Ruhanen et al., 2015). This means that financial decision-making in tourism projects is strategic in nature and not necessarily a technical financial analysis.

Tourism project finance also includes risk management. Economic crises, environmental and geopolitical instability are external shocks that are very sensitive to tourism demand (Song et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2020). Good financial governance thus entails leaders striking a balance between the short-term financial limitations and the long-term sustainability objectives.

Stakeholder trust and project legitimacy are also affected by financial transparency and accountability (Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; Mason, 2015). The development projects in tourism usually have collaborative governance systems with community involvement and state funding (Timur & Getz, 2008). Leaders who facilitate open financial decision-making processes can enhance stakeholder commitment and project outcomes. Although it is an important aspect, financial governance is not commonly incorporated into the behavioral leadership models in tourism studies. Financial performance is frequently considered as an outcome variable and not a process that is influenced by leadership and team dynamics. Incorporating financial decision-making into leadership models thus offers a better insight into the role of managerial practices in sustainable tourism development.

2.5 Sustainable Tourism Project Success

Conventional project management models establish success as mainly the triple constraint of time, cost, and scope (Atkinson, 1999; Serrador and Turner, 2015). Despite the fact that these criteria are still significant, the development projects in the tourism sector need wider success indicators that would consider social, environmental, and long-term economic factors. Sustainable tourism stresses that economic development should be balanced with environmental conservation, cultural conservation, and community welfare (Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Saarinen, 2014).

Project success in tourism settings thus goes beyond the short-term financial gains or efficiency of operation. Sustainable tourism projects should create long-term returns to destinations without compromising the environmental integrity or the support of stakeholders (Hall, 2019; Ruhanen et al., 2015). These results cannot be attained without proper coordination of various stakeholders and proper management of competing priorities.

It has been shown that the quality of leadership, cooperation with stakeholders, and strategic decision-making are significant factors that define sustainable tourism results (Aas et al., 2005; Cooper, 2018). Nonetheless, there are comparatively small studies on the interaction of behavioral processes in project teams with governance mechanisms in order to influence sustainability performance. This gap identifies the necessity of integrative frameworks, which bridge leadership competencies, team dynamics, and financial decision-making in the context of tourism projects.

2.6 Integrative Theoretical Framework

Based on the above literature, this paper suggests an integrative model according to which leadership is the most important coordinating process that would connect the dynamics of multicultural teams, cultural intelligence, financial decision-making, and the success of sustainable tourism projects. Instead of considering these factors as independent factors, the framework considers leadership as a skill that influences both collaborative processes and strategic governance processes.

To begin with, leadership affects the dynamics of multicultural teams by setting the norms of communication, trust, and collaboration (Burke et al., 2006; Hoch and Kozlowski, 2014). Second, cultural

intelligence also improves leadership performance by allowing leaders to make sense of cultural differences and change behavior in different settings (Ang et al., 2007; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Third, cohesive teams make financial decision-making more transparent and informed as they promote knowledge sharing and solving problems together (Serra & Kunc, 2015; Zwikael & Meredith, 2018). Lastly, good financial decisions are also a part of the sustainability of tourism development projects in the long term (Hall, 2019; Gössling et al., 2018).

This integrative approach addresses the problem of fragmentation in the study of tourism leadership and offers a theoretical basis for understanding the role of leadership in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes through interrelated behavioral and strategic processes.

3. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

3.1 Conceptual Model Overview

Based on the above literature, this paper suggests an integrative model, which makes leadership the main coordinating process between multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, and financial decision-making and sustainable tourism project success. Instead of considering these constructs as independent predictors, the framework conceptualizes leadership as a capability that influences the collaborative processes as well as strategic governance mechanisms.

To begin with, leadership affects the dynamics of multicultural teams by setting the norms of communication, trust, and collaboration (Burke et al., 2006; Hoch and Kozlowski, 2014). Second, cultural intelligence also improves leadership performance by allowing leaders to make sense of cultural differences and change behavior in different settings (Ang et al., 2007; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Third, cohesive teams make financial decision-making more transparent and informed as they promote knowledge sharing and solving problems together (Serra & Kunc, 2015; Zwikael & Meredith, 2018). Lastly, good financial decisions are also a part of the sustainability of tourism development projects in the long term (Hall, 2019; Gössling et al., 2018).

