

East or west, home is the best: the nexus between government-public relationship, patriotism and tourism ethnocentrism in emerging tourism destinations

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to shed light on the under-researched relationship between government–public relationship and tourism ethnocentrism via patriotism in emerging tourism destinations. The study empirically test the determinant role of government–public relationship and patriotism on tourism ethnocentrism within the theoretical lens of social exchange theory.

Keywords Government–public relationship, Patriotism, Tourism ethnocentrism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The holistic development of the domestic tourism economy in any destination must be supported by destination residents whose lives are sustained by tourism (Kock *et al.*, 2019; Lever *et al.*, 2022). Destination residents play a key role in creating a welcoming atmosphere for visitors, thus providing the genuine tourist experience through their culture and hospitality (Davari *et al.*, 2024; Mendes, 2024). On the flip side of their role, residents can extend their engagement to support the local tourism by visiting and spending within their own country. This helps to sustain the industry, especially during off-peak seasons or when the international tourism is limited (Buhalis *et al.*, 2023; Kowalczyk-Anioł and Pawlusiński, 2021; Sharma and Hasti, 2024). Recently, scholarly efforts have increasingly focused on residents as value co-creators (Begashe *et al.*, 2024; Chao, 2024), in contrast to earlier studies that concentrated heavily on tourists and placed residents on the periphery of tourism development (Aleshinloye *et al.*, 2022; Wassler *et al.*, 2019, 2021). In the majority of tourism destinations, particularly in developing countries, residents are considered merely as hosts and are thus misrepresented in shaping tourism in their home countries (Amani, 2022; Stone and Nyaupane, 2020). It is widely acknowledged that the misrepresentation and exclusion of



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local residents in tourism development result in promoting a Western-centric view of tourism (Amani, 2024; Chao, 2024; Stone and Nyaupane, 2020).

Additionally, it has been observed that in many developing countries, tourism promotion reinforces stereotypes, confines spaces and falsely depicts the country to cater to Western tourists (Stone and Nyaupane, 2020). Furthermore, residents in most tourism destinations in developing countries feel that domestic tourism promotion fails to accurately portray their destinations (Chao, 2024), while destination management organizations (DMOs) regard protected areas primarily as attractions for Westerners (Stone and Nyaupane, 2020). This perspective has led to several negative impacts, one being low support for the domestic tourism economy from residents. In the few destinations where residents participate in shaping the domestic tourism economy (Begashe *et al.*, 2024), their support is minimal, primarily through their representatives in decision-making regarding tourism (Wassler *et al.*, 2021). Residents should be the central focus of planners and managers in DMOs to ensure they are proud and satisfied with the domestic tourism economy (Amani, 2024; Chao, 2024; Zenker *et al.*, 2017). The holistic development of the domestic tourism economy in any destination must be supported by residents whose lives are sustained by tourism (Kock *et al.*, 2019; Lever *et al.*, 2022). Recent studies indicate that these residents are likely to develop an intention to support the tourism economy (Wassler *et al.*, 2021; Zhang and Xu, 2019). The importance of residents in strengthening the domestic tourism economy has increased scholarly interest in examining residents' attitudes and reactions toward this sector (Li *et al.*, 2022; Neuts *et al.*, 2021).

Seminal works advocating for resident-dominant logic in tourism have supported tourism ethnocentrism, a prescriptive belief complemented by feelings of obligation to support the domestic tourism economy (Kock *et al.*, 2019; Lever *et al.*, 2022; Todorović *et al.*, 2023). Tourism ethnocentrism represents a form of domestic tourism economy driven by, among other things:

- residents spending their holidays domestically and encouraging others to do the same; and
- residents demonstrating patriotic tendencies by defending the superiority of their domestic tourism economy and supporting their country as a tourist destination.

Tourism ethnocentrism positions residents as stakeholders who should perform multiple roles beyond merely being hosts or active beneficiaries of the domestic tourism economy (Amani, 2024). In developing countries, there is an agenda to counter the notion that traveling to support domestic tourism is a Western behavior and that non-Westerners are non-travelers (Stone and Nyaupane, 2020). Amidst this challenge, stakeholders are increasingly pressuring DMOs to make a significant shift, placing residents at the heart of sustainable tourism development (Bowen and Sotomayor, 2022).

According to Amani (2024), DMOs should redesign their management approach by adopting and embracing a bottom-up strategy to create strategic relationships and partnerships between residents and tourism destinations. This shift does not aim to diminish the importance of tourists in building competitive tourism destinations; instead, it emphasizes the central role of residents in sustainable tourism development (Chao, 2024). Residents embody specific values of a tourism destination and can actively engage in delivering these values while interacting with guests or tourists (Bowen and Sotomayor, 2022). Further studies indicate that residents play a crucial role in the legitimization of tourism planning and development (Zenker *et al.*, 2017). However, tourism research has predominantly focused on residents' attitudes toward tourists and tourism planning (Chao, 2024) rather than their active

participation as key stakeholders with multiple roles in developing the domestic tourism economy (Amani, 2023).

Despite the importance of tourism ethnocentrism in the ever-growing competition within the tourism sector, its antecedents have received less attention (Todorović *et al.*, 2023). This is surprising because evidence indicates that the ability of the majority of tourist destinations in the developing world to compete against international tourist destinations has decreased (Chao, 2024). In this regard, promoting support for domestic tourism through principles underscored in tourism ethnocentrism could be a source of boosting the domestic tourism economy and local tourist destinations (Amani, 2023). Given the importance of the domestic tourism economy in any country, it was expected that more scholarly efforts would be invested in examining the drivers that could promote tourists to favor domestic tourism economies and local destinations. Due to its significance in sustainable tourism, various studies have examined drivers for promoting tourism ethnocentrism. Some of this literature indicates that tourism ethnocentrism, as a form of advanced tourism support, can be promoted by destination corporate social responsibility (Amani, 2024), national identification and destination image (Lever *et al.*, 2022) and the level of awareness about the destination (Todorović *et al.*, 2023). This study extends the discussion of antecedents by exploring the impact of the government–public relationship on tourism ethnocentrism via patriotism.

