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Mediating and moderating role of entrepreneurial spirit to promote sustainable performing art tourism in Oman

Muzaffar Asad^{1*}, Mohammed Ali Bait Ali Sulaiman², Enrico di Bella³ and Sara Preti³

*Correspondence:

Muzaffar Asad
muzaffar.asad@tec.mx

¹Business School, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico

²Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman

³Department of Political and International Sciences, University of Genoa, PLe E. Brignole 3a Canc, 16126 Genoa, Italy

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the role of performing art tourism for achieving sustainable tourism. Additionally, the objective of the study is to identify the mediating and moderating role of entrepreneurial spirit of the performing art individuals between performing art tourism and sustainable tourism. A causal study has been conducted in Sultanate of Oman. The respondents were individuals involved in performing art. The sample of 415 represented was contacted using purposive sampling collecting the data from the questionnaire developed based on the literature. The instrument was sent to academicians in the field of tourism and finally, it was approved from the research department of the university for ethical concerns. STATA-17 was used to evaluate descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that performing art tourism has a significant impact over sustainable tourism. Additionally, the results revealed that the entrepreneurial spirit of the performing art individuals holds a significant mediating role between performing art tourism and sustainable tourism, however, the moderating impact was found insignificant. Furthermore, performing art tourism has a medium sized effect whereas, entrepreneurial spirit holds a major effect. The main limitation was the unwillingness of the respondents to participate in the survey due to their low education level and because of the cultural barriers. Additionally, the study holds significant theoretical implications because the study supports theoretical integration of Cultural Tourism Theory and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem theory.

Keywords Sustainable tourism, Cultural tourism, Performing art tourism, Entrepreneurial spirit, Sustainability

1 Introduction

The intersection of culture, tourism, and economic development, especially for the developing areas, has garnered increasing attention by the policy makers as well as researchers globally [1]. With nations recognizing the potential of their cultural assets to drive sustainable tourism initiatives, the concept of developing sustainable tourism is gaining attention [29]. Sultanate of Oman is rich in cultural heritage because of its history [50]. Oman despite being highly influenced by religious values boasts a vibrant



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heritage of performing arts, deeply rooted in its history and reflecting diverse cultural influences [20].

Performing arts, encompassing a diverse range of expressions from traditional music and dance to theatre and storytelling, holds a unique capacity to attract tourists and enrich their experience of a destination [38]. European countries are using performing arts to attract tourists [42]. In this regard the people involved in performing arts have a key role in several aspects [66]. However, people linked with the performing art activities to attract tourists [68] especially in the countries like Oman are hardly involved in the proper tourism business, due to lack of entrepreneurial spirit of the performing art individuals [31], critical licensing procedures, and lack of skills and awareness about the importance of tourism potential among the people associated with performing arts.. The major reason behind this issue is that academicians or practitioners hardly have paid any attention towards promoting entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial spirit among the individuals associated with performing arts. Hence, the extent to which entrepreneurial spirit of performing art individuals can effectively bridge the gap between these rich artistic traditions and the burgeoning sustainable tourism sector in Oman remains an area requiring comprehensive exploration.

The Sultanate of Oman, with its rich tapestry of ancient traditions and ambitious plans for economic diversification under Vision 2040, presents a compelling context for examining the interplay between these domains [59]. The government of Oman is putting utmost efforts to attract tourism and to preserve its culture and utilize the culture of Oman as a tourist attraction [44]. Tourism is identified as a key sector for reducing reliance on oil revenues, with significant investments planned to enhance infrastructure and attract a greater number of international visitors [45]. Thus, to support the intention of the government of Oman to attract sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship for developing Oman as a tourist brand the people linked with the performing arts can play a significant role.

Additionally, the concept of sustainable tourism has evolved to encompass cultural integrity, community well-being, and economic viability [35]. Sustainable tourism ensures that tourism benefits both the present and future generations, safeguarding the natural and cultural resources upon which it depends [29]. Moreover, this performing arts-based tourism industry can be developed as a major business like Malaysia [27], Sri Lanka [18], Turkey [46] and other tourist countries [56], where these people are not only involved in representing the culture of the country, but also are involved in several businesses related to tourism. However, hardly academicians have paid any attention towards this gap, of linking performing arts with entrepreneurial spirit for the promotion of sustainable tourism. Hence, the purpose of the current research is to identify the moderating role of entrepreneurial spirit using the theoretical support of entrepreneurial ecosystem theory, over the relationship between performing art activities and sustainable tourism in the Omani context using the underpinning support of cultural tourism theory.

Understanding this dynamic is crucial for policymakers, tourism operators, cultural organizations, and entrepreneurs seeking to leverage Oman's unique cultural assets for responsible and impactful tourism development. This research expressed performing arts within the Omani cultural landscape. The researchers identified the current state of sustainable tourism initiatives in the country while examining the relationship between

performing arts and sustainable tourism and identifying how entrepreneurial spirit of performing art individuals may boost the influence of performing arts for sustainable tourism in Oman.

2 Literature review

The Sultanate of Oman has long recognized the intrinsic link between its rich cultural heritage, including performing arts, and its tourism appeal. Cultural performances serve as a significant draw for tourists seeking authentic experiences that go beyond conventional sightseeing [13, 32, 55, 67]. Throughout the year, various festivals held across the country provide vibrant platforms for highlighting traditional Omani performing arts to both domestic and international visitors [20]. The Muscat Festival, featuring a wide array of artistic and cultural activities attracts large crowds of locals and international tourists alike [39]. Similarly, the Salalah Tourism Festival, taking place during the cooler Khareef season [24], offers a diverse program of cultural and musical events, highlighting the unique traditions of the Dhofar region [60].

