

Strategic Leadership, Innovation Management Capability, Government Policy Management, Social Capital and Network Management Affecting the Sustainability of Cultural Tourism in Chiang Mai Province

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Abstract

This study examined the levels and structural relationships of strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, network and social capital management, and sustainable cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, and developed an integrated sustainability framework. A mixed-methods research design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to 400 stakeholders involved in cultural tourism and analyzed using descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling (SEM). Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 20 purposively selected informants representing tourism networks, government agencies, private enterprises, and civil society. The findings indicated high to very high levels across all five constructs. The adjusted structural model demonstrated acceptable fit with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 121.035$, $df = 101$, $p = .085$, $RMSEA = .022$, $CFI = .99$). Government policy management ($\beta = .43$) and strategic leadership ($\beta = .21$) showed statistically significant positive direct relationships with sustainable cultural tourism. Although network and social capital management exhibited a positive coefficient ($\beta = .25$), its direct relationship was not statistically significant ($t = 1.23$). The model explained 90%, 92%, and 74% of the variance in innovation management capability, network and social capital management, and sustainable cultural tourism, respectively. Qualitative findings highlighted the complementary roles of leadership, innovation, institutional support, and stakeholder collaboration. The resulting SIGCS framework emphasizes integrated governance and organizational capabilities as relevant conditions for cultural tourism sustainability. These findings offer practical implications for participatory policy development, innovation support, and coordinated destination management in Chiang Mai, while underscoring the need for independent model validation.

Keywords: Sustainable Cultural Tourism; Strategic Leadership; Innovation Management; Government Policy; Social Capital; Structural Equation Modeling; Chiang Mai

Introduction

Cultural tourism can generate economic opportunities for local communities while presenting challenges related to cultural heritage preservation, environmental protection, and community participation. Sustainable tourism development therefore requires an integrated approach that addresses economic, sociocultural, and environmental considerations (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] & World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2005). In Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, the study's focus on Lanna cultural heritage brings these considerations into a shared context of tourism development and heritage conservation. Addressing them requires coordination among public agencies, tourism enterprises, and local communities. Tourism governance and collaborative planning provide relevant perspectives for understanding how these interdependent stakeholders participate in destination management (Hall, 2011; Jamal & Getz, 1995).

Several theoretical perspectives inform the examination of organizational capabilities and stakeholder relationships in sustainable cultural tourism. The resource-based view explains how valuable organizational resources and capabilities can contribute to sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Dynamic capabilities theory extends this perspective by emphasizing the capacity to integrate and reconfigure resources in response to changing environments (Teece, 2007; Teece et al.,

[1]

1997). Social capital theory, in turn, highlights the resources embedded in social relationships and the importance of trust, shared norms, and networks in facilitating collective action (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). These perspectives provide a theoretical basis for examining how leadership, innovation capability, policy management, and stakeholder networks relate to sustainable cultural tourism. However, their respective relationships with sustainability in Chiang Mai require empirical examination.

Accordingly, this study examines the structural relationships among strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, network and social capital management, and sustainable cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province. It evaluates eight prespecified hypotheses and uses the quantitative findings and qualitative insights to develop an integrated SIGCS framework. The study seeks to distinguish relationships supported by the empirical evidence from theoretically plausible relationships that are not supported by the estimated model. Because the quantitative component employs a cross-sectional design, the estimated structural paths are interpreted as associations within the proposed model rather than definitive evidence of causal effects (Kline, 2016). The findings are intended to inform policy coordination, organizational capability development, and stakeholder collaboration for sustainable cultural tourism.

Research Objectives

(1) To examine the levels of strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, network and social capital management, and the sustainability of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province.

(2) To investigate the influence of strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, and network and social capital management on the sustainability of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province.

(3) To develop a sustainability model for cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on innovation management capability.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on innovation management capability.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Innovation management capability has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Network and social capital management has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Literature Review

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on innovation management capability.