The government–public relationship refers to a state of mutual understanding between the government and the public. As tourism development relies on citizens' trust in their government, the government must provide the necessary support to foster domestic tourism and create an environment conducive to income generation. A stable, high-performing economy attracts investment across sectors, driving overall economic growth (Buhalis *et al.*, 2023; Macha, 2021; Nunkoo, 2015; Pagliara *et al.*, 2021; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2024). The study used social exchange theory, which has been widely applied in studies on the government–public relationship, to theorize that a mutual relationship between the government and the public can be successful if it offers mutual benefits to both residents and the government (Kim and Manoli, 2022). Past studies indicate that this mutual relationship is constructed through mutual trust, power balance and exchange relations between residents and the government (Kim *et al.*, 2024). The study further hypothesized that the relationship between the government–public relationship and tourism ethnocentrism is mediated by patriotism, which refers to a deep emotional attachment to one's motherland, connected with a close emotional bond to the country (Amani, 2022; Rybina, 2021). Thus, in addressing its objectives, the following research questions guided the development of hypotheses:

- RQ1. What is the influence of the government–public relationship on patriotism?
- RQ2. What is the influence of patriotism on tourism ethnocentrism?
- RQ3. What is the mediation effect of patriotism on the relationship between the government–public relationship and tourism ethnocentrism?

Literature review and hypotheses development

Social exchange theory

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on social exchange theory, which can be traced back to the work of Blau (1964). Blau (1964) suggests that the exchange process is governed by three key norms: exist solidarity, role integrity and mutuality. The theory focuses more on providing a theoretical explanation for what one does in a relationship to

enhance mutual benefits (Blessley *et al.*, 2018; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The theory puts forth the idea that in situations where there is a shared problem domain, parties affected by the problem should collaborate through an exchanging process to address the problem by sharing resources (Ismail, 2022; Zafirovski, 2005). The theory emphasizes that while addressing the problem and sharing resources, each party should acquire benefits that are greater than the costs invested. In other words, the theory suggests that there should be mutual benefits derived from the mutual exchange of resources. The theory has been extensively used in the public relations domain, particularly in explaining how government–public relationships can be established and sustained based on mutual exchange, allowing for mutual benefits between the government and the public (Dong *et al.*, 2023; Kim and Manoli, 2022).

Social exchange theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the government–public relationship as a mutually beneficial partnership. Accordingly, such a relationship can be successful when both residents and the government stand to gain from the exchange. The theory emphasizes that mutual trust, a balance of power and reciprocal exchanges between residents and the government are key to fostering this partnership (Ismail, 2022; Zafirovski, 2005). Residents, in turn, are willing to contribute resources like labor, time and knowledge to support development, which benefits both parties. Through these contributions, residents actively participate in the growth of the tourism industry by purchasing local products and engaging in domestic tourism. This reciprocal exchange not only drives infrastructure development and economic growth but also enhances residents' quality of life, helping the government achieve its goals (Buhalis *et al.*, 2023; Šegota *et al.*, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2022). This study theorizes that a mutual relationship between residents and the government is the source of cultivating a sense of patriotism, which fuels the intent to support the domestic tourism economy.

Patriotism

Patriotism emanates from cultural heritage, traditions, norms and national symbols and usually becomes evident when personal values align with national values and norms (Lever *et al.*, 2022; Qu *et al.*, 2021; Schatz *et al.*, 1999). Patriotism symbolizes an individual's emotional attachment to their country, exhibited through the degree of love and pride they feel for it (Parker, 2010; Spry and Hornsey, 2007; Stepchenkova *et al.*, 2020). A patriotic person expresses a deep emotional attachment to their motherland, connected with a close emotional bond to the country (Sekerdej and Roccas, 2016; Spry and Hornsey, 2007). Hence, patriotism stems from the strong emotional relationship a person has with their country. It develops when a person is satisfied with their relationship and has trust in the political and administrative systems of the country (Parker, 2010). Amani (2022) and Lever *et al.* (2022) stated that patriotism is fueled by exchange relationships characterized by mutual benefits between the person and the country. These mutual benefits do not necessarily manifest in terms of monetary value; rather, they can also take the form of non-monetary value. Patriotism can be manifested in three different forms:

- (1) an individual's national pride and joy stemming from the achievements of the country (Qu *et al.*, 2021);
- (2) an individual's criticism driven by the desire for better development of the nation (Sekerdej and Roccas, 2016); and
- (3) an individual's intolerance or resistance to criticisms and negative sentiments about the country (Schatz *et al.*, 1999).

In the modern world, patriotism stands as one of the most prominent forms of group attachment (Dirksmeier, 2023; Lever *et al.*, 2022; Qu *et al.*, 2021). It represents a positive identification with and a deep sense of attachment to one's country (Dirksmeier, 2023; Stepchenkova *et al.*, 2020). It is a love for one's country and an attachment to national values and norms, grounded in critical understanding (Marinthe *et al.*, 2023). In this view, a patriotic person resists any sentiments that aim to degrade or draw attention to the weaknesses of their motherland (Amani, 2022; Qu *et al.*, 2021). A person with strong patriotic feelings considers his/her country as more superior than others and that it deserves to be honored (Chang *et al.*, 2020). Patriotism fuels behavior characterized by self-sacrifice, which eventually influences a person to prioritize the country's interests over personal interests (Shen and Wu, 2022). This self-sacrifice is manifested in behavior such as supporting country development through positive criticisms and active participation in national causes. Furthermore, patriotic individuals often engage in civic activities, volunteer work and advocacy to promote the welfare of their nation (Choe *et al.*, 2020; Kapareliotis and Voutsina, 2020; Shen and Wu, 2022). This suggests that a person with strong patriotic feelings participates in initiatives at both the individual and country levels to ensure the country builds and maintains superiority against other countries.