While performing arts clearly play a role in attracting tourists by showcasing culture [66] and Oman has no exception to it, the current integration of these artistic expressions with explicit sustainable tourism practices appears to be in its emerging stages. Thus, the focus has primarily been on cultural appeal as a driver for sustainable tourism, with less emphasis on how these performances can directly contribute to or align with environmental and socio-cultural sustainability objectives. In the next section the detailed discussion over sustainable tourism initiatives by the Omani government followed by performing artis in Oman and role of entrepreneurial spirit of performing art individuals in Boosting the relationship between performing art and sustainable tourism has been analyzed.

2.1 Sustainable tourism in Oman

Oman has embarked on an ambitious journey towards economic diversification, with tourism playing a pivotal role as outlined in its Vision 2040 [59]. This national strategy emphasizes the development of a sustainable tourism sector that not only contributes to the GDP but also preserves the country's rich cultural and natural heritage for future generations [31]. The government has set ambitious targets, aiming to attract tourism investments by 2040, with a goal to increase the sector's contribution to the GDP [44].

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is at the forefront of formulating and implementing policies to achieve these goals, focusing on enhancing the competitiveness of tourism experiences while safeguarding Oman's cultural identity [26]. A key aspect of competitiveness of tourism experiences is the emphasis on cultural heritage preservation, recognizing its intrinsic value and its appeal to tourists seeking authentic experiences [41]. The Oman Tourism Development Company, a state-owned entity, plays a crucial role in realizing this vision through strategic investments in sustainable tourism destinations and innovative urban communities. Eco-friendly developments and the protection of Oman's biodiversity are also central to the sustainable tourism strategy. The establishment of nature reserves underscores the commitment to preserving natural beauty while offering responsible sustainable tourism opportunities. Projects like The Sustainable City—Yiti exemplify the focus on creating environmentally conscious tourism destinations. Furthermore, the "Visit Oman" platform serves as a key tool for

promoting the country's diverse offerings, connecting local tourism providers with international markets, and enhancing Oman's global appeal (Fig. 1).

Despite these concerted efforts, Oman faces challenges in balancing the ambitious economic growth targets with the imperative of environmental and cultural preservation [3]. Development in remote areas, the potential impact of increased tourist activity on fragile ecosystems, and the need to ensure that tourism benefits local communities remain critical considerations for the government behind promoting tourism in any country [22]. Oman's government is also trying to promote tourism sector with the same objectives, however, there is scarcity of literature linking role of entrepreneurial spirit among the performing art individuals which can promote sustainable development. Hence, this research is needed to identify the role of performing art for achieving sustainable tourism with the support of entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals.

3 Research framework

The study has been conducted considering the need for developing a framework to promote sustainable tourism in Oman. The core aim of the study is to understand the importance of two key variables for the promotion of sustainable tourism. The first key variable is performing arts. Cultural Tourism Theory confirms the significance of performing arts because performing arts are a significant aspect of cultural heritage of a country. Performing arts individuals who focus on authentic cultural expressions can enhance the appeal of sustainable tourism in Oman. By offering genuine performances rooted in local traditions, they provide tourists with enriching experiences and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. Thus, cultural tourism theory provides the underpinning support for the development of direct relationship between performing arts and sustainable tourism.

Additionally, in this study the role of entrepreneurial spirit has also been added, the entrepreneurial spirit role is added from four different perspectives. Initially, its impact over sustainable tourism has been seen. Moreover, its dependence over performing arts people and how it mediates between performing art and sustainable tourism added to the Authenticity theory with the support of Entrepreneurial Ecosystem theory [65] because, the core aim is sustainable tourism. Entrepreneurial spirit as a mediator is suggested because, performing art individuals if possess entrepreneurial spirit can promote sustainable tourism in the country [11], and the researchers have hardly paid any attention towards this aspect especially in the middle east region.

The moderating role of entrepreneurial spirit is suggested and analyzed to confirm that up to what extent entrepreneurial spirit can positively strengthen the relationship between performing art individuals and sustainable tourism [15]. Hence, Ecosystem theory provide support for interconnectedness of numerous factors that foster or hinder

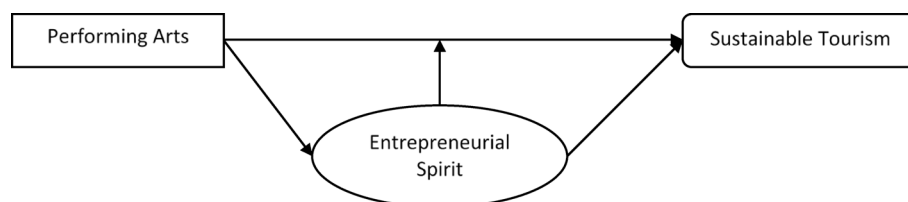


Fig. 1 Research framework

entrepreneurial activity in Oman; thus, the moderating and mediating role of entrepreneurial spirit is supported by Entrepreneurial Ecosystem theory. Moreover, for performing arts entrepreneurs to in a sustainable tourism context use cultural themes and sustainable practices to support sustainable tourism. The challenges that entrepreneurs related to tourism business face especially focused with performing arts include cultural barriers and religious barriers particularly related to the region, because Omanis consider performing art against the religious practices, which is because of the low education level in the region [3].