This integrative approach deals with the problem of fragmentation in the study of tourism leadership and offers a theoretical basis for the study of the role of leadership in achieving sustainable tourism results based on the interrelated behavioural and strategic processes.

Figure 1 shows the suggested conceptual framework to demonstrate the connection between integrative leadership and multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, financial decisions, and the sustainability of tourism projects.

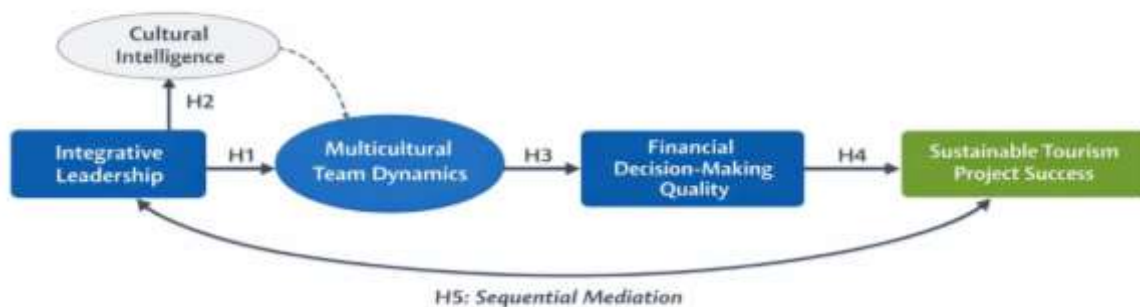


Figure 1. Integrative Leadership, Cultural Intelligence, and Success of Sustainable Tourism Project Conceptual Model.

3.2 Integrative Leadership and Multicultural Team Dynamics

The literature on project leadership is always keen on emphasizing the role of leadership in influencing the team processes, such as the quality of communication, the establishment of trust, and conflict management (Burke et al., 2006; Hoch and Kozlowski, 2014). Leadership is especially critical in multicultural teams since cultural diversity can lead to a lack of convergence in terms of expectations on hierarchy, cooperation, and decision-making (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Stahl et al., 2010). By providing a direction to the team members and encouraging a participatory approach, such leaders will be able to make the team members overcome the cultural barriers and develop shared goals.

The multicultural partnerships are characteristic of the tourism development projects since the tourism markets are international, and various stakeholders are involved. Good leaders are able to establish psychologically safe conditions in which the team members are free to exchange ideas and resolve conflicts effectively (Edmondson, 1999; Bradley et al., 2013). These environments promote trust and cohesion, which are critical in successful teamwork in culturally diverse project environments.

The concept of integrative leadership focuses on the skill to organize the different views and bring the team members together with the same goals. Relational influence combined with strategic coordination is more likely to turn cultural diversity into an innovation and collaboration source instead of a source of conflict in the hands of leaders. In this regard, integrative leadership will enhance the performance of multicultural teams that work on tourism development projects.

H1: Integrative project leadership has a positive impact on multicultural team dynamics in tourism development projects.

3.3 Moderating Role of Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence is one of the key skills in leadership in multicultural settings. High CQ people are capable of deciphering cultural cues, adjusting communication patterns, and reacting to cultural variations in a proper manner (Ang et al., 2007; Rockstuhl et al., 2011). Such competencies will help leaders to live in cultural diversity and minimize misunderstandings that can otherwise undermine teamwork.

Cultural diversity in the context of tourism development is usually incorporated in the project structures. Teams can consist of international professionals, the representatives of the local community, and government officials who can have various cultural orientations and institutional interests. Culturally intelligent leaders are in a better position to overcome such differences and achieve collaborative interaction among team members.

It has been indicated that CQ can increase the capacity of leaders to develop trust and promote knowledge sharing in culturally diverse teams (Groves and Feyerherm, 2011; Lisak and Erez, 2015). Culturally intelligent leaders can enhance the connection between leadership practices and team effectiveness by adjusting the leadership behaviors to the cultural expectations of the team members. The cultural intelligence is therefore likely to enhance the positive influence of integrative leadership on the dynamics of multicultural teams.

H2: Cultural intelligence moderates the relationship between integrative leadership and multicultural team dynamics in a positive way.

