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PROMOTING TOURISTS' GREEN CONSUMPTION THROUGH LOCAL RESIDENTS' AND TOUR GUIDES' BEHAVIORS: A STUDY ON RURAL TOURISM IN QUANG NAM PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The growing importance of sustainable tourism has brought attention to the factors influencing tourists' eco-friendly behaviors. This study investigates the relationships between the environmentally responsible actions of residents and tour guides, tourists' environmental attitudes, and their green consumption choices in the context of rural tourism in Quang Nam, Vietnam. Drawing upon the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework and the Theory of Planned Behavior, a quantitative survey was conducted with 320 domestic and international tourists visiting rural destinations in Hoi An. The findings, analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), reveal that both residents' and tour guides' environmentally responsible behaviors have significant positive effects on shaping tourists' environmental attitudes and promoting their green consumption. Residents' actions emerged as the strongest predictor of tourists' attitudes, followed by tour guides' behaviors. Furthermore, tourists' environmental attitudes were found to positively influence their actual green consumption choices. The study highlights the pivotal role of residents and tour guides as sustainability ambassadors in driving responsible tourist behaviors.

Keywords: Environmentally responsible behavior, green consumption, Quang Nam, sustainable tourism, rural tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, green tourism has emerged as an inevitable trend in global tourism development, gaining widespread attention from travelers, tourism businesses, and society. Recognizing this shift, Quang Nam province has proactively embraced sustainable tourism since 2019, consistently promoting a green tourism message. It later became the first locality in Vietnam to issue a provincial-level Green Tourism Criteria, reinforcing its commitment to eco-friendly travel. Over the past five years, Quang Nam has been dedicated to developing its tourism sector in alignment with the green tourism model. Thanks to these efforts, the province's destinations have become increasingly popular, leaving a lasting positive impression on international visitors. Moreover, this commitment contributes to Vietnam's broader goal of achieving Net Zero Tourism. A key aspect of Quang Nam's green tourism strategy is its extensive network of 128 agricultural and rural tourism sites, many of which operate effectively [1]. Notable destinations include Thanh Ha Pottery Village, Tra Que Vegetable Village, Bay Mau Coconut Forest in Cam Thanh, Kim Bong Carpentry Village, Cu Lao Cham, and Tan Thanh Fishing Village in Hoi An. Agricultural and rural tourism has

become an integral part of the visitor experience, with surveys estimating that over 30% of tourists engage in these activities [1]. Among them, the Bay Mau Coconut Forest stands out as a prime attraction. In 2023 alone, it welcomed nearly 1 million visitors, generating over 27 billion VND in revenue from entrance ticket sales.

As rural tourism continues to grow, an equally important aspect of sustainability is the behavior and mindset of tourists themselves. Green consumption among travelers is becoming a critical factor in advancing sustainable tourism, as visitors' choices directly impact local environments and communities. Previous studies have identified several key influences on tourists' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Notably, the environmentally responsible actions of residents [2-4] and the conduct of tour guides [5, 6] play significant roles in shaping sustainable tourism practices. However, the interplay between these factors remains unclear, particularly in the context of rural tourism, where community engagement and eco-conscious travel decisions are crucial.

Safshekan, et al. [4] found that community attachment, community involvement, and environmental attitude positively influence the environmentally responsible behavior of residents. This suggests that residents' behavior can impact tourists' behavior. Similarly, Cheng, et al. [3] showed that residents' positive attitudes towards sustainable tourism development led to increased community participation and environmentally responsible behavior. This behavior has both direct and indirect effects (through community participation) on tourists' green consumption. Furthermore, tourists' attitudes towards responsible tourism are influenced by various factors such as environmental knowledge and concern, place attachment [7, 8], perceived environmental consequences of tourism activities [9], destination image [6, 10], and social norms [11]. Among these, environmental knowledge is considered a more significant predictor of sustainable attitude than environmental sensitivity [8]. However, many studies have also highlighted the gap between positive attitudes and actual green consumption behavior among tourists [12, 13]. Passafaro [14] emphasized the limitations in applying the concept of "attitude" in tourism research, particularly the weak or inconsistent relationship between attitudes and behavior. Similarly, Schönherr [15] noted that responsible tourism research has mainly focused on tourists' responsibility, while the roles of tourism businesses, residents, and destination management organizations have not received sufficient attention.