Strategic leadership may strengthen innovation management capability by aligning organizational resources with long-term priorities, supporting learning, and maintaining an adaptive strategic direction. The resource-based view identifies valuable organizational resources and capabilities as potential foundations for sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Strategic leadership research further emphasizes the importance of organizational learning, adaptability, and the coordination of resources in pursuing strategic objectives (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Ireland & Hitt, 1999). Dynamic capabilities theory explains how organizations integrate and reconfigure

resources to respond to changing environmental conditions (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). Applied to cultural tourism, these perspectives suggest that strategic leaders can create organizational conditions that support the development and implementation of innovative practices. They therefore provide a theoretical rationale for H1.

Government policy management represents a complementary institutional condition that may support innovation and collaboration. Institutional theory explains how formal rules and informal norms shape organizational behavior and resource use (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). Collaborative governance research emphasizes institutional design, stakeholder participation, and the capacity for joint action across organizational boundaries (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). In cultural tourism, these perspectives suggest that policy management may help establish the conditions under which organizations develop innovation capabilities, coordinate stakeholder networks, and pursue sustainability objectives. These proposed relationships are examined through H2, H6, and H7.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on innovation management capability.

Government policy management may strengthen innovation management capability by establishing coherent policy objectives, facilitating access to resources, and supporting organizational learning. Institutional theory provides a basis for understanding how regulatory arrangements, incentives, and shared expectations influence organizational activities (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). Dynamic capabilities theory also recognizes the importance of adapting organizational resources and competencies to changing external conditions (Teece et al., 1997). Edler and Fagerberg (2017) explain that innovation policy encompasses interventions intended to influence the development, diffusion, and use of innovation. Together, these perspectives suggest that coherent policies and appropriate support mechanisms may improve the capacity of cultural tourism organizations to develop and implement innovative practices.

Within cultural tourism, policy support may facilitate innovation through stakeholder collaboration, knowledge exchange, and opportunities to develop new services and organizational practices. Ansell and Gash (2008) identify institutional design, dialogue, and trust-building as important conditions for collaborative governance, while Hjalager (2010) describes tourism innovation as encompassing products, processes, management, and institutional arrangements. In Chiang Mai Province, support for digital applications, cultural heritage interpretation, tourism product development, and community participation represents a set of potential policy mechanisms rather than established outcomes. This study therefore proposes that stronger government policy management is positively associated with innovation management capability, as specified in H2.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Strategic leadership may contribute to cultural tourism sustainability by establishing a long-term direction and aligning organizational decisions with economic, cultural, and environmental priorities. Chimakati and Nzinga (2023) discuss the value of integrating different strategic perspectives to develop organizational responses suited to changing conditions. Their work provides a general rationale for strategic adaptability rather than direct evidence of cultural tourism sustainability. When considered alongside tourism governance research, strategic leadership may help organizations balance stakeholder interests, allocate resources responsibly, and maintain attention to heritage conservation and community benefits (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011). These proposed mechanisms provide the theoretical basis for H3, which requires empirical testing in the Chiang Mai context.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Strategic leadership has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Strategic leadership may support network and social capital management by developing a shared direction, encouraging participation, and sustaining relationships among stakeholders. In their conceptual analysis of university leadership in Zimbabwe, Gore and Kanyangale (2022) identify personal social capital, collective sense-making, and inclusive envisioning as relevant components of strategic leadership. Mohammed and Kadhém (2020) similarly discuss how participation, empowerment, and communication can encourage cooperation within organizations. Although these studies do not establish a direct relationship between strategic leadership and tourism network

management, their arguments suggest mechanisms through which leaders may facilitate collaboration. Applied to cultural tourism, these mechanisms may help stakeholders develop shared goals and coordinate their activities, providing a theoretical rationale for H4.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Innovation management capability has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Innovation management capability may strengthen network and social capital management by enabling organizations to exchange knowledge, combine complementary resources, and undertake joint development activities. Aas and Breunig (2017) conceptualize innovation capabilities as contingent on the novelty of innovation and market conditions, highlighting the different roles of organizational, human, and social capital across innovation contexts. Their framework suggests that innovation capability involves more than the introduction of new products or services; it also concerns the capacity to mobilize and reconfigure relevant knowledge and resources. In cultural tourism, organizations that manage these processes effectively may be better positioned to sustain stakeholder relationships and collaborative initiatives. This theoretical application supports the proposed positive relationship in H5 without treating it as an already established empirical finding.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on network and social capital management.