Entrepreneurial ventures in this area can enhance cultural tourism by offering unique and authentic experiences, preserving traditions, and attracting visitors interested in the local arts scene. Sustainable practices within these ventures ensure the long-term viability of the cultural resources and the well-being of the community. Thus, the key contribution of the research is the integration of cultural tourism theory with entrepreneurial ecosystem theory to promote sustainable tourism in the context of Oman.

In the next section the methodology applied has been discussed for collecting the data and developing the instrument for collecting the data.

3.1 Performing arts tourism in and sustainable tourism in Oman

Performing arts in Oman are deeply interwoven with the nation's history, traditions, and social fabric, primarily transmitted through oral tradition and community practices [4]. Performing art serves not only as entertainment but also as vital expressions of identity, social cohesion, and historical narratives [52]. Traditional Omani music is remarkably diverse, with regional variations reflecting the country's diverse geography and historical interactions [63]. Among the oldest forms is *Al Razha*, a celebration involving swordplay and poetry recitation by skilled poets, typically performed during traditional celebrations across many of Oman's provinces, excluding the southern region [17]. The wearing of Omani attire, including the *khanjar*, is integral to this art form. *Al Azi*, another prevalent traditional art, is practiced throughout Oman and embodies pride, praise, and poetic recitation, with the champion poet, also named *Al Azi*, being highly esteemed within their community [28]. These poems often focus on religious themes, moral lessons, and praise for the Sultan.

Al Tariq, meaning 'the melodious tune', is a unique Bedouin vocal art performed without musical instruments, often while riding camels. It involves a lead singer reciting a verse, which is then repeated by others, with themes ranging from memories and tribal pride to the virtues of camels. *Al Wana*, also a Bedouin tradition, features groups singing songs originating from long camel journeys, often performed with a melancholic tone, especially when recalling memories. *Al Tagrood*, another Bedouin art is associated with the appearance of horses or camels. Similarly, *Al Habot* (or *Al Medan*), a current style in the southern region, characterized by poetic banter between two poets at weddings, social events, and national celebrations. In contrast, *Al Rabobah* is a mixed-gender musical performance featuring dancers, singers, and traditional instruments like the *Rababah*, a stringed instrument [28].

Beyond these musical forms, traditional dance plays a significant role in Omani culture. *Al-Ayyala*, is a popular and expressive performance practiced in northern Oman, simulating a battle scene with chanted poetry, drum music, and synchronized movements of men carrying bamboo sticks [64]. Similarly, *Al-Razfa*, involves men of all ages

performing in two facing lines, singing chants accompanied by drums and holding wooden replica rifles, originally a celebration of victory now popular as entertainment [2]. Additionally, Sword dances, such as the *Razhah qasafiyah*, are also traditional and symbolize courage and honor [54]. All these activities, being a part of performing arts, support tourism in the country.

In more contemporary times, the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) has emerged as a prominent venue showcasing both international and Omani performing arts for attracting tourism, reflecting Oman's openness to global culture while also providing a platform for local talent [43]. The upcoming Oman Cultural Complex, featuring a National Theatre, signifies a further commitment to developing and celebrating the performing arts within the Sultanate [47]. The rich and varied landscape of performing arts in Oman, therefore, provides a significant cultural asset with the potential to attract and engage tourists seeking authentic and meaningful experiences. The above discussion provides a brief overview of the performing arts activities and the historical background. This helped to identify the potential of research and promotion of sustainable tourism through performing art. It also provided background information about the potential of businesses that can be linked with performing arts for the promotion of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁ Performing arts tourism has a significant impact over sustainable tourism.

3.2 Entrepreneurial spirit and sustainable tourism in Oman

Entrepreneurial spirit of the performing art individuals, characterized by innovation, risk-taking, opportunity recognition, and proactiveness, is increasingly recognized as a vital force in driving economic growth and diversification [6] and entrepreneurship in Oman is not different from the world. Entrepreneurial spirit and sustainability spirit need to be incorporated within the people associated with tourism activities to develop sustainability in the same [19]. In the context of Oman, this spirit manifests in local initiatives that creatively leverage the country's unique cultural heritage and natural resources to create memorable experiences for tourists [16].

Entrepreneurship is emerging among Omani people especially the individuals related to tourism. Ventures like Misfat Al Abryeen Old House and Al Hamra Heritage Inn highlight the adaptive reuse of traditional architecture to offer authentic accommodation experiences, appealing to tourists seeking cultural immersion [51]. Homestays in Bidiya provide another example, allowing visitors to connect directly with local communities and experience Omani life firsthand [62]. In the culinary sector, entrepreneurs have established cafes and restaurants [16], such as Kadm Café in Bahla and Bait Al Luban in Muscat, that highlight traditional Omani cuisine and cultural elements, enriching tourism [61]. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) form a significant part of Oman's economy [57], and their role in the tourism sector is growing, offering personalized and niche experiences.

The Omani government actively supports this entrepreneurial drive through various policies and initiatives aimed at diversifying the economy away from oil dependence [9, 10]. Vision 2040 places a strong emphasis on fostering a business-friendly environment and encouraging private sector participation in various sectors [10]. Furthermore, efforts have been made to streamline the process of starting a business in Oman, making it

more accessible for aspiring entrepreneurs [7]. The growing global demand for authentic and sustainable travel experiences creates a favorable market environment for ventures that can offer unique cultural immersion while adhering to responsible practices [53].