3.4 Multicultural Team Dynamics and Financial Decision-Making

The dynamics of teams are significant in influencing the process of collective decision-making in project setups. When teams are cohesive, based on trust, open communication, and psychological safety, they have a higher chance of sharing information and assessing alternative strategies together (Mathieu et al.,

2017; O'Neill et al., 2013). These types of collaborative environments have the potential to enhance the quality of strategic decision-making, such as financial planning and resource allocation.

Past studies have shown that successful teamwork leads to better strategic decisions in project-based organizations (Serra & Kunc, 2015; Zwikael and Meredith, 2018). In the tourism setting, effective multicultural team dynamics are thus likely to improve the quality of financial decision-making processes.

H3: Multicultural team dynamics have a positive effect on the quality of financial decisions in tourism development projects.

3.5 Financial Decision-Making and Sustainable Tourism Project Success

One of the most important mechanisms that connect managerial processes and project outcomes is financial decision-making. Good financial governance will make sure that the resources are distributed in an efficient way, risks are handled in a proper manner, and long-term sustainability goals are facilitated (Kerzner, 2017; Meredith et al., 2019). Financial decisions made in the development projects in tourism should be able to balance both economic performance, environmental protection, and community well-being.

The quality of financial decision-making can help

project leaders to focus on investments that can create long-term value for destinations and remain financially viable. Clear and well-informed financial management can also increase the confidence of stakeholders and allow further investment in sustainable tourism projects (Nunkoo, 2017; Hall, 2019).

In this regard, sound decision-making in terms of financial considerations is likely to be a direct contributor to the success of the sustainable tourism development projects.

H4: The quality of financial decision-making is positively related to the success of sustainable tourism projects.

3.6 Sequential Mediation Pathway

The study of project leadership is becoming more focused on the indirect nature of leadership impacts on performance in that they are mediated by the intermediate organizational processes instead of direct influence on performance outcomes (Aga et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2009). Leadership can also help in achieving sustainability results in the development of tourism projects by influencing the creation of collaborative team conditions that facilitate quality strategic decision-making.

The integrative model that can be proposed in this research, therefore, implies a step-by-step process. Multicultural team dynamics brought about by integrative leadership enhance the quality of financial decision-making. These governance procedures eventually increase the success of sustainable tourism projects.

H5: Multicultural team dynamics and quality of financial decision making: Integrative leadership has a positive impact on sustainable tourism project success indirectly.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This research takes the form of a quantitative research design to empirically test the proposed integrative framework that relates project leadership, multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence, financial decision-making quality, and sustainable tourism project success. The survey-based method was chosen to collect data systematically from the population directly engaged in tourism development projects and to analyze the complex relationships among various constructs. Quantitative survey techniques are widely used in research on tourism and project management to test theoretical frameworks and assess behavioral

relationships among organizational variables.

A multi-source data collection strategy was used to reduce the possibility of common method bias. Two groups of respondents were used to collect data, which included project leaders and project team members. Leaders of the project were informed about the leadership behaviors and financial decision-making practices, and team members rated multicultural team dynamics and perceived project sustainability outcomes. A combination of respondents who participated in the same project will increase the reliability of the information gathered and decrease the single-source bias that is a frequent issue in leadership research.

Figure 1 is a conceptual model that was empirically validated through structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM was chosen since it allows for examining several relationships, such as direct, moderating, and mediating effects between latent constructs simultaneously. This method of analysis is generally suggested to be used in theory-testing research that entails complicated causal connections between organizational variables.

4.2 Sample and Data Collection

The empirical context of the study is the international tourism development projects that have been undertaken in the last five years. Such projects include destination development projects, sustainable tourism programmes, eco-tourism infrastructure projects, as well as hospitality expansion projects. The research setting has been selected as tourism development projects as they frequently presuppose multicultural collaboration and sustainability-oriented objectives in them, which are aligned with the conceptual framework that has been created in the current study.

The professional tourism networks, project management associations and industry contacts operating in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East were also used to recruit the participants. This method of sampling is international, because tourism development is global and the results will more likely be external valid. The respondents were required to have the first-hand experience of working on the tourism development projects of the culturally diverse teams to be qualified.

The prospective respondents were provided with an online questionnaire in a structured form. To make the survey items relevant and to clear up a pilot test was carried out on a small sample of tourism professionals prior to actual collection of the data. Some insignificant adjustments were done in accordance with the feedback at the pilot stage. This was a voluntary and anonymous survey and the respondents were assured that their responses could only be used in the academic study

To ensure that the responses met the desired quality, only questionnaires that were filled and had passed the inclusion criteria of the study were retained to be analyzed. The concluding data consisted of the responses of the project leaders and team members representing various functional areas, including project management, operations, sustainability management, marketing, and stakeholder engagement.