Government policy management may shape the institutional arrangements through which stakeholders participate, coordinate activities, and develop collaborative relationships. Ansell and Gash (2008) identify inclusive participation, institutional design, face-to-face dialogue, and trust-building as important elements of collaborative governance. Emerson et al. (2012) further explain how principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action contribute to collaboration across organizational boundaries. Applied to cultural tourism, clear participation procedures, transparent decision-making, and consistent coordination mechanisms may help public agencies, private enterprises, and communities develop shared understanding and workable partnerships. These mechanisms provide a theoretical basis for expecting a positive relationship between government policy management and network and social capital management, as proposed in H6.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Government policy management has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Sustainable tourism governance requires coordination across economic development, cultural conservation, environmental protection, and stakeholder participation (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011). Policy management may contribute to this coordination by clarifying responsibilities, supporting implementation, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring tourism outcomes. However, the effectiveness of governance arrangements depends on institutional capacity, stakeholder relationships, and local conditions (Ruhanen et al., 2010; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). In Chiang Mai Province, coherent policy management may therefore help align tourism development with heritage conservation and community priorities. This reasoning supports H7 while recognizing that the proposed relationship must be evaluated empirically.

Innovation capability may also support stakeholder relationships through knowledge exchange and joint problem-solving. Absorptive capacity concerns the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply external knowledge, while the relational view explains how interorganizational relationships can generate value through complementary resources and knowledge-sharing routines (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Dyer & Singh, 1998). Tourism innovation encompasses service, process, managerial, and institutional developments (Hjalager, 2010), and network analysis provides a means of examining the relationships through which destination actors interact (Baggio et al., 2010). These perspectives reinforce the theoretical rationale for the innovation–network relationship in H5. They do not establish a direct innovation–sustainability relationship, which is not specified in the present structural model.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Network and social capital management has a direct positive influence on the sustainability of cultural tourism.

Social capital refers to resources embedded in social relationships that may facilitate cooperation and collective action. Trust, shared expectations, and social connections can support the exchange of information and the coordination of activities among stakeholders (Coleman, 1988;

Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam, 2000). In cultural tourism, managing these relational resources may help public agencies, businesses, and communities coordinate heritage conservation and tourism development. Nevertheless, network participation and trust do not necessarily translate into effective implementation. Provan and Kenis (2008) explain that network effectiveness depends on governance arrangements and their fit with network conditions. H8 therefore proposes a positive direct relationship between network and social capital management and cultural tourism sustainability while recognizing that its direction, magnitude, and statistical significance must be determined through empirical analysis.

Research Conceptual Framework

This research on strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, and network and social capital management influencing the sustainability of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province is developed based on a review of relevant documents, theories, concepts, and previous studies. The conceptual framework is constructed using an integrated approach, aiming to explain the causal relationships among five key latent variables: (1) strategic leadership, (2) innovation management capability, (3) government policy management, (4) network and social capital management, and (5) the sustainability of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province.