Despite this encouraging landscape, challenges remain for tourism entrepreneurship in Oman because of conservative image of the country [20]. Fostering entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals to further integrate performing arts into sustainable tourism development in Oman presents a set of unique challenges and promising opportunities [36]. Lack of specialized training and education programs focused on the intersection of sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship also function as a hurdle [5]. Aspiring entrepreneurs might lack the specific skills and knowledge needed to develop ventures [6] that are both culturally rich, environmentally responsible, and economically viable. Despite these challenges, numerous opportunities exist for fostering entrepreneurial spirit in this domain. Therefore, considering the great opportunities for entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals in the tourism industry of Oman and scarcity of literature calls for conducting research in the area. Based on the above discussion the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H₂ Entrepreneurial Spirit has a significant impact over sustainable tourism in Oman.

3.3 Performing art tourism, entrepreneurial spirit, and sustainable tourism in Oman

By fostering creativity and resourcefulness, entrepreneurs can develop novel approaches that not only display culture but also contribute to environmental and socio-cultural sustainability [37]. This involves moving beyond traditional models of cultural tourism to create experiences that are both engaging for tourists and responsible towards the destination and its communities [25]. In Oman, one promising avenue lies in the creation of eco-friendly cultural performances that take place in natural settings, minimizing environmental impact while highlighting the beauty of country's landscapes [24]. Imagine traditional music and dance performances staged in wadis or desert landscapes [2], utilizing renewable energy sources for lighting and sound, and promoting environmental awareness through the performances themselves [21]. Interactive storytelling experiences offer another opportunity [14]. In Oman, entrepreneurs can weave narratives about Oman's natural heritage and the importance of conservation into engaging performances, particularly for younger audiences. Community-based theatre productions can also play a significant role, celebrating local heritage and involving community members in sustainable tourism initiatives [40], ensuring that the benefits of tourism are directly felt by the people who are the custodians of the culture [49]. Thus, entrepreneurial spirit, helps to promote and identify different businesses by developing innovative products [58] for the tourism industry and sustainable tourism in Oman.

A strong entrepreneurial drive, characterized by innovation, investment, and community involvement, can amplify the positive connections between these two elements, leading to more impactful and sustainable outcomes [69]. However, a lack of entrepreneurial vigor in these areas can weaken or even negate the potential benefits.

Innovation, a core tenet of entrepreneurial spirit, is essential for developing creative and sustainable ways to highlight performing arts for tourism [48]. This includes not only artistic innovation in the performances themselves but also the innovative use of resources and technologies to minimize environmental impact [34].

Entrepreneurial initiatives that actively engage local communities in the creation and delivery of performing arts experiences can contribute significantly to sustainable tourism [12]. By involving community members as performers, artisans, or guides, entrepreneurs can ensure that tourism benefits the local economy, preserves cultural authenticity, and fosters a sense of ownership and pride [22]. However, a lack of entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals in these areas can hinder the development of a strong relationship between performing arts and sustainable tourism [23]. For instance, resistance to adopting innovative practices might lead to the extension of conventional performance methods which are hardly sustainable [8]. Thus, fostering a robust entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals within Oman's cultural and tourism sectors is paramount to effectively leverage performing arts as a driver for sustainable tourism. Therefore, it would be right to claim that entrepreneurial spirit among performing art individuals not only promotes sustainable tourism but also acts as a catalyst by moderating as well as mediating the relationship between performing arts tourism and sustainable tourism in Oman. Therefore, considering the above discussion the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₃ Performing arts tourism has a significant impact over the entrepreneurial spirit.

H₄ Entrepreneurial spirit mediates between performing art tourism and sustainable tourism.

H₅ Entrepreneurial spirit moderates the relationship between performing art tourism and sustainable tourism.

4 Methodology

This research is quantitative and causal in nature. The reason for choosing such quantitative methodology is that hardly researchers have empirically tested the relationships in the cultural settings of Oman and at the same time limited studies conducted previously over performing arts, sustainable tourism, or entrepreneurial spirits in other regions have used the same causal studies [6, 33]. The data has been collected using a developed questionnaire with the support of the prior literature that has been conducted over performing art individuals, entrepreneurial spirit and sustainable tourism [6, 33, 35, 46, 68, 69]. The developed instrument was then sent to two experts of the field and the researchers in the field from Italy, as the country is renowned for tourism, for content and face validity. They confirmed the content validity of the items used in the questionnaire. The items used to measure the variables are attached in the Appendix. In the questionnaire, performing art tourism is chosen as independent variable and the sustainable tourism is chosen as a dependent variable, however, entrepreneurial spirit as an intervening variable has been analyzed to have two different roles, the same variable is analyzed as a mediator as well as moderator. Afterwards, a pilot test was conducted over a sample of 50 respondents. The pilot tests was conducted in Salalah, which is the tourism hub and cultural hub of the country. The data was collected from Salalah during Khareef season and from other parts of the country throughout the year. The only reason for choosing Khareef season was easy availability of performing art individuals during the Khareef season. The main cities targeted for collection of the data were Muscat,