4.3 Measurement of Variables

The measurement of all the constructs in the study was based on the previously validated scales modified according to the literature on leadership, organisational behaviour, and project management. Some slight changes in words were carried out to make them relevant to the context of the tourism project.

Integrative Project Leadership. The items that were used to measure leadership behaviours were based on transformational and project leadership scales that were modified. These items represent the skill of leaders in formulating project objectives, organizing the work of the team, and making decisions jointly.

Multicultural Team Dynamics. The indicators of team dynamics were determined based on the levels of trust, quality of communication, and team cohesion in multicultural project teams. These dimensions are

widely applied to measure the effectiveness of collaboration within the culturally diverse organisational setting.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ). The four-dimensional CQ framework, comprising metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioural dimensions, was used to measure cultural intelligence. These dimensions are used to describe the ability of the individuals to comprehend and adjust to cultural differences when interacting with the team.

Financial Decision-Making Quality. Financial decision-making was measured based on measures that reflect strategic resource allocation, financial governance transparency, and the degree to which financial decisions are based on long-term sustainability goals.

Success in Sustainable Tourism Project. The operationalisation of project success was as a multidimensional construct that encompassed economic viability, environmental sustainability, program, and stakeholder satisfaction. This conceptualisation is broader in the sense that tourism development initiatives have sustainability-oriented goals.

All constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The control variables were the size of the project, project duration, and the level of international diversity in project teams because they can determine the project performance and the outcome of collaboration.

Table 01: Measurement Constructs and Sources

Construct	Description	Sample Item	Source
Integrative Project Leadership	Leadership capability to coordinate collaboration and strategic project direction	“Project leaders effectively coordinate team collaboration.”	Bass & Avolio (1994); Müller & Turner (2010)
Multicultural Team Dynamics	Trust, communication, and cohesion within culturally diverse teams	“Team members openly share ideas despite cultural differences.”	Edmondson (1999); Stahl et al. (2010)
Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	Ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences	“I adjust my behavior when interacting with people from different cultures.”	Ang et al. (2007)
Financial Decision-Making Quality	Strategic and transparent financial decision processes	“Financial decisions consider long-term sustainability.”	Kerzner (2017); Meredith et al. (2019)
Sustainable Tourism Project Success	Achievement of economic, environmental, and stakeholder goals	“The project achieved sustainable outcomes for the destination.”	Bramwell & Lane (2011); Hall (2019)

Note: All constructs were measured using seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

4.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Two-step structural equation modelling was used as a method of data analysis. The **confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)** was conducted in the first step to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement model. The fit was assessed based on the frequently suggested fit indicators, such as the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR).

The second step involved estimation of the structural model to test the hypothesized construct relationships. Direct correlations between leadership, team dynamics, financial decision-making, and project success were considered, and the moderating effect of cultural intelligence. Bootstrapping procedures were used to test the mediation effects and give strong estimates of the indirect effects without the assumption of a normal distribution.

4.5 Reliability and Validity Assessment

Construct reliability and validity were evaluated through a set of statistical criteria. The internal consistency reliability was checked by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Average variance extracted (AVE) was used to measure convergent validity, and the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotraitmonotrait ratios were used to measure discriminant validity.

Procedural and statistical remedies were used in order to overcome the possible common method bias. The application of a series of respondents minimized the chances of single-source bias. Also, a single-factor test was done by Harman to determine whether a single latent factor was the primary cause of the variance in the data. The findings showed that the common method bias was not a major issue in the research.

All the analyses were performed with the help of the existing statistical software, which is widely used in organizational research based on SEM.

5. Results

5.1 Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analysis

Table 2: Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Respondent Role	Project Leaders	122	48.8%
	Team Members	128	51.2%
Region	Europe	90	36.0%
	Asia	95	38.0%
	Middle East	65	26.0%
Project Type	Destination Development	80	32.0%
	Eco-tourism Projects	70	28.0%
	Tourism Infrastructure	60	24.0%
	Hospitality Expansion	40	16.0%

The descriptive statistics were used to analyze the general features of the data and determine the connections between the most important variables to be used in the study. The integrative project leadership, multicultural team dynamics, cultural intelligence (CQ), financial decision-making quality, and sustainable tourism project success were calculated using means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients.