Government – public relationship

The concept of the government–public relationship has its origin in the relationship management approach to public relations, which gave birth to the organization–public relationship (Chon and Park, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2024; Liu and Huang, 2023). The concept of the organization–public relationship has been extended to various aspects, including the government–public relationship, which is one of the central concepts in the policy public relation domain (Chon, 2019; Men *et al.*, 2018). It aims to examine how the government can enhance its relationship with key stakeholders, including the public, in realizing sustainable development (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Kim and Manoli, 2022). Research in this domain indicates that the organization–public relationship, as the key foundation of the government–public relationship, employs unique marketing strategies based on symmetric communication to achieve mutually beneficial relationships (Liu and Ni, 2021). The government–public relationship, as presented in the literature, is a state in which there is mutual understanding between the government and the public (Dong *et al.*, 2023; Kim and Manoli, 2022; Liu and Huang, 2023). This mutual understanding is supported by the existence of symmetric communication between both parties. Symmetric communication is one of the most effective strategies for creating and enhancing a positive long-term reputation, which gives moral legitimacy to the government and facilitates the successful implementation of various development programs, while minimizing the possibility of damaging the government's reputation (Chon, 2019; Kim and Manoli, 2022; Liu and Huang, 2023; Liu and Ni, 2021). The government–public relationship is conceptualized in other studies as a phenomenon that consists of relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment. This multidimensional conceptualizations provide a broader understanding but focused and specific understanding for each division (Kim *et al.*, 2023; Kim and Manoli, 2022; Men *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2022).

Relational trust

Relational trust should be viewed as the extent to which residents appreciate that the country or government can be trusted on its claims of what it can do (i.e. dependability) and the ability to do what it claims it can do (i.e. competencies) (Kim and Manoli, 2022; Liu and Ni, 2021). Relational trust represents an individual level of confidence and willingness to work

with the other party in a fair and beneficial manner for both parties (Kim *et al.*, 2023). As an element of government–public relationship, relational trust implies mutual benefits (both economic and social benefits) in the eyes of residents. Government–public relationship, as a form of mutual relationship, is defined by relational trust, which is the most important driver of citizenship or ambassadorship behaviors (Kim *et al.*, 2023; Kim and Manoli, 2022). Relational trust implies that both parties in the relationship can realize mutual benefits in the mutual relationship. In the tourism research domain, residents define relational trust as an opportunity for them to benefit from various economic activities and investments in their respective countries. Past studies indicate that residents develop the intention to support their respective countries when the government establishes a relationship that creates mutual trust (Kim *et al.*, 2023, 2024; Liu and Huang, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, relational trust provides assurance to residents that they will not lose by being in the mutual relationship and hence increases the likelihood of them benefiting as key actors in the mutual relationship (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2022). With support from the above explanations, this study suggests that the theoretical understanding of relational trust in tourism significantly influences residents to develop patriotism toward the country as a tourism destination. Therefore, the study develops a hypothesis suggesting that:

H1. Relational trust positively influences patriotism.

Power mutuality

In the context of government–public relationship, power mutuality or control mutuality refers to the degree to which both parties agree regarding which party has rightful or legal powers of influencing decisions among themselves (Chon, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2023). Most of the time, power mutuality implies that the country or the government should not attempt to maximize its gains at the expense of residents (Ki and Hon, 2007; Kandzer *et al.*, 2022). The concept of control mutuality offers the same meaning as mutual legitimacy, reciprocity, negotiation, distribution of authority and power in the relationship, power asymmetry and empowerment (Chon, 2019). In the context of tourism, power mutuality focuses on reciprocity and negotiation between the country or government and residents on various issues that affect the welfare of the country and residents. Residents develop the intent of supporting their countries when reciprocity and negotiation promise benefits equivalent to what they have invested in supporting the mutual relationship (Kim and Manoli, 2022; Yang, 2018). Power mutuality in government–public relationships elevates the idea of shared power between residents and the government in the mutual relationship to avoid misunderstandings (Chon, 2019). The ability and willingness of the country and government to demonstrate power mutuality are expected to influence residents' intent to support the domestic tourism economy. With support from the above explanations, this study theorizes and hypothesizes that power mutuality in tourism significantly influences residents to develop patriotism toward the country as a tourism destination. The study, therefore, derived the hypothesis that:

H2. Power mutuality positively influences patriotism.

Relational satisfaction

Relational satisfaction comprises the degree of gratification and positive perceptions experienced by residents in their interactions and exchanges with the government (Kim and Manoli, 2022; Liu and Ni, 2021). Government–public relationship aims to ensure residents'

expectations, such as benefits or comparable returns, create satisfaction, which can motivate residents to support the government and the country (Chon, 2019; Kim and Manoli, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Thus, if such a relationship does not offer the possibility for residents to get anything of value in return, the residents may decide to be less responsible and accountable toward the government and the country (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Kim and Manoli, 2022; Liu and Ni, 2021). Relational satisfaction can be achieved when the government and residents allow give-and-take, whereby the government should be ready to give something of value and receive something of value in return from residents (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Liu and Ni, 2021).

Relational satisfaction reflects the success of communication strategies in fostering mutual understanding and trust between residents and the government. Government–public relationship aims to enhance relational satisfaction by bridging cultural gaps, addressing shared challenges and promoting collaborative initiatives between residents and the government (Kim and Manoli, 2022). When both residents and the government express satisfaction in their interactions, it indicates a successful alignment of interests and values, contributing to stronger relationships and fostering a favorable image for the involved parties. Ultimately, relational satisfaction in government–public relationships is a key indicator of the effectiveness of relationship endeavors in building enduring connections and collaboration between residents and the government (Kim *et al.*, 2023, 2024; Liu and Huang, 2023). While considering the above literature, this study theorizes and hypothesizes that relational satisfaction in tourism significantly influences residents to develop patriotism toward the country as a tourism destination. With support from the above theoretical explanation, the study derived the following hypothesis:

H3. Relational satisfaction positively influences patriotism.

Relational commitment

Relational commitment can be viewed as the extent to which residents develop feelings of loyalty in the relationship with the government (Chon, 2019). In the context of government–public relationship, relational commitment can prevail when residents feel that the relationship with the government is good enough in terms of rewards (Chon, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2023). It is widely accepted that, in the context of relational commitment, residents may decide to be committed to the relationship with the government if:

- it covers emotional aspects of individuals in the relationship with the government; and
- if the rewards are greater than the costs if they decide to continue the relationship with the government.