Nizwa, Jebel Shams, Wahiba Sands, Wadi Shab, Bahla, Sohar, and Al Hoota. The results of the pilot test were satisfactory based on Cronbach's Alpha, then rest of the data was collected from the entire country. In these cities the Finally, a total of 415 respondents were chosen who were linked with performing arts business and participated in entertaining the tourists. The people associated with performing arts were picked using purposive sampling because the people associated with performing arts were supposed to participate in the study. The chances of respondent bias was overcome by collecting the data from the large sample size and the respondents were chosen spontaneously. Any respondent showing unwillingness were not forced to participate in the study, hence the chances of respondent bias or response bias were minimized. Secondly, the government of Oman does not have any particular list of such people associated with performing arts. Most of the performing art individuals were in their Middle Ages. To evaluate the hypothesis raised in the study, we used Stata/SE 15.1 for all analyses. Data from 415 respondents were analyzed to test relationships among Performing Arts Tourism (PAT), Entrepreneurial Spirit (ES), and Sustainable Tourism (ST). All constructs were modeled as reflective. As a first step (Measurement model) we validated the reflective measurement model via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation, reporting standardized loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and global fit indices (χ^2 , CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR). As a second step (Structural, primary specification) we tested the hypothesized mediation using a path model on composite scores (item means), estimated by OLS. To obtain robust inference for direct, indirect, and total effects, we used 5,000 bootstrap resamples and reported 95% normal-based confidence intervals (BCa acceleration could not be estimated by Stata). As an auxiliary robustness check, we also tested a moderation term ($ES \times PAT \rightarrow ST$) on composites. Given the very high latent correlations observed in the CFA, we estimated an equality-constrained SEM (ML) at the latent level, constraining $PAT \rightarrow ST$ and $ES \rightarrow ST$ to be equal. We compared the constrained and unconstrained models using a likelihood-ratio test and reported standard fit indices. For the unified path under the constraint, we also reported a 95% normal-based bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CI, on 5,000 resamples). We evaluated multicollinearity on the composite-score regressions using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF).

5 Analysis

We first ran descriptive statistics for Performing Arts Tourism (PAT), Sustainable Tourism (ST), and Entrepreneurial Spirit (ES). Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and internal consistency (Cronbach's α). All scales exhibit excellent reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.90$). In our primary specification, PAT is the independent variable, ST is the dependent variable, and ES acts as a mediator. We also tested an auxiliary moderation ($PAT \times ES \rightarrow ST$) as a robustness check; the interaction was not significant (Table 2).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Variable	No. of Items	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max	Cronbach's Alpha
Performing arts tourism (PAT)	8	415	3.59	0.96	1	5	0.943
Entrepreneurial spirit (ES)	7	415	3.56	0.93	1	5	0.924
Sustainable tourism (ST)	6	415	3.56	0.95	1	5	0.909

Table 2 Measurement model results (Standardized Loadings; CR, AVE)

Construct	Item	Std. Loading	CR/AVE
Performing arts tourism	d_1	0.812	0.943/0.674
	d_2	0.827	
	d_3	0.866	
	d_4	0.795	
	d_5	0.841	
	d_6	0.830	
	d_7	0.811	
	d_8	0.782	
Entrepreneurial spirit	e_1	0.808	0.926/0.641
	e_2	0.774	
	e_3	0.828	
	e_4	0.818	
	e_5	0.799	
	e_6	0.767	
	e_7	0.809	
Sustainable tourism	f_1	0.724	0.909/0.625
	f_2	0.803	
	f_3	0.807	
	f_4	0.814	
	f_5	0.829	
	f_6	0.763	

Table 3 Latent construct correlations (three-factor CFA, standardized)

	PAT	ES
Entrepreneurial spirit (ES)	0.907	
Sustainable tourism (ST)	0.929	0.929

5.1 Measurement model (three-factor reflective model estimated via ML)

The three-factor reflective CFA shows acceptable fit, $\chi^2(186)=683.35$, $p < 0.001$; CFI=0.935, TLI=0.926, RMSEA=0.080, SRMR=0.033. All standardized loadings are high (≈ 0.76 – 0.87), with CR ranging 0.909–0.944 and AVE 0.624–0.677, indicating strong reliability and convergent validity.

5.2 Latent construct correlations (ancillary CFA)

An ancillary three-factor CFA indicated very high latent correlations (Table 3), suggesting substantial conceptual overlap among constructs.

5.3 Structural model: mediation on composite scores (primary analysis)

We estimated a path model on composite scores to test mediation, using 5,000 bootstrap resamples (Table 4). Results support a significant partial mediation: PAT directly affects ST and also indirectly affects ST via ES. The model explains 72.8% of the variance in ES ($R^2=0.728$) and 79.7% of the variance in ST ($R^2=0.797$). A VIF diagnostic on the composites showed no critical multicollinearity (Table 5): although slightly above 3, both VIFs remain below the widely used threshold of 5; given the high conceptual relatedness we additionally ran the equality-constrained SEM as a conservative robustness check.

Table 4 Structural results mapped to hypotheses (primary composite mediation; auxiliary moderation for H5)

Path	β	95% Confidence Intervals	p-value	Hypothesis	Significance
PAT \rightarrow ST (direct)	0.336	[0.179, 0.493] ^a	< 0.001	H1	Supported
ES \rightarrow ST	0.598	[0.513, 0.683] ^b	< 0.001	H2	Supported
PAT \rightarrow ES	0.829	[0.780, 0.878] ^b	< 0.001	H3	Supported
PAT \rightarrow ES \rightarrow ST (Indirect)	0.496	[0.376, 0.615] ^a	< 0.001	H4	Supported
ES \times PAT \rightarrow ST (Interaction)	0.0078	[-0.024, 0.040] ^b	0.632	H5	Not supported
PAT \rightarrow ST (Total; derived H1 + H4)	0.832	[0.763, 0.901] ^a	< 0.001	–	–

^abootstrap, normality-based, 5,000 replicates^bmodel based (asymptotic) CIs from OLS equations on composites**Table 5** Multicollinearity diagnostics (VIF) on composite scores