The findings revealed that all the variables had a positive relationship in the desired direction, which gave preliminary evidence of the conceptual framework proposed. Integrative leadership was positively related to multicultural team dynamics, and the quality of financial decision-making was positively related to the success of sustainable tourism projects. These trends indicate that leadership and collaborative processes can be a significant factor in influencing strategic project results in tourism development situations.

Before the structural equation modelling (SEM), multicollinearity and normality assumptions were tested. All constructs had variance inflation factor (VIF) values that were lower than the recommended values, which meant that multicollinearity was not an issue. The skewness and kurtosis values were also within acceptable limits, which indicates that the maximum likelihood estimation procedures can be used to analyze the SEM.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Integrative Leadership	4.85	0.76	—				
2. Multicultural Team Dynamics	4.71	0.80	.48**	—			
3. Cultural Intelligence	4.92	0.74	.41**	.36**	—		
4. Financial Decision-Making	4.67	0.79	.44**	.52**	.39**	—	
5. Sustainable Project Success	4.88	0.72	.46**	.50**	.37**	.55**	—

Note: $p < .05^*$, $*p < .01$.

5.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the reliability and validity of the measurement model and then to test the structural relationships between constructs. The measurement model showed an acceptable overall fit to the data. Fit indices were within generally accepted limits of SEM research, which means that the proposed factor structure was sufficient to describe the observed data.

Table 4: Measurement Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Recommended Threshold	Model Result
Chi-square/df (χ^2/df)	< 3.00	2.11
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90	0.94
Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.90	0.92
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.052
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	< 0.08	0.041

Note: Suggested ranges are according to SEM requirements (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2019).

Their respective constructs had statistically significant item loadings which were above recommended minimum values, and this shows that their indicators are strongly reliable. The values of alpha and composite reliability were compared with the previously set value of alpha and composite reliability which is high-0.70. These results demonstrate that the measurement scales that were used in the study were valid measures of the constructs.

Convergent validity was measured using average variance extracted (AVE). The recommended minimum values of AVE of all constructs were 0.50, and the values of AVE of all constructs exceeded this, which implies that all constructs were capable of explaining a substantial amount of variance in construct indicators. Discriminant validity was tested by the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios. The results established that the construct differences were empirically different.

Overall, the CFA results show the reliability and validity of the measurement model, which is a promising base on which to test the hypothesized structural relationship.

Table 5: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Integrative Leadership	0.89	0.91	0.64
Multicultural Team Dynamics	0.88	0.90	0.61
Cultural Intelligence	0.90	0.92	0.65
Financial Decision-Making	0.87	0.89	0.60
Sustainable Tourism Project Success	0.91	0.93	0.67

Note: CR > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50 indicate adequate reliability and convergent validity.

5.3 Structural Model Results

After the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was estimated to test the hypothesized relationships among constructs. In the structural model, adequate overall fit was observed and this means that the conceptual framework presented is an effective explanation of the success of sustainable tourism projects.

The analysis outcomes revealed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between integrative project leadership and multicultural team dynamics which supports Hypothesis 1. This observation suggests that those leaders emphasizing on teamwork, coordination, and working towards the same project goal are more likely to produce cohesive and effective multicultural teams in tourism development projects.

Cultural intelligence moderating role was then taken into consideration. The results indicated that cultural intelligence was a considerable boost to the correlation between integrative leadership and multicultural team dynamics. Specifically, the positive effect of the leadership on the team process was more evident when leaders were more culturally intelligent. This finding validates Hypothesis 2 and shows that cross-cultural competence is an important element in multicultural projects.

