

MASTER'S THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Student's name: Semegn Feseha Desalegn

Master's Thesis Reviewer (MT): Sandeep Kumar Dey, Ph.D

MT topic: The Role of Community Attachment and Residents' Empowerment Towards Quality of Life and Support for Sustainable Tourism Development: An Application of RETS 2.0 in Ethiopia

Acad. year: 2024/2025

Notes on completing the report:

1. For the evaluation of each criterion, use the following scale: A - fulfilled very well, significantly exceeds the requirements; B – fulfilled with quality; C – fulfilled without reservations; D – fulfilled with minor deficiencies; E - fulfilled but with significant deficiencies; F - not fulfilled.
2. If any criterion is graded F, the thesis must be evaluated as unsatisfactory overall, not meeting the criteria for the MT defence, and such a thesis cannot be recommended for the defence.
3. MT Reviewer must comment verbally on each evaluation criterion!

Assessment criteria:

Assessment

1. Thesis Objectives and Methods	A
<i>The commentary focuses on: clarity of the formulation of the thesis objectives and the methods used in the thesis elaboration; evaluation of the objectives of the thesis following the thesis theme; the methods and procedures chosen to fulfil the thesis objectives.</i> The student has clearly stated the dual focus on empowerment dimensions (economic, environmental, political, psychological, social) and their impact on quality of life (QoL) and sustainable tourism support. This study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a robust tool for small sample sizes (n=200), to analyze complex variable relationships. However, Limited justification for selecting Addis Ababa as the sole study location, raising questions about cultural specificity and generalizability to other Ethiopian regions. Sample size, though adequate for PLS-SEM, may inadequately represent Addis Ababa's diverse population, risking sampling bias	
2. Theoretical Background	A
<i>The commentary focuses on: the content of the critical literature research; the appropriateness of the chosen domestic and foreign literature sources; the method of citing sources in an adequate manner.</i> The student has effectively synthesised sustainable tourism literature, particularly the RETS 2.0 model, to contextualise empowerment in urban African settings. Furthermore, the thesis Identifies gaps in existing frameworks, such as the neglect of political empowerment in prior studies. Nevertheless, the study overrelies on the RETS 2.0 model without adequately addressing its limitations, such as its original application in rural Asian contexts. It is to be noted that, it misses the mark to engage with critiques of "community attachment" as a Western-centric construct, which may not fully capture Ethiopian communal dynamics	
3. Practical Application – Analysis	B



The commentary focuses on: the use of knowledge from theory, its appropriateness of application; sufficient description of the process of application of the methods of work; overall assessment of the current state; sufficient substantiation of the conclusions of the analyses; the difficulty of data collection and processing.

The student has identified political, psychological, and social empowerment as key drivers of sustainable tourism support, aligning with global studies on participatory governance. Furthermore, the examination has revealed moderating effects of community attachment on economic/environmental empowerment and QoL, offering nuanced policy insights. Certain weaknesses of this particular section, firstly, economic and environmental empowerment show no direct significance, yet the analysis lacks depth in exploring why these dimensions fail to impact QoL in Addis Ababa. Secondly, it excludes critical variables like tourism revenue distribution or infrastructure gaps, which are pivotal for Ethiopian urban tourism.

4. Practical Application – Project/ Research	B
<i>The commentary focuses on: the connection of the solving part of the thesis to the theory and to the analyses results; supporting the proposals with appropriate arguments; meeting the objectives set. For research-oriented MTs, the focus should be on discussion of the results and their evaluation.</i> The candidate proposes actionable strategies (e.g., community-based entrepreneurship, civic participation) grounded in statistical findings. Furthermore, the investigation discusses moderating effects rigorously, linking results to broader debates about local identity and inclusion. However, recommendations for "equitable tourism benefits" remain vague, lacking concrete mechanisms for implementation in Ethiopia's bureaucratic context. Simultaneously, it overlooks potential conflicts between communal traditions and modern tourism development, a critical issue in African urban studies.	
5. Formal Layout	A
<i>The commentary focuses on: logical coherence of the text of the thesis; use of correct terminology; use of the prescribed standard of citation of sources; appropriate linguistic and graphic level.</i> Satisfactory	

Overall thesis assessment*	B
The thesis makes a meaningful contribution by contextualizing empowerment in an understudied African urban setting. However, methodological constraints (sample size, cultural specificity) and theoretical oversights (uncritical adoption of RETS 2.0) limit its broader applicability. While the analysis identifies key empowerment drivers, the practical recommendations lack operational specificity, reducing their utility for policymakers. Future research should incorporate longitudinal data and cross-cultural comparisons to strengthen the framework's relevance.	

* The final grade is not an arithmetic average of the individual criteria for assessing the thesis.

Questions for the defence:

1. The RETS 2.0 framework was originally applied in rural Asian contexts. How do you justify its suitability for analysing empowerment dynamics in an urban African setting like Addis Ababa, given Ethiopia's unique communal traditions and bureaucratic challenges? What modifications, if any, were made to address the model's inherent rural bias?
2. Your findings show no direct statistical significance between economic/environmental empowerment and quality of life. How do you reconcile this with Ethiopia's high poverty rate and environmental degradation? Could Addis Ababa's urban informality (e.g., unregulated businesses, lack of green infrastructure) explain this divergence from global studies?
3. Your recommendations emphasise "equitable tourism benefits" but lack actionable mechanisms. How would you propose overcoming Ethiopia's centralised governance and resource allocation bottlenecks to ensure marginalised communities directly benefit from tourism? Provide specific policy or institutional reforms.

The thesis **fulfils** the criteria for the defence of the MT. The thesis **is recommended** for the defence.

Date 22.05.2025

Signature of MT Reviewer