Hence, government–public relationship flourishes when the government is highly committed by fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities as stated in the agreement (Chon, 2019; Liu and Huang, 2023). Past studies indicate that relational commitment creates a sense of support toward the country, which is crucial in ensuring that residents cultivate supportive behavior (Chon, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2022). A stream of research in tourism indicates that relational commitment expressed by the government in the relationship is a sign of the sustainability of the government–public relationship, which assures long-term benefits for residents (Chon and Park, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2022). Relational commitment plays an important role in motivating residents to demonstrate extra-role behavior, mainly responsible behavior toward the

countries (Kim *et al.*, 2023, 2024; Liu and Huang, 2023). While considering the above literature, this study hypothesizes that relational commitment in tourism significantly influences residents to develop patriotism toward the country as a tourism destination. The above explanations support the development of the hypothesis that:

H4. Relational commitment positively influences patriotism.

Tourism ethnocentrism

Support for tourism has expanded to include tourism ethnocentrism, which suggests that residents should not only support tourism as hosts but also actively engage as beneficiaries who directly participate in tourism activities (Amani, 2024; Kock *et al.*, 2019; Todorović *et al.*, 2023). In the context of tourism ethnocentrism, support for domestic tourism is driven by residents' passion and love for the tourism sector and the communities that depend on it (Lever *et al.*, 2022). Tourism ethnocentrism is a sociological and psychological concept focusing on the belief in the cultural superiority of one's own ethnic group (Amani, 2023; Xiaolong *et al.*, 2023). Ethnocentrism was first coined by Sumner (1906), who described it as the act of judging another culture from the perspective of one's own (Josiassen, 2011; Karoui and Khemakhem, 2019; Sharma, 2015). The concept was later extended to the marketing domain as consumer ethnocentrism, representing a preference for domestic products based on nationalistic feelings (Acikdilli *et al.*, 2018; Kibret and Shukla, 2021; Ulker-Demirel *et al.*, 2021). In consumer studies, ethnocentrism has been linked to patriotism (Marcoux *et al.*, 1997) and even nationalism (Balabanis *et al.*, 2001). In this context, tourism ethnocentrism is developed when individuals express an ideology indicating that they believe their nation is superior to all others (Amani, 2024; Lever *et al.*, 2022; Todorović *et al.*, 2023). This ideological view is motivated by a close relationship between the country and the individual, characterized by mutual benefits that residents and the country expect from each other (Amani, 2022). Recently, the concept of ethnocentrism was extended to tourism, defined as a prescriptive belief complemented by feelings of obligation to support the domestic tourism economy (Amani, 2024; Lever *et al.*, 2022; Todorović *et al.*, 2023). This builds a theoretical foundation based on the idea that the tourism sector should be supported by promoting a willingness to spend holidays and boost the domestic tourism economy among residents.

Research in the domain of inclusive tourism development considers tourism ethnocentrism as an attitude characterized by the glorification of home tourism and the domestic tourism economy (Lever *et al.*, 2022), often accompanied by the discrimination against other competing destinations (Bremser and Abraham, 2022; Kock *et al.*, 2019). It represents a symbolic reason for traveling, motivating individuals including residents to choose domestic tourism and spend their holidays at home destinations (Gedecho *et al.*, 2023; Lever *et al.*, 2022). It manifests as a strong preference for domestic tourism and a belief in the superiority of the home country's tourism offerings. Unlike most parts of the world, such as Asia and Europe, international tourists make up a larger portion of tourism in Africa compared to domestic tourism, statistically (OECD, 2016; TANAPA, 2024; UNWTO, 2020; WTTC, 2024a). Although tourism ethnocentrism is both positively and negatively perceived, studying it is valuable as it helps understand how promoting national pride and local attractions can boost domestic tourism (Macha, 2021; Melubo, 2020). This not only strengthens the local tourism economy but also fosters a sense of identity and pride, turning residents into ambassadors for the country's tourism abroad (Boukamba *et al.*, 2021; Kock *et al.*, 2019).

Ethnocentrism is rapidly growing in the tourism sector due to cutthroat competition among destinations. This trend is becoming more relevant as tourism destinations increasingly encourage residents to support the domestic tourism economy rather than foreign destinations (Lever *et al.*, 2022; Todorović *et al.*, 2023). This behavior is driven by a sense of patriotism, where individuals develop a deep devotion and passionate love for their country. The concept of tourism ethnocentrism has gained attention due to the increasing patriotic tendencies observed among local residents worldwide. Amani (2024) argues that ethnocentric residents exhibit three main characteristics:

- (1) They tend to demonstrate the superiority of local tourism using “us” versus “them” language.
- (2) They believe they can support the domestic tourism economy and home destinations by developing specific travel behaviors.
- (3) They feel accountable and responsible for the domestic tourism economy, leading to a sense of obligation to support the domestic tourism industry and the communities that rely on it.

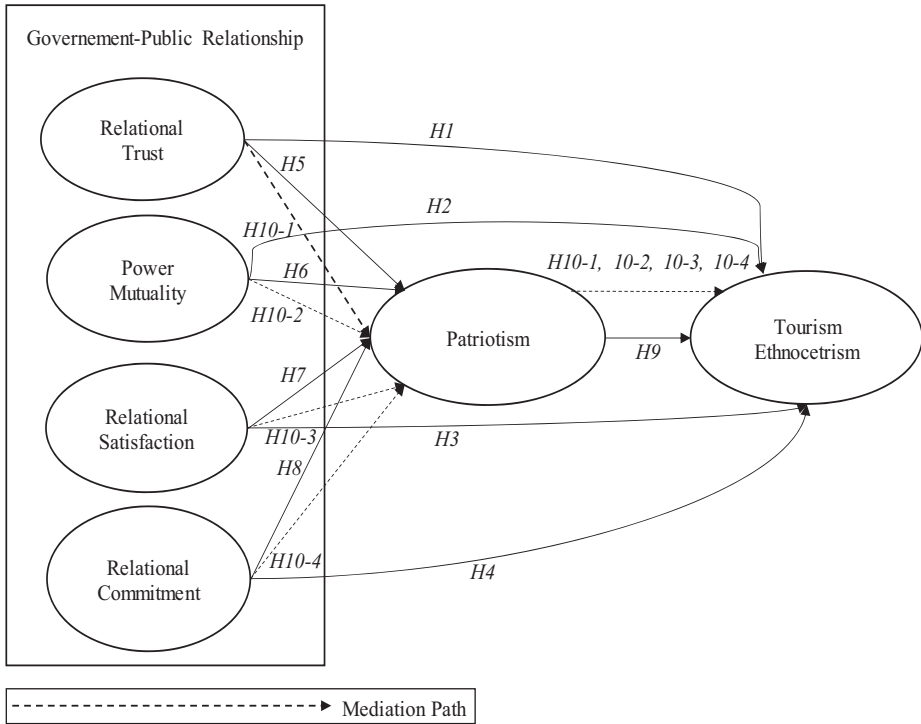
With support from the above theoretical explanation, the study derived the following hypotheses:

- H5. Patriotism positively influences tourism ethnocentrism.
- H6-1. Patriotism mediates the relationship between relational trust and tourism ethnocentrism.
- H6-2. Patriotism mediates the relationship between power mutuality and tourism ethnocentrism.
- H6-3. Patriotism mediates the relationship between relational satisfaction and tourism ethnocentrism.
- H6-4. Patriotism mediates the relationship between relational commitment and tourism ethnocentrism.

This study conceptualizes how the quality of government–public relationships fosters a sense of patriotism among the public. This sense of patriotism, which serves as a mediating variable, in turn impacts citizens’ attitudes toward tourism, promoting tourism ethnocentrism, as shown in the conceptual model in Figure 1. The model highlights both the direct effects of government–public relationships on tourism ethnocentrism and the indirect effects mediated through patriotism.

Instrumentation

The instrument for the study was developed by reviewing and analyzing previously validated scales related to government–public relationships, patriotism and tourism ethnocentrism. The purpose of this review was to ensure that the study is appropriately situated within the relevant domain. Additionally, it enhanced the reliability and validity of the instruments used. Multiple measures were adopted to capture the nature of the variables from different perspectives and to minimize measurement errors (Churchill, 1979). In addition, each variable was captured using at least more than three indicators to enhance validity and reliability of data analysis (Boateng *et al.*, 2018). Minor modifications were made to the wording of each statement to ensure that the variables fit well within the study setting and context. The construct of government–public relationships was conceptualized using four



Source: Authors' conceptual model

Figure 1. Research model

variables: relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment. The variables were measured using scales from other similar studies (Chon, 2019; Chon and Park, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2023). Patriotism was measured using scales from Amani (2022), Kim *et al.* (2019) and Shen and Wu (2022), and tourism ethnocentrism was captured using scales from Amani (2024), Lever *et al.* (2022) and Todorović *et al.* (2023). The respondents were asked to rate each questions in five-point bipolar Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree).

Methodology

Study setting and design

Guided by a positivist approach, this study developed a research model to propose and test hypothesized relationships using a quantitative methodology. Employing empirical and scientific techniques, the study investigated the relationship between government–public relationships, patriotism and tourism ethnocentrism. A cross-sectional approach was adopted to examine these phenomena at a specific time and place, without tracking future changes (Lavrakas, 2013; Rindfleisch *et al.*, 2008). The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Arusha and Kilimanjaro, strategic regions for tourism development in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam, the business hub of the country, serves as the gateway for approximately 10% of all international tourists visiting Tanzania. Arusha and Kilimanjaro were selected for their major

tourist attractions, including Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa and the second highest in the world, Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater, all of which are UNESCO World Heritage sites. These two regions also serve as gateways for approximately 65% of all international tourists visiting Tanzania (Amani and Chao, 2023) and host the largest recreational centers and accommodation facilities crucial for the development of the tourism sector. It is estimated that more than 75% of economic activities related to tourism occur in Arusha, Kilimanjaro and Dar es Salaam (Anderson and Sanga, 2019).

Sampling and data collection procedures

The study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling technique to determine the sample size from the target population of residents in selected regions. This technique is often used in studies where subjects are selected based on their easy accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Zikmund *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, the technique is widely employed in tourism research involving residents as subjects (Amani and Chao, 2023). The primary advantage of convenience sampling is its usefulness in dealing with study populations that are hard to precisely define or are difficult to identify. However, a significant challenge of this technique is the potential for bias in sample selection (Jawad Golzar, 2022). To address this challenge, literature suggests implementing measures to minimize bias during sample size determination. Following the recommendations of Skowronek and Duerr (2009), the study incorporated the following measures to mitigate bias:

- selecting respondents to ensure a variety of demographic characteristics;
- conducting sampling at different times, days and locations during the data collection period to capture diverse samples; and
- using a large sample size to promote diversity.

The final sample size was 503 local residents, which is significantly above the recommended minimum of 150 for multivariate data analysis techniques. Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire. Before data collection, respondents were informed about the study, and their consent and willingness to participate were obtained. To ensure a high response rate, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

Common method bias

The methodology adopted in this study may raise concerns regarding common method bias, a situation in which the estimates of hypothesized relationships between two or more constructs are biased due to their measurement using the same method. This systematic error occurs when multiple variables in a study are assessed through a single method, potentially inflating the estimates of the hypothesized relationships and thereby compromising the reliability and validity of the findings (Fuller *et al.*, 2015). Given the adverse effects of common method bias on research outcomes, it is crucial to implement measures to avoid or minimize it. According to Podasakoff *et al.* (2003), both procedural and statistical measures are essential when addressing common method bias in social science research. Procedurally, measures should be taken during the development of instruments and the data collection stage. In this study, the data collection instrument was developed by consulting and reviewing validated scales from previous studies, ensuring the clarity of measurement items. During the data collection stage, respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage unbiased responses. Statistically, the possibility of common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test. In this test, all items were subjected to

exploratory factor analysis to determine if a single factor accounted for more than 50% of the explained variance. The findings indicated that a single factor explained only 25.49% of the variance, suggesting that common method bias was not a significant concern in the data.