Figure 2. Moderating Effect of Cultural Intelligence on Leadership and Team Dynamics

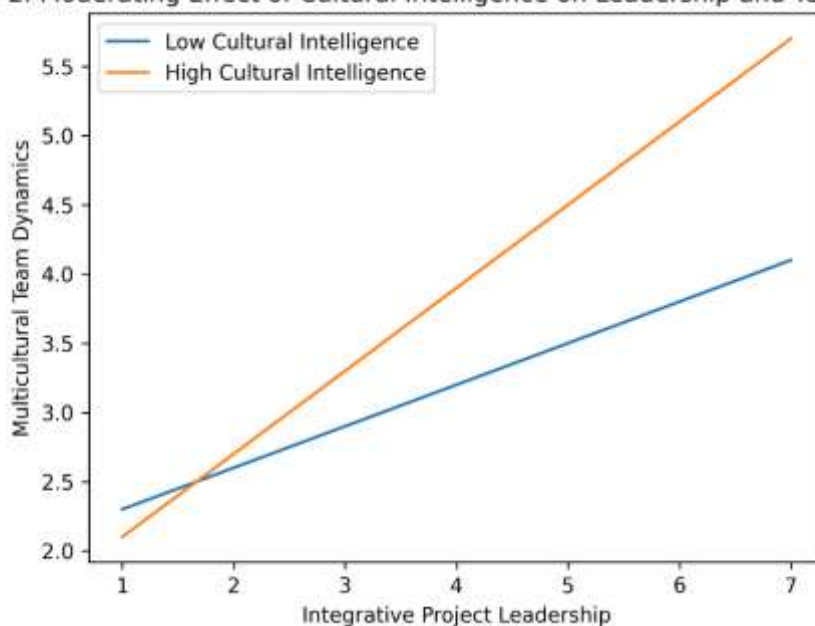


Figure 2. Moderating effect of cultural intelligence on leadership and team dynamics

Then, the relation between the multicultural team dynamics and the quality of the financial decision-making was tested. This led to a positive and statistically significant effect, which was in line with Hypothesis 3. The teams that were described as having high levels of trust, free communication, and involvement in collaborative activities were more likely to produce quality of financial decisions in terms of resource allocation and project planning. It was also found in the analysis that financial decision-making quality is positively and significantly related to the success of sustainable tourism projects. This finding supports **Hypothesis 4**, indicating that projects characterized by transparent and strategically informed financial governance are more likely to achieve economic, environmental, and stakeholder-oriented objectives.

5.4 Mediation Analysis

In order to test the indirect effects hypothesized in the conceptual model, mediation analysis was performed through bootstrapping processes. Bootstrapping is an effective technique to estimate indirect effects through the construction of confidence intervals through repeated resampling of the data.

The results indicated that the integration of a project in the success of sustainable tourism has a strong indirect relation to integrative leadership through multicultural dynamics in the team and quality of financial decision-making. More specifically, team collaboration also improved with the help of integrative leadership, which further facilitated financial decision-making and ultimately delivered sustainable outputs of projects.

The outcome of these findings supports Hypothesis 5, which demonstrates the presence of a sequential mediation effect. The results show that the sustainability implications of leadership are more likely to be realized through collaborative and governance procedures and not through direct behavioral influences.

Table 6: Mediation Analysis Results

Path	Indirect Effect	Bootstrapped CI (Lower)	Bootstrapped CI (Upper)	Result
Leadership → Team Dynamics → Financial Decision-Making	0.19	0.10	0.29	Supported
Leadership → Team → Finance → Project Success	0.24	0.14	0.36	Supported

5.5 Additional Findings

Additional tests were carried out to test the effect of the control factors, including project size, project duration, and team international diversity. The results indicated that the influences of these variables on the primary relationships in the model were not significant. This means that the framework proposed is congruent in the different contexts associated with tourism development projects.

Overall, the structural model explained a large proportion of the success of sustainable tourism projects. The results indicate that integrative leadership, culturally intelligent collaboration, and effective financial governance are relevant in the attainment of sustainable outcomes in tourism development projects.

6. Discussion

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The research is relevant to the literature in tourism management because it constructs and empirically confirms an integrative model of how project leadership, multicultural team processes, cultural

intelligence, and financial decision-making relate to the success of a sustainable tourism project. The results add to the body of existing research on tourism leadership by showing that the effectiveness of leadership in tourism projects is mediated by interdependent behavioral and governance processes and not by leadership style.

To begin with, the findings contribute to the development of the leadership theory in tourism by conceptualizing integrative leadership as a multidimensional capacity that can coordinate collaboration and strategic decision-making at the same time. Although in the past research, the focus is usually on transformational or relational leadership approaches, the results indicate that the effectiveness of leadership in tourism projects is determined by the capacity to match team processes with governance and decision-making systems.