Predictor	VIF
Performing Arts Tourism (pa)	3.68
Entrepreneurial Spirit (es)	3.68

Table 6 Robustness check: equality-constrained SEM (latent-level)

Model/metric	Result
LR Test (Unconstrained vs. Constrained)	$\chi^2(1) = 14.96, p = 0.0001$
Unified Path (PAT, ES) \rightarrow ST (unstandardized)	$\beta = 0.473$; 95% CI [0.431, 0.516]; $p < 0.001$
Model Fit (Constrained)	$\chi^2(187) = 698.31$; CFI = 0.933; TLI = 0.924; RMSEA = 0.081; SRMR = 0.034
Explained Variance	$R^2(ST) \approx 0.905$

5.4 Robustness check: equality-constrained latent SEM

Given the high latent correlations, we re-estimated the SEM imposing equality on the unstandardized structural paths from PAT and ES to ST. Compared with the unconstrained SEM, this restriction entails a modest but statistically significant loss of fit (LR $\chi^2(1) = 14.96, p = 0.0001$). The constrained model still shows acceptable fit ($\chi^2(187) = 698.31$; CFI = 0.933; TLI = 0.924; RMSEA = 0.081; SRMR = 0.034). Under the constraint, the common unstandardized effect is 0.473, with a normal-based (because BCa acceleration could not be estimated) bootstrap 95% CI [0.431, 0.516] based on 5,000 resamples ($p < 0.001$). The implied R^2 for ST from the constrained SEM is ≈ 0.905 . As expected, standardized paths are virtually identical ($\beta_{PAT \rightarrow ST} \approx 0.486$; $\beta_{ES \rightarrow ST} \approx 0.488$) (Table 6).

6 Conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations

This analysis underscores the significant potential for entrepreneurial spirit to function as a bridging factor in strengthening the relationship between performing arts and sustainable tourism in Oman. While Oman possesses a rich heritage of performing arts and a growing commitment to sustainable tourism under its Vision 2040, the effective integration of these two domains requires a vibrant and innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem. Entrepreneurial drive, characterized by innovation in performance and sustainability practices, strategic investment in infrastructure and talent, and genuine engagement with local communities, can significantly enhance the value and sustainability of Oman's cultural tourism offerings.

Our results show a clear positive effect of Performing Arts Tourism (PAT) on Sustainable Tourism (ST) ($\beta = 0.336$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.179, 0.493]), plus a sizable indirect effect via Entrepreneurial Spirit (ES) ($\beta = 0.496$; 95% CI [0.376, 0.615]), yielding a large total effect ($\beta = 0.832$; 95% CI [0.763, 0.901]). ES has a strong direct association with ST ($\beta = 0.598$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.513, 0.683]) and PAT strongly predicts ES ($\beta = 0.829$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.780, 0.878]). The composite model explains $R^2_{ES} = 0.728$ and $R^2_{ST} = 0.797$. By contrast, the $ES \times PAT$ interaction on ST is not significant ($\beta = 0.0078$, $p = 0.632$; 95% CI [-0.024, 0.040]), indicating no detectable moderation in our data. A latent equality-constrained SEM returned a unified unstandardized effect $b = 0.473$ (95% CI [0.431, 0.516]) and $R^2_{ST} \approx 0.905$, corroborating the primary mediation findings from the composite-score path model (Table 4). These patterns are consistent with prior work suggesting that these patterns are consistent with prior work suggesting that promoting performing arts can support tourism outcomes and sustainability [33, 37]. Likewise, performing art has also shown a significant impact over entrepreneurial spirit which is also in line with the prior literature [23]. Likewise, the role of entrepreneurial spirit in promoting sustainable tourism has also found significant which is also in line with the prior literature [23, 31].

The results highlight an important distinction between moderation and mediation, supporting mediation ($PAT \rightarrow ES \rightarrow ST$) but not moderation. While ES as a moderator does not significantly alter the direct impact of PAT on ST, a plausible reason is that entrepreneurship often emphasizes profit generation, scalability, and market competitiveness, whereas performing-arts practitioners engaged in sustainable tourism may prioritize cultural preservation, community engagement, and environmental responsibility. Prior studies have also reported cases where ES does not affect sustainability dimensions [30, 70]. Such divergent logics may create tension—where the commercial drive of entrepreneurship can overshadow the authentic, place-based, and often non-commercial nature of performing arts—and many practitioners may lack the resources, training, or networks needed to adopt entrepreneurial approaches effectively.

Conversely, ES plays a fundamental role as a mediator, meaning that the impact of performing arts on sustainable tourism is amplified when individuals develop entrepreneurial skills [33]. This aligns with the limited literature on similar topics and suggests that policies aimed at promoting cultural entrepreneurship among performing-arts practitioners could enhance the sustainability of tourism initiatives.

6.1 Practical implications

To effectively leverage performing arts for sustainable tourism, entrepreneurial initiatives need to be strategically integrated with existing sustainable tourism efforts by Omani government. Partnerships between performing artists, tourism operators (including eco-lodges and heritage hotels), and conservation organizations can create synergistic opportunities. Cultural performances could be a regular feature at eco-lodges, offering guests an enriching experience that aligns with the sustainability ethos of the accommodation. Similarly, collaborations with nature reserves and cultural heritage sites can lead to the development of site-specific performances that enhance visitor appreciation and promote responsible tourism practices. Entrepreneurial spirit holds the key to unlocking innovative and sustainable intersections between Oman's rich performing arts traditions and its flourishing tourism sector. Overcoming the challenges will be

crucial to fully harness the potential of entrepreneurial spirit in driving innovation and sustainability within Oman's cultural and tourism sectors. Likewise, the findings are useful for any country that is rich in its heritage and has the potential to attract performing art tourism.