Inspecting measurement model

The psychometric properties of the measurement model were evaluated by checking validity and reliability. The reliability of the measurement model was estimated using McDonald's omega coefficient (ω) and the composite reliability coefficient (CR). The results shown in [Table 1](#) indicate that both the CR and McDonald's omega coefficient (ω) have values above the threshold of 0.7, indicating good reliability ([Cho, 2021](#); [Valentini et al., 2016](#)). The validity of the measurement model was estimated through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings (λ) and the average variance extracted (AVE). The results in [Table 1](#) show that all items loaded well on their respective constructs, with values above the threshold of 0.7, suggesting good convergent validity ([Awang, 2014](#); [Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). Additionally, the AVE of all constructs is above the limit of 0.5, as shown in [Table 2](#), further indicating good convergent validity ([Valentini et al., 2016](#)). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) criterion, which states that the square root of the AVE should be greater than the inter-construct correlation. The results in [Table 2](#) demonstrate that the square root of the AVE for each construct is above the inter-construct correlation values, indicating good discriminant validity. The model is well supported by the data, as confirmed by the following goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 232.455$, $df = 154$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ and $\chi^2/df = 1.509$, significantly below the recommended threshold of 3 ([Hooper et al., 2008](#); [Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). Additionally, AGFI = 0.939, GFI = 0.955, CFI = 0.983, NFI = 0.952 and TLI = 0.979, all of which are above the agreed-upon value of 0.9 ([Hooper et al., 2008](#)). Furthermore, RMSEA = 0.032 is significantly below the acceptable threshold of 0.08 ([Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)).

Structural model and hypotheses testing

Before estimating the parameters, the hypothesized six-factor model was evaluated to determine if it was supported by the data. The model produced results of $\chi^2 = 337.544$, $df = 164$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ and $\chi^2/df = 2.058$, which is below the acceptable standard of 3 ([Hooper et al., 2008](#); [Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). Other goodness-of-fit statistics include AGFI = 0.919, GFI = 0.937, CFI = 0.963, NFI = 0.931 and TLI = 0.957, all of which are above the prescribed standard of 0.9 ([Bollen, 1989](#); [Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). Additionally, RMSEA = 0.046, which is less than the recommended value of 0.08 ([Hu and Bentler, 1999](#)). The hypothesized path relationships were estimated using standardized estimates, t -statistics and p -values. The findings presented in [Table 3](#) indicate that all hypothesized path relationships were supported. Therefore, it has been confirmed that the government–public relationship cultivates patriotism, which eventually fuels tourism ethnocentrism. The results in [Table 3](#) indicate that relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment significantly influence tourism ethnocentrism, with the following coefficients: $\beta = 0.357$, $t\text{-statistics} > 1.96$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.391$, $t\text{-statistics} > 1.96$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.570$, $t\text{-statistics} > 1.96$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$; and $\beta = 0.412$, $t\text{-statistics} > 1.96$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$, respectively. Therefore, these findings support *H1*, *H2*, *H3* and *H4*.

H5 proposed that relational trust has a direct influence on patriotism. This hypothesis was confirmed and supported with $\beta = 0.296$, $t\text{-statistics} > 1.96$, $p\text{-value} < 0.001$, confirming that relational trust directly influences patriotism. *H6* speculated on the causal relationship between power mutuality and patriotism, which was supported with $\beta = 0.337$,

Table 1. Measurement model

Constructs	Code	Measurement items	λ	Ω	CR
<i>Relational trust (RET)</i>	ret1	Whenever the Tanzania government makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about its citizens	0.719	0.761	0.761
	ret2	The Tanzania government can be relied on to keep its promises to citizens	0.716		
	ret4	The Tanzania government treats citizens fairly and justly	0.718		
				0.814	0.814
<i>Power mutuality (POM)</i>	pom1	The Tanzania government believes the opinions of citizens like me are legitimate	0.764		
	pom2	Generally speaking, Tanzania government and citizens are both satisfied with the decision-making process	0.738		
	pom3	The Tanzania government and citizens like me are attentive to what each other say	0.808		
<i>Relational satisfaction (RES)</i>	res1	Citizens' relationship with the Tanzania government is good	0.770	0.778	0.780
	res2	Most citizens like me are happy in their interaction with the Tanzania government	0.727		
	res3	I am pleased with the relationship the Tanzania government has established with citizen like me	0.709		
<i>Relational commitment (REC)</i>	rc1	I can see that the Tanzania government wants to maintain a relationship with citizens like me	0.785	0.805	0.804
	rc2	There is a long-lasting bond between the Tanzania government and citizens like me	0.700		
	rc3	I feel a sense of loyalty to the Tanzania government	0.796		
<i>Patriotism (PAT)</i>	pat1	It is important for me to serve my country	0.743	0.798	0.798
	pat2	I am proud to be my country's citizen	0.734		
	pat3	It is good to live in my country	0.783		
<i>Tourism ethnocentrism (TRE)</i>	tre1	Every time a Tanzanian decides to spend their holiday in Tanzania, it makes Tanzania's future a little bit brighter	0.839	0.921	0.914
	tre2	Tanzanians should support the Tanzania economy by travelling to holiday destinations in Tanzania	0.898		
	tre3	Everyone should support the Tanzania economy by spending their holiday in Tanzania	0.910		
	tre4	Tanzanians should spend their holiday in Tanzania because this secures jobs in the Tanzanian tourism industry	0.746		
	tre5	Tanzanians should feel a duty and responsibility to travel within Tanzania on national holiday	0.718		

Source: Data analysis

Table 2. Discriminant validity using Fornell–Larcker criterion

Variables	AVE	RET	POM	RES	REC	PAT	TRE
RET	0.515	<i>0.718</i>					
POM	0.594	-0.142	<i>0.771</i>				
RES	0.541	0.276	0.137	<i>0.736</i>			
REC	0.579	0.129	0.151	0.180	<i>0.761</i>		
PAT	0.568	0.356	0.368	0.410	0.354	<i>0.754</i>	
TRE	0.682	-0.009	0.117	0.061	0.188	0.592	<i>0.826</i>

Source: Date analysis

t -statistics > 1.96 , p -value < 0.001 . This implies that power mutuality significantly influences patriotism. The results also confirmed and supported $H7$, which postulated that relational satisfaction has a positive significant influence on patriotism with $\beta = 0.304$, t -statistics > 1.96 , p -value < 0.001 . This suggests that patriotism is enhanced by relational satisfaction between the public and the government. $H8$ proposed that relational commitment influences patriotism, which was confirmed and supported by $\beta = 0.344$, t -statistics > 1.96 , p -value < 0.001 . This implies that relational commitment is a driving force in building patriotism. The results in [Table 3](#) show that patriotism influences tourism ethnocentrism with $\beta = 0.649$, t -statistics > 1.96 , p -value < 0.001 . These results confirmed and supported $H9$, which speculated that patriotism has a significant influence on tourism ethnocentrism. This implies that a sense of patriotism fuels tourism ethnocentrism.