Second, the research is relevant to the multicultural team research in the tourism industry as it demonstrates that team dynamics is a key mediating variable between leadership behavior and strategic project outcomes. Despite the fact that cultural diversity is often discussed as a source of innovation or conflict, the findings show that leadership can turn diversity into a strategic asset through building trust, cohesion, and effective communication. The study brings together team collaboration and financial decision-making, which underscores the wider strategic implications of multicultural teamwork.

Third, cultural intelligence plays a moderating role, which offers a valuable theoretical extension. Past studies on tourism usually focus on cultural intelligence on an individual level, especially when it comes to service experiences or cross-cultural competence. The current results indicate that cultural intelligence improves leadership performance through reinforcing the association between leadership behaviors and team process collaboration. This implies that cultural intelligence can be regarded as not only a personal ability but also a strategic leadership asset in the tourism project contexts.

Fourth, the findings broaden tourism project management literature as it incorporates financial decision-making in behavioral leadership models. Financial governance is commonly regarded as a technical managerial role that is independent of leadership processes. The results are a challenge to this division since they show that teamwork settings have a great impact on the quality of financial decision-making.

Lastly, the research is relevant to the theory of sustainable tourism because it demonstrates that sustainability results are achieved in indirect ways. The effect of leadership on project success involves a series of processes that include teamwork and strategic decision-making. This integrative approach is a response to demands to have more holistic models that could be used to explain the contribution of organizational processes to sustainable tourism outcomes. Lastly, the research contributes to the sustainability tourism theory because it demonstrates that the results of sustainability are achieved by indirect means. Leadership affects the success of projects in a series of steps that entail teamwork and strategy formulation. This integrative view is a reaction to the calls for more holistic models that can explain the contribution of organizational processes to the results of sustainable tourism.

6.2 Practical Implications

There are also certain practical implications of the results for the tourism project managers and organizations. First of all, the leadership development programmes in the tourism organizations should not be reduced to the traditional training of interpersonal influence or motivation. Project leadership requires integrative skills that encompass collaboration, management, and strategic and financially prudent decisions.

Second, the results indicate that the multicultural team dynamics should be proactively controlled in tourism projects. Psychologically safe environments are supposed to be established by the project

managers, whereby open communication, knowledge sharing, and constructive discussions are encouraged. Some of these practices that can strengthen the cohesion of the team and improve the quality of decisions are cross-cultural training, formal team communication, and joint planning.

Third, the cultural intelligence moderating effect means that the tourism organizations should aim at improving the cross-cultural competencies of the project leaders. The training programs on cultural awareness, adaptive communication, and intercultural negotiation can be utilized to enhance the performance of leadership in the international project environment. Cultural intelligence could also be considered as a factor in the selection of leaders to be employed in multinational tourism programs.

Fourth, the findings highlight the need to relate the practices of leadership and financial governance. Tourism organizations tend to separate leadership development and financial management training, yet the results suggest that the two competencies can improve the outcomes of the project considerably. Financially sensitive collaborative leaders have an advantage in leading sustainable tourism projects.

Finally, organizations should learn to value that leadership influences the success of projects indirectly. The effectiveness of leadership can be evaluated through the short-term indicators of leadership performance; however, it may happen that the effectiveness of leadership can be missed regarding its more global impact on the quality of team cooperation and decision-making. These are broader organizational inputs that ought to be considered by the leadership evaluation systems

6.3 Policy Implications

The implications for tourism policy and destination governance are also significant as a result of the results. Sustainable tourism development projects have been described as the collaboration among governments, individual investors, and local communities, creating complex multicultural environments for the project. The policy frameworks that promote collaborative leadership and open governance systems can thus improve the sustainability outcomes.

To begin with, policymakers must understand that sustainable tourism development needs leadership skills that bring together social cooperation, culture, and resource management. Leadership and cultural intelligence training through public programmes can enhance the success of tourism development programs. Second, tourism policy institutions can enhance the results of projects by promoting decision-making frameworks that are collaborative and foster transparency and stakeholder involvement. These strategies have the potential to enhance the alignment of various stakeholders and reach an agreement on the priorities of sustainability. Third, the financial governance systems in tourism development projects must focus on the long-term value creation as opposed to short-term economic benefits. Financial decision-making can be made more aligned with the broader sustainability goals through policies that promote transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. Lastly, the policymakers must realize that leadership and team skills are as significant as investments in infrastructure in the realization of sustainable tourism development. Enhancement of these organizational capabilities among tourism project networks can greatly enhance long term destination performance.