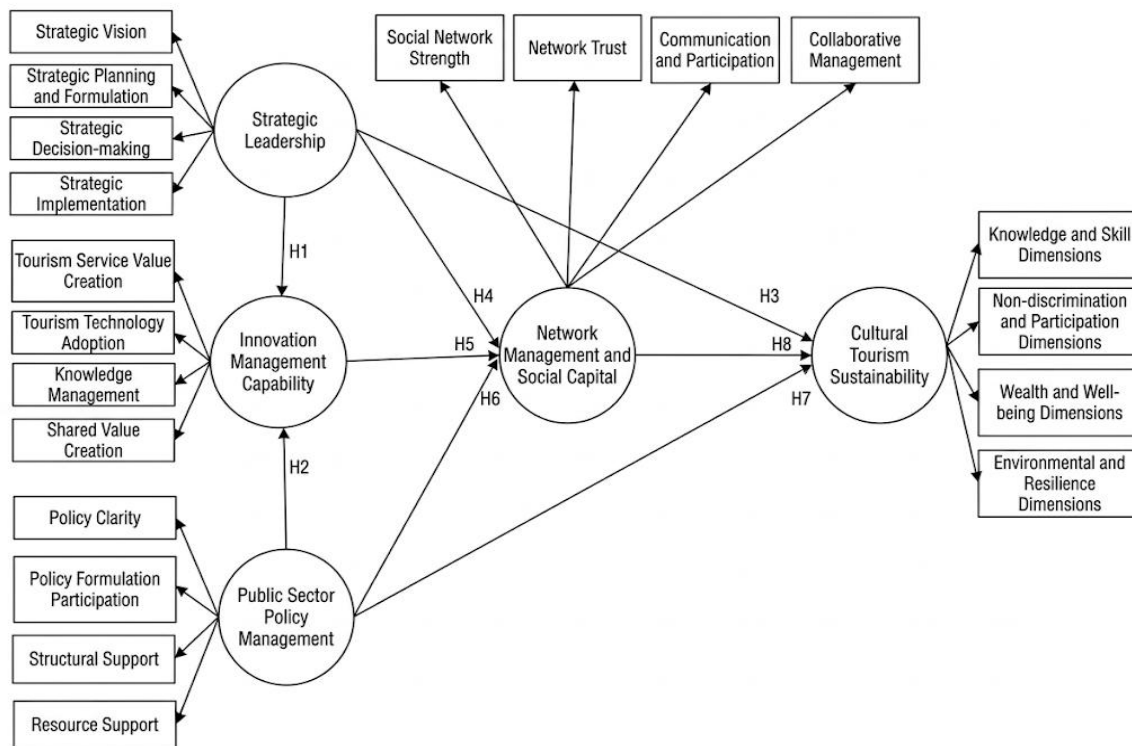


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The population of this study consists of key stakeholders who play a direct role in policy formulation, management, and the development of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province. These include tourism cluster networks, the public sector, the private sector, and the civil society sector. Since the exact population size is unknown, purposive sampling was employed by defining specific characteristics of participants who are directly involved in cultural tourism.

The sample size was determined based on the ratio of observed variables, using a proportion of 1:20. In this study, there are 20 observed variables; therefore, the sample size was set at 400 respondents. The samples were selected using purposive sampling.

For the qualitative component, key informants were selected from four groups: 5 participants from tourism cluster networks, 5 from the public sector, 5 from the private sector, and 5 from the civil

society sector, totaling 20 participants. These participants were also selected using purposive sampling.

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain comprehensive data. Secondary data were collected through a review of literature, concepts, theories, and related research, while primary data were obtained from questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire developed based on the literature review. It consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions and is divided into three parts as follows:

Part 1: General information of respondents, including gender, age, educational level, and affiliated organization.

Part 2: Questions measuring the levels of key variables ได้แก่ strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, network and social capital management, and the sustainability of cultural tourism, using a 5-point Likert scale.

Part 3: Additional suggestions, presented in an open-ended format.

The research instrument was validated for content validity by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In addition, composite reliability (CR) was examined, with all variables showing values not lower than 0.70, indicating that the instrument has an acceptable level of reliability.

For data collection, the researcher collected data from 400 respondents using questionnaires as the primary tool. All questionnaires were checked for completeness before being used for data analysis.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics—including mean and standard deviation—were used to describe the characteristics of the data. Inferential statistics were also applied, specifically Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), to conduct confirmatory factor analysis.

Results

1. The levels of strategic leadership and innovation management capability were found to be at the highest level, with mean scores of 4.20 and 4.22, respectively. Meanwhile, government policy management (4.07), network and social capital management (4.19), and the sustainability of cultural tourism (4.18) were at a high level.

2. Strategic leadership, government policy management, and network and social capital management have direct positive effects on the sustainability of cultural tourism in Chiang Mai Province, with path coefficients of 0.21, 0.43, and 0.25, respectively, at a statistical significance level of 0.05. These variables together explain 74.00% of the variance in cultural tourism sustainability. In addition, innovation management capability, government policy management, and strategic leadership have direct positive effects on network and social capital management, with path coefficients of 0.33, 0.61, and 0.38, respectively, at a statistical significance level of 0.05. Together, they explain 92.00% of the variance in network and social capital management. At the same time, government policy management and strategic leadership have direct positive effects on innovation management capability, with path coefficients of 0.68 and 0.30, respectively, at a statistical significance level of 0.05. These variables jointly explain 90.00% of the variance in innovation management capability.