Mediation analysis

The study conducted bootstrap estimation with 5,000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval (CI) to test hypotheses $H10-1$, $H10-2$, $H10-3$ and $H10-4$. These hypotheses proposed the indirect effect of relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment on tourism ethnocentrism via patriotism. The results in [Table 4](#) support all the proposed hypotheses, indicating that patriotism mediates the relationship between tourism ethnocentrism and all dimensions of the government–public relationship. Hypothesis $H10-1$, which proposed the mediation effect of patriotism on the relationship between relational trust and tourism ethnocentrism, was supported ($\beta = 0.170$, t -statistics > 1.96 , 95% CI = [0.1066,

Table 3. Parameter estimations

Hypothesis	Hypothesized relationship	Standardized estimate	t -statistics	Remarks
$H1$	Relational trust \rightarrow tourism ethnocentrism	0.357	8.063***	Supported
$H2$	Power mutuality \rightarrow tourism ethnocentrism	0.391	9.656***	Supported
$H3$	Relational satisfaction \rightarrow tourism ethnocentrism	0.570	8.902***	Supported
$H4$	Relational commitment \rightarrow tourism ethnocentrism	0.412	9.737***	Supported
$H5$	Relational trust \rightarrow patriotism	0.296	5.363***	Supported
$H6$	Power mutuality \rightarrow patriotism	0.337	6.445***	Supported
$H7$	Relational satisfaction \rightarrow patriotism	0.304	5.010***	Supported
$H8$	Relational commitment \rightarrow patriotism	0.344	5.000***	Supported
$H9$	Patriotism \rightarrow tourism ethnocentrism	0.649	10.319***	Supported

Note: *** p -value < 0.001

Source: Date analysis

Table 4. Mediation analysis

Hypothesis	Hypothesized relationship	Standardized estimate	t-statistics	95% CI		Remarks
				BootLLCI	BootULCI	
H10-1	Relational trust → patriotism → tourism ethnocentrism	0.170	5.111	0.1066	0.2369	Supported
H10-2	Power mutuality → patriotism → tourism ethnocentrism	0.173	5.989	0.1196	0.2335	Supported
H10-3	Relational satisfaction → patriotism → tourism ethnocentrism	0.229	6.655	0.1654	0.2990	Supported
H10-4	Relational commitment → patriotism → tourism ethnocentrism	0.212	5.957	0.1482	0.2852	Supported

Source: Data analysis

0.2369]). Similarly, the results ($\beta = 0.173$, t -statistics > 1.96 , 95% CI = [0.1196, 0.2335]) supported *H10-2*, which speculated that the relationship between power mutuality and tourism ethnocentrism is mediated by patriotism. Hypothesis *H10-3*, which hypothesized that the relationship between relational satisfaction and tourism ethnocentrism is mediated by patriotism, was supported ($\beta = 0.229$, t -statistics > 1.96 , 95% CI = [0.1654, 0.2990]). Finally, *H10-4*, which proposed that patriotism mediates the relationship between relational commitment and tourism ethnocentrism, was confirmed ($\beta = 0.212$, t -statistics > 1.96 , 95% CI = [0.1482, 0.2852]).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to provide a clear understanding of relationship between government–public relationship and tourism ethnocentrism through patriotism in evolving tourism destinations. Generally, the study determined to test the pivotal role of government–public relationship and patriotism on tourism ethnocentrism theoretically mirrored through social exchange theory. The study was inspired by the existing literature informing the crucial role to be played by the residents so as to act as a core creator and not simply hosts of the tourism developments (Begashe *et al.*, 2024; Chao, 2024). Moreover, the study was motivated by the fact that ethnocentric view has to be promoted due to its significance to make a clear representation of the local in sustainable tourism development unlike the Western-centric view (Amani, 2024). Considering the crucial role of tourism ethnocentrism in successful development of tourism destinations, the study proposed and tested the relationship between government–public relationship and tourism ethnocentrism when mediated with patriotism. Given the conceptualization derived from social exchange theory, government–public relationship was explained by the relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment to enhance destination’s tourism ethnocentrism via patriotism. Overall, the study theorized that government–public relationship is crucial in promoting tourism ethnocentrism. Evidence from literature shows that domestic tourism economy is highly dependent on the attitudes of the individuals toward their governments (Amani, 2024). Therefore, the individuals who are patriotic are deeply attached and committed to the development of their country in all sectors including tourism (Chao, 2024).

The results of this study highlight that relational trust, which comprises the belief in the reliability and integrity of another party, is a critical resource in government–public relationship as explained by social exchange theory. The results indicate that higher levels of relational trust positively influence patriotism given the significant standardized estimate shown in Tables 3 and 4. The results aligns with other studies where trust is reported as a crucial for positive attitudes toward countries development (Carreño *et al.*, 2024; Heo and Wu, 2024). This relationship suggests that when the government and individual citizens trust each other, the individuals who represent the public are more likely to develop a sense of national pride and loyalty. This increased patriotism, in turn, positively impacts tourism ethnocentrism, the preference for the development of domestic tourism, and sustainably facilitates the reduction of unemployment and poverty (Henseler *et al.*, 2022; Macha, 2021; WTTC, 2018, 2024b). The results further confirm for a statistically significant indirect effect of relational trust on tourism ethnocentrism through patriotism. The results aligned with Amani (2022), whose findings suggest that patriotism influences value co-creation behavior among residents in the tourism sector. On the other hand, the findings for power mutuality, which explains the equitable distribution of power within a relationship, have significantly emerged to be able to foster patriotism. As patriotism reflects satisfaction and a feeling of trust and fairness toward political systems, these findings indicate the possibility of increased

commitment. When individuals perceive fairness, their commitment to their nation tends to increase. The results align with various past studies, indicating that power mutuality can be a potential catalyst for fueling residents' support for the country in mega sports events (Kim *et al.*, 2024), in health crisis (Chon and Park, 2021) and political situations (Chon, 2019). The increased commitment can then be translated into higher tourism ethnocentrism, where individuals prefer to support their own nation's tourism sector. The findings make it safe to assert that equitable power dynamics are essential for cultivating patriotism and consequently influencing tourism ethnocentrism.