Raising awareness among tourists about the value and appeal of sustainable cultural experiences is another challenge, as it is competing with more conventional and potentially less responsible tourism offerings. Finally, the need to navigate cultural sensitivities and ensure respectful engagement with local traditions in the development and promotion of performing arts tourism requires careful consideration and expertise. Entrepreneurs might pioneer the use of sustainable materials for costumes and stage sets, or design performances that take place in naturally lit outdoor venues to reduce energy consumption. Incorporating environmental themes and messages into the performances themselves can further enhance their contribution to sustainable tourism by raising awareness and encouraging responsible behavior among audiences. The study also opens horizons for the people who have entrepreneurial mind to start businesses related to performing arts because this sector has a significant vacuum not only in research but also in tourism and in entrepreneurial aspects as well.

6.2 Theoretical implications

The study over identification of the mediating and moderating role of entrepreneurial spirit between performing art and sustainable tourism has significant theoretical implications because the framework has been developed based on the integration of cultural tourism theory and entrepreneurial ecosystem theory.

Primarily the study extends Cultural Tourism Theory by embedding performing arts within entrepreneurial spirit where artists, tour operators, and cultural institutions function as ecosystem participants. The framework developed encourages a shift from preservation to innovation, where tradition is repurposed through entrepreneurship which may strengthen the context of Cultural Tourism Theory. The mediating role of Entrepreneurial Spirit helps in translating performing arts into marketable tourism experiences, to enhance sustainability in tourism. This reframes performing arts from being passive cultural products to active drivers of sustainable economic value. Theoretically, this implies that individual agency and creativity are essential to transforming culture into sustainable tourism offerings.

On the other hand, the moderating role of Entrepreneurial Spirit had the potential to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between performing arts and sustainable tourism, however, the relationship is found insignificant. The major reason behind the insignificant impact is lack of awareness of entrepreneurial spirit among the individuals involved in performing art, perhaps because of their low education level of lack of entrepreneurial education, therefore, entrepreneurial spirit fails to significantly moderate the relationship between performing art and sustainable tourism. However, its direct impact over sustainable tourism is significant, which shows the significance of entrepreneurial spirit in the model. This contributes to contingency theory in tourism and entrepreneurship: outcomes depend on contextual factors like individual drive and ecosystem support. Additionally, Integration of the two theories supports the idea that sustainability is not just environmental but also economic and cultural. The

entrepreneurial ecosystem acts as a vehicle for long-term resilience, ensuring that performing arts remain viable and adaptive.

6.3 Limitations

Despite significant theoretical, practical, and policy implications, this research has some serious limitations that we face while collecting the data, and they are worth mentioning. The foremost common limitation that researchers face in any middle east country is related to cultural sensitivity as majority of the participants due to religious reasons as performing arts including dances and modern theaters are viewed as culturally sensitive and inappropriate, hence limiting openness in response. At the same time, respondents hesitated to share personal opinions particularly in face to face data collection. At the same time there are limited databases regarding performing arts. The potential participants were scattered throughout the country and the researchers faced challenges in collecting the data.

Another limitation of the study which is common for majority of the primary studies was common method bias, however the issue was minimized by collecting the data with a huge sample size. Moreover, non-response bias could also be a major issue, but because of the large sample size and confirmation to the respondents that their personal information will not be revealed or disclosed helped to overcome the challenge. In future the researchers are guided to also use qualitative studies to avoid this issue and to also collect the data from the tourists as well to understand sustainable tourism.

Meanwhile, a worth mentioning issue was that hardly there was any well-established model that was explored in this study. At the same time the instrument was developed instead of adopting an established instrument. The research become more challenging because of lack of understanding, as in Oman there are very few references available for primary research. However, the researchers managed the issue by increasing the sample size to avoid any bias and collected the data from the whole country. The developed instrument was sent to the experts from Oman and Italy to get the face validity of the instrument. Thus, the challenges associated with expected bias, and lack of research was overcome.

6.4 Policy recommendations

To fully realize this potential, policymakers in Oman should consider implementing targeted measures to foster entrepreneurship in this intersection. This includes establishing dedicated funding mechanisms and grant programs to support sustainable cultural tourism startups and SMEs. Developing specialized training and mentorship initiatives focused on the unique skills required for this field can equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the necessary expertise. Streamlining the regulatory landscape for cultural and tourism businesses and promoting collaborations between cultural organizations, tourism operators, and entrepreneurs are also crucial steps. Investing in eco-friendly infrastructure that supports both performing arts and sustainable tourism, such as green performance venues and digital platforms for virtual experiences, will be essential, however, the current Omani digitalization hardly support, but the government is paying utmost attention to promote digitalization in the country. Furthermore, raising awareness among both tourists and local communities about the benefits of sustainable cultural experiences can help cultivate a supportive environment for these ventures.

For entrepreneurs looking to capitalize on these opportunities, focusing on authentic and community-based experiences that deeply resonate with Omani culture is paramount. Integrating sustainability principles into every aspect of their ventures, from resource utilization to community partnerships, will not only align with global trends but also enhance the long-term viability of their businesses. Leveraging digital technologies for promotion, storytelling, and creating immersive experiences can expand their reach and appeal. Building strong and respectful relationships with local communities and cultural organizations will ensure the authenticity and sustainability of their offerings. By developing unique and innovative experiences that cater to niche markets interested in culture and sustainability, Omani entrepreneurs can carve out a distinctive position in the global tourism landscape.