3. The results of the model fit analysis indicate the consistency between the empirical data and the hypothesized structural equation model (SEM).

The researcher constructed a covariance matrix from all observed variables included in the structural equation model. This covariance matrix was then used for analyzing the hypothesized structural equation model. Parameter estimation was conducted using the Maximum Likelihood method with the AMOS software package. The goodness-of-fit between the proposed model and the empirical data was evaluated using several statistical indices, including χ^2 (Chi-square), relative χ^2 , GFI, AGFI, RMR, SRMR, RMSEA, the p-value for the test of close fit, and CN (Hair et al., 2022; Kline, 2016).

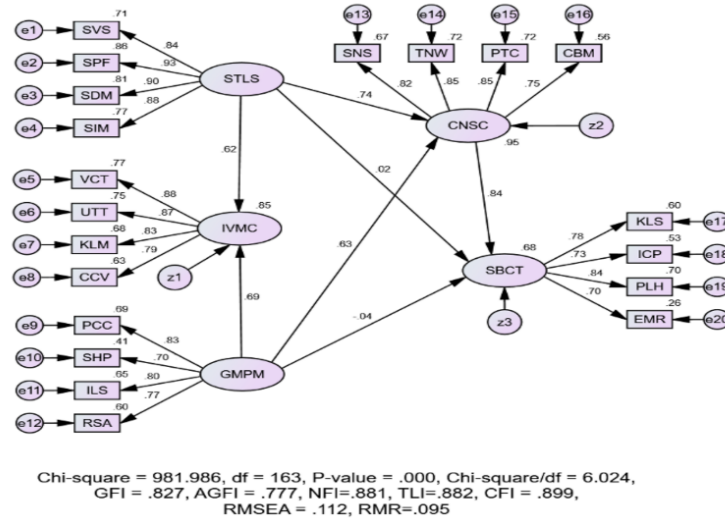


Figure 2: Results of the Structural Equation Model Analysis Based on the Hypothesis (Standardized Solution)

The results of the structural equation model (SEM) analysis based on the hypothesized model revealed that the model was not consistent with the empirical data. This was indicated by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 981.986$, $df = 163$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$, relative $\chi^2 = 6.02$; $GFI = 0.82$; $AGFI = 0.77$; $RMR = 0.095$; $SRMR = 0.095$; $RMSEA = 0.112$; $NFI = 0.88$; $IFI = 0.89$; $CFI = 0.89$; and $CN = 79$. These values did not meet the acceptable criteria, indicating that the hypothesized structural equation model (Hypothesis Model) did not fit the empirical data (Model Non-Fit). Consequently, the estimated path coefficients lacked sufficient reliability for practical application. The researcher therefore presented a figure illustrating the hypothesized model that did not fit the empirical data.

After revising and improving the structural equation model (Adjusted Model) by allowing the error variances (θ) of all pairs of observed variables to correlate, the results showed that the adjusted model achieved an acceptable level of fit with the empirical data. This was evidenced by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 121.035$, $df = 101$, $p\text{-value} = 0.085$; relative $\chi^2 = 1.19$; $GFI = 0.97$; $AGFI = 0.94$; $RMR = 0.006$; $SRMR = 0.015$; $RMSEA = 0.022$; $NFI = 0.98$; $IFI = 0.99$; $CFI = 0.99$; and $CN = 414$. These results provide strong support for accepting the parameter estimates, including direct effects and total effects, derived from the adjusted model. The detailed statistical evaluation of the adjusted model is presented as follows:

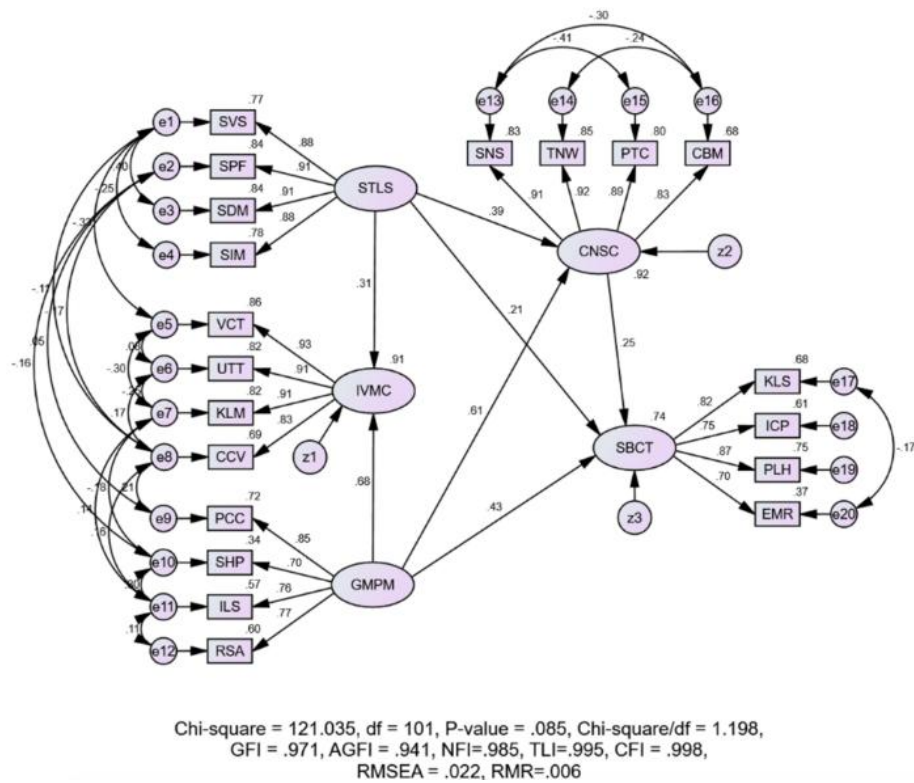


Figure 3: The revised and developed structural equation model is consistent with the empirical data, presented in standardized estimates (Standardized Solution)

From the analysis of the revised structural equation model, the estimated parameters of the direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects can be presented, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated Parameters of Direct Effects, Indirect Effects, and Total Effects of the Revised Structural Equation Model

Dependent Variables	R ²	Effects	Innovation Management Capability (IVMC)	Government Policy Management (GMPM)	Strategic Leadership (STLS)	Network and Social Capital Management (CNSC)
Innovation Management Capability (IVMC)	0.91	Direct effect	-	0.68*(9.93)	0.30*(5.04)	-
		Indirect effect	-	-	-	-
		Total effect	-	0.68*(9.93)	0.30*(5.04)	-
Network and Social Capital Management (CNSC)	0.92	Direct effect	0.33*(5.31)	0.61*(10.31)	0.38*(7.12)	-
		Indirect effect	-	-	-	-
		Total effect	0.33*(5.31)	0.61*(10.31)	0.38*(7.12)	-
Sustainability of Cultural Tourism (SBCT)	0.74	Direct effect	-	0.43*(2.61)	0.21*(2.07)	0.25*(1.23)
		Indirect effect	-	0.15*(1.17)	0.09*(1.10)	-
		Total effect	-	0.58*(2.89)	0.30*(2.32)	0.25*(1.23)

$\chi^2 = 121.035$, $df = 101$, $p\text{-value} = 0.085$; Relative $\chi^2 = 1.19$; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.94; RMR = 0.006; SRMR = 0.015; RMSEA = 0.022; NFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; CN = 414

* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Note: The values in parentheses represent the t -statistics. If the values fall outside the range of -1.96 to 1.96 , the corresponding effect coefficients are considered statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

3. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Cultural Tourism Sustainability Model in Chiang Mai Province