6.4 Integration with Tourism Management Scholarship

On a larger scale, the results support the new trends in tourism management studies that focus on interdisciplinary integration. The study addresses the call to use more holistic approaches that can explain the complex processes of tourism development by synthesizing the knowledge of leadership theory, cross-cultural management, and project governance. The findings demonstrate that sustainable tourism outcomes cannot be comprehended in full under the solitary theoretical viewpoints. Instead, it is not the application of these leadership practices, multicultural collaboration, or strategic governance mechanisms

that cause project success. This integrative strategy generates future research in tourism to transcend the fragmented research and adopt models that demonstrate the dynamic interconnection of leadership, collaboration, and organizational decision-making.

The strategies are particularly applicable to the sphere of tourism projects that are increasingly being carried out in the global environment, which is characterized by cultural diversity, sustainability requirements, and complex relations with stakeholders.

7. Conclusion

The paper has examined how integrative project leadership has contributed to the success of sustainable tourism development projects in multicultural environments. The study proposed, and empirically supported by means of the insights into the leadership theory, multicultural team study, and project governance, the research provided its suggestions for a model that links integrative leadership, multicultural team processes, cultural intelligence, quality of financial decision making, and sustainable tourism project performance.

The findings show that leadership plays a very important role in the performance of sustainable tourism, not through the direct behavioral effects but through the indirect organizational processes. It was observed that the integrative leadership enhances multicultural team dynamics, which in turn increases the quality of financial decisions in tourism development projects. Such mechanisms of governance later contributed to the higher level of sustainable project success. In addition, cultural intelligence was an intermediate variable since it increased the relationship between leadership behaviors and multicultural cooperation.

The results show the importance of interpersonal coordination, cross-cultural competence, and strategic governance leadership skills. The ability to coordinate different teams and guide the decision-making process toward the establishment of long-term value is required in the case of effective leaders in tourism development situations, when the relationships of different stakeholders are complicated, and sustainability goals are to be realized.

Theoretically, the research study shall be applicable to the literature on tourism management in that it introduces behavioral leadership processes under the same concept structure as multicultural collaboration systems and financial governance systems. The study adds to the current research on the concept of leadership in the tourism development contexts by demonstrating how leadership could be transformed into a sustainable outcome through collaborative and strategic avenues.

In practice, the findings reveal that the program of leadership development emphasizing cultural intelligence, team management, and strategic financial decision-making is the domain that should be taught by tourism organizations and destination stakeholders. These capabilities can be used to help organizations to manage increasingly complex tourism projects and simultaneously deliver long term sustainable outcomes on destinations and communities.

8. Limitations and Future Research

In spite of its contributions, this research has a number of limitations that must be noted. To begin with, the research design used was a cross-sectional research design, thus making it impossible to make strong causal inferences about the relationship between leadership and team dynamics and project outcomes. Future studies would use longitudinal designs to study the dynamics of leadership processes through the life cycle of tourism development projects.

Second, the research was based on the perceptual survey measures that were mostly reported by the project

leaders and team members. Though the multi-source data collection procedures were used to minimize the common method bias, future research can enhance the empirical validity by including the objective performance measures, financial measures, or longitudinal project data.

Third, the empirical situation was concentrated on the international tourism development projects with multicultural teams. Although this context can offer useful information regarding the nature of cross-cultural collaboration, the results might not necessarily be fully applicable to smaller-scale tourism projects or undertakings that take place within a single cultural context. Future research may consider the examination of whether the proposed framework can be used in other tourism areas like community-based tourism, heritage tourism, or hospitality development projects.

Finally, the paper has discussed cultural intelligence as a moderating factor that influences the effectiveness of leadership. Future researches may consider additional contextual issues affecting leadership in tourism development projects such as institutional, governance, or the stakeholder network circumstances. Studies on such areas can provide a more profound comprehension of the role leadership capabilities could have in the sustainable tourism results in multifaceted project ecosystems.

Overall, the present paper can be used as a foundation of the additional studies on integrative leadership in the context of tourism development projects and also suggests that the behavioral approach, combined with the cultural one and the governance approach are essential in the discussion of success of sustainable tourism projects.

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