Along with Sultanate of Oman, the study is extremely helpful for the policy makers of the countries that are rich in tourism and especially, rich in cultural tourism. In such countries policy makers can seek guidance from the findings of the study, how to promote entrepreneurial spirit among the performing art individuals for not only promoting business, but also enriching the sustainability aspect in it.

6.5 Future directions

Future research could further explore the specific economic and social impacts of entrepreneurial initiatives linking performing arts and sustainable tourism in Oman. Investigating tourist motivations and preferences for such integrated experiences would also be valuable. Additionally, comparative studies with other countries in the region that are also focusing on cultural tourism, and sustainability could provide further insights and best practices for Oman. In conclusion, by strategically fostering entrepreneurial spirit within its cultural and tourism sectors, Oman has a unique opportunity to develop a vibrant and sustainable tourism industry that not only celebrates its rich performing arts heritage but also contributes to its broader economic and social development goals. Oman's rich and diverse performing arts heritage provides a strong and distinctive foundation upon which entrepreneurs can build innovative tourism offerings. The government's strong commitment to Vision 2040 and its focus on diversifying the economy through sustainable tourism creates a supportive policy landscape.

Additionally, in future the researchers are encouraged to conduct cross-disciplinary frameworks, encouraging further merging of tourism, entrepreneurship, and cultural studies. Moreover, it is highly recommended to use longitudinal and multi-level models in studying cultural tourism for achieving sustainable tourism in the region. Moreover, in future, the researchers should address local entrepreneurial culture as a moderator which may provide significant results and may add to the theoretical foundations of the study. Finally, the issue of contextual sensitivity opens the avenues for highlighting the significance of local entrepreneurial culture, especially in under-researched areas like Oman.

7 Conclusions

There is also an increasing awareness and interest in entrepreneurship among Omani youth, who represent a dynamic and creative force for developing new initiatives. The potential for forging public-private partnerships can provide crucial financial and logistical support for sustainable cultural tourism ventures. Leveraging digital technologies

offers opportunities for innovative promotion, enhanced visitor engagement, and the creation of virtual experiences that align with sustainability goals. Finally, there is a significant opportunity to develop niche tourism markets that cater to specific interests within performing arts while emphasizing sustainability and responsible travel.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Age	15 to 25	26 to 35	36 to 45	46 and Above
Qualification		Diploma	Bachelors	

Use 5 points Likert Scale to collect the answers for the questions.

where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Performing Art Tourism.

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	I believe that performing arts enhance the overall tourism experience					
2	I believe that cultural events attract more tourists					
3	I believe that performing arts can promote understanding of local cultures					
4	I believe tourists prefer destinations that offer a variety of performing arts experiences					
5	I believe that investing in performing arts is important for local economies					
6	I believe that performing arts should be part of tourism marketing strategies					
7	I believe that performing arts can help preserve cultural heritage of tourist destinations					

Entrepreneurial Spirit.

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	I have a strong tolerance for risk and ambiguity					
2	I recover and learn from failures					
3	I can identify the opportunities					
4	I can propose innovative solutions for the challenges					
5	I can get resources to perform my acts					
6	I can implement innovative solutions					
7	I have the capabilities to undertake the required task					

Sustainable Tourism.

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am a performing art individual, and aware of the principles of sustainable tourism					
2	I feel responsible for minimizing my environmental impacts while performing my acts					
3	I actively seek out sustainable tourism experiences while performing my acts					
4	I believe tourism contributes positively to local communities					
5	I respect the cultural values of tourists while performing my art activities					
6	I believe sustainable tourism is needed for the economic sustainability of a country					

Author contributions

“Conceptualization, Muzaffar Asad; methodology, Muzaffar Asad; software, Enrico di Bella; validation, Muzaffar Asad; formal analysis, Enrico di Bella; investigation, Mohammed Ali bait Ali Sulaiman; resources, Mohammed Ali bait Ali Sulaiman; writing—original draft preparation, Muzaffar Asad; writing—review and editing, Muzaffar Asad; visualization, Sara Preti; supervision, Enrico di Bella; project administration, Mohammed Ali bait Ali Sulaiman. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.” Authorship has been limited to those who have contributed to the work reported.

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Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from Dr. Mohammed Ali Bait Ali Sulaiman on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

In this study no minor was involved, or no animal was harmed. Furthermore, participants were free to participate or to refuse to participate in the survey. The names of the participants were kept confidential, and they were assured that responses given by them will not be shared publicly. All the sources from where the help is received have been properly cited and acknowledged. Additionally, all methods were conducted in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Informed consent

All the Participants were informed through a cover letter, and informed consent was obtained through the telephone call before sending the questionnaire to them. The cover letter contains the statement that their names will not be disclosed, and the information provided by them will not be linked with their organization.

Human or animal rights

The study is not a clinical trial; hence no documentation was required. Furthermore, participants who were adult and performing art individuals were free to participate or to refuse to participate in the survey. The names of the participants were kept confidential and all the sources from where the help is taken have been properly cited and acknowledged. Additionally, the human participants participated only by responding to the questionnaire which is attached at the end and approval for the data collection was also taken from Research Ethics Committee from Dhofar University, therefore, all the protocols necessary were followed.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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