From Table 1, it was found that the developed and revised structural equation model (Adjusted Model) is consistent with the empirical data. This is supported by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 121.035$, $df = 101$, $p\text{-value} = 0.085$; Relative $\chi^2 = 1.19$; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.94; RMR = 0.006; SRMR = 0.015; RMSEA = 0.022; NFI = 0.98; IFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; and CN = 414, all of which meet the established criteria (Hair et al., 2022; Kline, 2016). Furthermore, the estimation of parameter coefficients for the latent variables in the structural model revealed that government policy management and strategic leadership are key factors directly influencing innovation management capability, with effect coefficients of 0.68 and 0.30, respectively, at a statistical significance level of 0.05. In addition, innovation management capability, government policy management, and strategic leadership were found to have significant direct effects on network and social capital management, with effect coefficients of 0.33, 0.61, and 0.38, respectively. Regarding the sustainability of cultural tourism, government policy management, strategic leadership, and network and social capital management showed positive direct effects, with coefficients of 0.43, 0.21, and 0.25, respectively. However, the effect of network and social capital management was not statistically significant. Meanwhile, government policy management and strategic leadership also exert indirect effects through network and social capital management, resulting in increased total effects on sustainability of 0.58 and 0.30, respectively. Moreover, the model demonstrates a high level of explanatory power for key variables. It explains 90% of the variance in innovation management capability, 92% of the variance in network and social capital management, and 74% of the variance in the sustainability of cultural tourism.

4. Results of Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis revealed that the sustainability of cultural tourism arises from the integration of multiple factors operating systematically. Strategic leadership serves as the primary driving force in shaping the direction of development through vision, planning, and decision-making aligned with the local identity. At the same time, innovation management capability plays a crucial role as a catalyst in enhancing the quality of tourism, particularly in terms of value creation, the application of technology, and knowledge development. This enables the tourism system to continuously adapt and respond to changing demands.

In addition, government policy management acts as a key structural mechanism that ensures clarity and continuity in development, reduces uncertainty, and builds confidence among stakeholders. It also promotes participation and resource support at various levels. Meanwhile, network and social capital management functions as the foundational base of the system by strengthening collaboration, trust, and communication among different sectors, thereby reducing conflicts and facilitating joint decision-making.

Therefore, the sustainability of cultural tourism does not result from any single factor alone but rather from the synergistic interaction of strategic leadership, innovation management capability, government policy management, and network and social capital management. These elements are holistically interconnected, enabling the tourism system to develop sustainably.

Discussion

The reported qualitative findings highlight strategic vision and planning, innovation and knowledge development, institutional policy support, and stakeholder collaboration as relevant dimensions of sustainable cultural tourism. These themes are broadly consistent with the study's conceptual framework and with collaborative governance research emphasizing shared understanding, institutional arrangements, and capacity for joint action (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). However, the absence of interview transcripts, a documented coding audit

trail, and illustrative participant quotations limits the assessment of how these themes were derived. The qualitative findings should therefore be interpreted as contextual insights that complement the quantitative results, with their credibility and analytical depth requiring further documentation.

Government policy management was described as supporting policy continuity, coordination, stakeholder participation, and access to resources, whereas network and social capital management was described as facilitating communication and stakeholder relationships. These themes suggest possible mechanisms through which institutional support and collaboration may contribute to tourism development. Nevertheless, qualitative accounts of the perceived importance of networks do not establish a statistically significant direct relationship between network and social capital management and sustainable cultural tourism. The estimated CNSC–SBCT path was positive but nonsignificant ($\beta = .25$, $t = 1.23$). This distinction is consistent with the argument that network effectiveness depends on governance arrangements and the conditions under which collaboration occurs, rather than on network participation alone (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Taken together, the quantitative results and reported qualitative themes suggest that leadership, innovation capability, policy management, and stakeholder networks may play complementary roles in cultural tourism development. However, the findings do not demonstrate that all four constructs have independent direct effects on sustainability. Instead, the estimated model indicates differentiated relationships: government policy management and strategic leadership were significantly associated with sustainable cultural tourism, innovation management capability was associated with network and social capital management, and the direct CNSC–SBCT relationship was not statistically significant. The SIGCS framework should therefore be regarded as a provisional account of these relationships, requiring further measurement validation and replication before broader conclusions can be drawn (Kline, 2016).