Again, the relational satisfaction findings, which represent the positive feelings derived from interactions within a relationship, have shown strong evidence of relational satisfaction to positively influence patriotism. As a result, satisfied individuals are more likely to show loyalty and pride toward their nation, driven by positive interpersonal interactions. This increased patriotism strongly influences tourism ethnocentrism, as these individuals tend to prioritize supporting their country's tourism sector. The significant results obtained reveals a satisfaction in relationships, which then plays a key function in shaping nationalistic attitudes and preferences regarding tourism. The findings are supported by Kim *et al.* (2024) and Kim and Manoli (2022), whose research suggests that relational satisfaction plays a significant role in determining residents' support for mega sports events organized by the government. Furthermore, the results shown in Tables 3 and 4 indicate the significant influence of relational commitment on patriotism. This is due to the fact that relational commitment shows the dedication and loyalty individuals feel toward their relationships. The obtained findings further reaffirm the idea that committed individuals display higher levels of national pride, which then fosters tourism ethnocentrism. The findings by Amani and Chao (2023) and Chao (2024) support this study, indicating that residents' perceptions of the government's commitment in their relationship are crucial in determining and driving behaviors such as behavioral support toward destination branding. Overall, the findings of this study illustrate the vital role of relational dynamics trust, power mutuality, satisfaction and commitment in shaping patriotic sentiments and, subsequently, tourism ethnocentrism.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that a positive government–public relationship enhances patriotism, which in turn boosts tourism ethnocentrism. Additionally, patriotism has a mediating effect on this relationship, implying that the impact of the government–public relationship on tourism ethnocentrism is partly channeled through the patriotism of the citizens. The findings assert that the equitable power dynamics in the relationship are essential for cultivating patriotism and consequently influencing tourism ethnocentrism. The study illustrates the vital role of government–public relational dynamics – trust, power mutuality, satisfaction and commitment – in shaping patriotic sentiments and, subsequently, tourism ethnocentrism. This increased patriotism leads to a preference for domestic tourism. Inferentially, it has been concluded that fostering strong, fair and satisfying relationships within communities can significantly boost national pride and support for the domestic tourism industry. Overall, the study affirms that government–public relationship is crucial in promoting tourism ethnocentrism. These insights offer valuable implications for policymakers and marketers aiming to enhance tourism ethnocentrism through initiatives that build and maintain positive relational dynamics.

Theoretical contribution

This study makes significant theoretical contributions by extending social exchange theory into tourism ethnocentrism, offering a novel framework for understanding how government–public

relationships within a destination facilitate the achievement of tourism ethnocentrism through patriotic behaviors. It demonstrates that trust, power dynamics, satisfaction and commitment in these relationships can foster patriotic attitudes and, ultimately, a preference for domestic tourism. This is crucial because most studies suggest that tourism ethnocentrism, as a phenomenon representing group favoritism (Rybina, 2021; Todorović *et al.*, 2023), is primarily influenced by drivers such as social identification, as theorized through social identity theory (Amani, 2023; Lever *et al.*, 2022). By integrating relational dynamics into tourism literature, the study provides a deeper understanding of how better government and community cohesion influence nationalistic behaviors and economic decisions. It empirically validates the indirect effects of trust, power mutuality, satisfaction and commitment on tourism ethnocentrism, mediated by patriotism. The significant estimates and robust CIs contribute to a nuanced understanding of how tourism ethnocentrism is achieved in a national context.

Managerial contribution

This study offers valuable insights for tourism managers and policymakers, helping them design strategies that leverage government–public relational factors to boost local tourism. For instance, managers can focus on community-building activities that enhance trust and mutuality, such as community events, local tourism ambassador programs and partnerships between businesses and tourism authorities. These initiatives foster a sense of shared purpose, increasing residents’ trust and satisfaction with their tourism environment, which can lead to higher levels of patriotism and support for local tourism. The study also highlights the importance of equitable, satisfying relationships in promoting tourism ethnocentrism. Tourism managers can ensure that marketing and operational strategies emphasize fairness and mutual benefits, involving community members in decision making, providing fair opportunities for local businesses and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits. These actions enhance perceptions of power mutuality and satisfaction, encouraging residents to take pride in and promote local tourism.

Limitations of the study and areas for future study

Although the study holds significant potential for advancing knowledge on the relationship between government–public dynamics and tourism ethnocentrism, it has some limitations that future research could address. Conducted in Tanzania, the study’s findings are context-specific, given the varying nature of government–public relationships across different countries. Future studies should consider replicating this research in other countries to enhance and generalize the findings across diverse sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts. The study examined the relationship between government–public dynamics and tourism ethnocentrism through the lens of patriotism. Future research could improve this model by including additional variables such as destination psychological ownership to further expand knowledge in this area. Moreover, considering patriotism as a multidimensional construct encompassing dimensions like constructive patriotism, blind patriotism and symbolic patriotism could provide deeper insights into its role in mediating this relationship in different contexts. Moreover, the study used only cross-sectional data, which limits the study to draw causal inferences about the relationships between relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, patriotism and tourism ethnocentrism. On the other hand, the study tested the relationships using quantitative approach, which limits the ability to get the naturalistic picture of the relationships that can be obtained through adopting qualitative approach. Future research may employ longitudinal designs that can provide more definitive evidence of causality that allow observations on how changes in

relational trust, power mutuality, relational satisfaction and commitment over time influence patriotic sentiments and tourism ethnocentrism. Again, qualitative study might be adopted by the future studies to provide a more naturalistic view of the relationships.

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