Government policy management showed the strongest statistically significant direct association with sustainable cultural tourism ($\beta = .43$), followed by strategic leadership ($\beta = .21$). These findings are consistent with tourism governance scholarship emphasizing policy coordination, stakeholder participation, and institutional capacity (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Hall, 2011; Ruhanen et al., 2010). Government policy management was also positively associated with innovation management capability ($\beta = .68$) and network and social capital management ($\beta = .61$), suggesting that supportive institutional arrangements may be relevant to both organizational adaptation and stakeholder collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). Strategic leadership was associated with innovation management capability and network and social capital management, which is theoretically consistent with perspectives emphasizing resource alignment, strategic direction, and organizational adaptation (Barney, 1991; Ireland & Hitt, 1999; Teece et al., 1997). Innovation management capability was positively associated with network and social capital management ($\beta = .33$), a finding consistent with the roles of knowledge exchange, complementary resources, and collaborative learning in innovation (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Hjalager, 2010). However, the model did not test a direct IVMC–SBCT path, so no conclusion can be drawn about a direct relationship between innovation management capability and sustainability. Likewise, the nonsignificant CNSC–SBCT coefficient ($\beta = .25$, $t = 1.23$) does not support H8, although it should not be interpreted as proof that networks and social capital are irrelevant to sustainability. Social capital may facilitate collective action, while the effectiveness of that action depends on governance structures and implementation conditions (Coleman, 1988; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Putnam, 2000). Resource constraints, limited decision-making authority, construct overlap, and model specification are possible explanations for the nonsignificant relationship, but these explanations were not tested in this study. The cross-sectional design, purposive sampling, incomplete reporting of measurement validity, and extensive residual covariance adjustments further limit causal interpretation and generalizability (Kline, 2016). The findings suggest practical priorities for participatory policy coordination, leadership development, innovation support, and network arrangements with clear implementation responsibilities. Future research should report complete confirmatory factor analysis results and validity evidence, clarify sampling procedures, document qualitative analysis, evaluate indirect relationships using bootstrapped confidence intervals, and assess the model using independent or longitudinal samples.

Conclusion

The study identifies significant positive structural relationships between government policy management and sustainable cultural tourism and between strategic leadership and sustainable cultural tourism. The hypothesized direct network and social capital management relationship was not statistically significant. Innovation management capability was associated with network management, but its direct association with sustainability was not tested. The SIGCS framework provides a provisional integrated perspective requiring independent validation before broad application.

Practical and Policy Implications

Chiang Mai tourism authorities should coordinate cultural heritage, tourism, community development, and environmental policies through transparent, participatory mechanisms. Tourism organizations should develop strategic leadership and knowledge-sharing capabilities, while innovation programs should emphasize locally appropriate services and cultural value. Network-building initiatives should include decision-making authority, resources, implementation responsibilities, and measurable outcomes rather than assuming that trust alone ensures sustainability (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Provan & Kenis, 2008; UNEP & UNWTO, 2005).

Limitations and Future Research

The study is limited by its cross-sectional design, purposive sampling, self-report measurement, incomplete reporting of factor loadings and validity statistics, and extensive post hoc error-covariance adjustments. Interview transcripts and coding details were not available for verification. Future research should test the SIGCS model in independent samples, evaluate alternative theoretically specified pathways, examine multicollinearity and measurement validity, and use longitudinal designs and bootstrapped indirect-effect confidence intervals where appropriate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kline, 2016).

Recommendations

1. Development of Strategic Leadership and Policy: Strategic leadership should be strengthened at all levels, with an emphasis on establishing a long-term vision aligned with local identity. Decision-making should be based on empirical data, and government policies should be clearly defined, consistent, and inclusive of participation from all sectors. In addition, appropriate infrastructure and resource support should be provided.

2. Promotion of Innovation and Capacity Development: Support systems for innovation in cultural tourism should be enhanced, such as the application of digital technologies, the design of new tourism experiences, and knowledge management. Furthermore, learning opportunities, workforce skill development, and supporting mechanisms—such as funding schemes or innovation incubators—should be promoted.

3. Strengthening Networks and Sustainability. The strength of collaborative networks among the public sector, private sector, and communities should be reinforced, with a focus on participation, transparency, and trust. This should be accompanied by sustainable tourism development across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, as well as long-term planning for risk management and tourism carrying capacity.

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