Based on these research gaps, this study aims to investigate the relationship between the environmentally responsible behavior of residents and tour guides with tourists' environmental attitudes and green consumption in the context of rural tourism in Quang Nam, Vietnam. The proposed research model is based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework [16] and the Theory of Planned Behavior [17] and a review of previous studies. The research questions are: (1) How does the environmentally responsible behavior of residents influence tourists' environmental attitudes and green consumption? (2) How does the environmentally friendly behavior of tour guides impact tourists' environmental attitudes and green consumption? (3) To what extent do tourists' positive environmental attitudes promote their green consumption behavior?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, proposed by Mehrabian and Russell [16], provides a comprehensive understanding of how external factors influence human behavior. According to this model, when an individual is exposed to an external stimulus, such as a physical or social environment, it affects their internal cognitive and

emotional states (organism). These internal processes, which are not directly observable, involve perceptions, thoughts, and emotions that are unique to each individual. The changes in the individual's cognitive and emotional states subsequently lead to behavioral responses toward the initial stimulus.

The S-O-R model emphasizes the crucial role of the mediating factor, the individual's internal state (organism). The same stimulus can lead to different responses in different individuals, depending on how each person interprets and psychologically reacts to the stimulus [18]. Therefore, understanding and influencing the psychological aspects of customers is essential for predicting and shaping their behavior.

2.2. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB proposed by Ajzen [17], is one of the most widely used theoretical models to explain human behavior. According to TPB, the intention to perform a behavior is the direct factor leading to that behavior, and the intention is influenced by three factors: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Specifically, attitude represents an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior; subjective norms reflect the social pressure an individual perceives about whether or not to perform the behavior; perceived behavioral control indicates the degree of ease or difficulty that a person believes they will face when acting.

2.3. Hypotheses and research model

The S-O-R model has been applied in the context of rural tourism to explain how residents' environmentally responsible behavior can influence tourists' green consumption [2]. In this model, the environmentally friendly actions of residents serve as the Stimulus (S) that triggers tourists' internal states (Organism, O), such as destination identification and environmental concern. These internal states then motivate tourists to engage in green consumption behaviors (Response, R). The interaction between stakeholders in tourism, including residents, tour guides, and tourists, is crucial for the sustainable development of a destination [2].

Social norms and observational learning play a significant role in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors related to the environment [19]. When tourists witness residents and tour guides engaging in environmentally responsible practices, they may experience social pressure to adhere to green norms and become more aware of the importance of environmental protection. This observational learning can also enhance tourists' environmental knowledge, which is a key predictor of sustainable attitudes [8]. In addition to social influences, tourists' environmental attitudes are shaped by various factors such as place attachment [7, 8], perceived environmental consequences of tourism activities [9], destination image [6, 10], and environmental concern [8].

In summary, the S-O-R model provides a framework for understanding how the environmentally responsible behaviors of residents and tour guides (Stimulus) can influence tourists' environmental attitudes (Organism), ultimately leading to green consumption behaviors (Response).

Based on the above arguments, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Residents' environmentally responsible behavior has a direct positive influence on tourists' environmental attitudes

H2: Residents' environmentally responsible behavior has a direct positive influence on tourists' green consumption

H3: Tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior has a direct positive influence on tourists' environmental attitudes

H4: Tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior has a direct positive influence on tourists' green consumption

In recent decades, TPB has been widely applied in the tourism field, particularly in research on environmentally friendly behavior of tourists. Most studies have confirmed the existence of a relationship between environmental attitudes and green consumption intentions/behaviors of tourists. For instance, the results of Nekmahmud, et al. [20] showed that environmental attitudes have a strong positive influence on the intention to purchase green products in both European and non-European tourist groups. Similarly, Abdullah, et al. [10] also pointed out that tourists with a positive attitude towards the environment are more likely to have intentions to behave in an environmentally responsible manner. Furthermore, many previous studies have also provided evidence on the link between attitudes and environmentally friendly behaviors. Leonidou, et al. [21] affirmed that tourists' pro-environmental attitudes lead to eco-friendly behaviors, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction. Follows and Jobber [22] also found a hierarchical relationship, where individual values lead to product-specific attitudes, which then lead to purchase intention and ultimately purchase behavior. Their study confirmed the important role of attitudes in predicting customers' purchase intentions.

However, the relationship between attitudes and green consumption behavior of tourists has also encountered some inconsistent results. Passafaro [14] highlighted the limitations in applying the attitude concept in tourism research, particularly the weak or inconsistent relationship between attitudes and behavior, as well as the neglect of social, cultural, and contextual factors underlying reported attitudes. Budeanu [12] findings showed that despite positive attitudes, few tourists actually engage in sustainable tourism behaviors such as buying responsible products or choosing environmentally friendly transportation. This may be because existing initiatives are not effectively reaching or engaging customers. From the above arguments, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Tourists' environmental attitudes have a direct positive influence on their green consumption behavior.

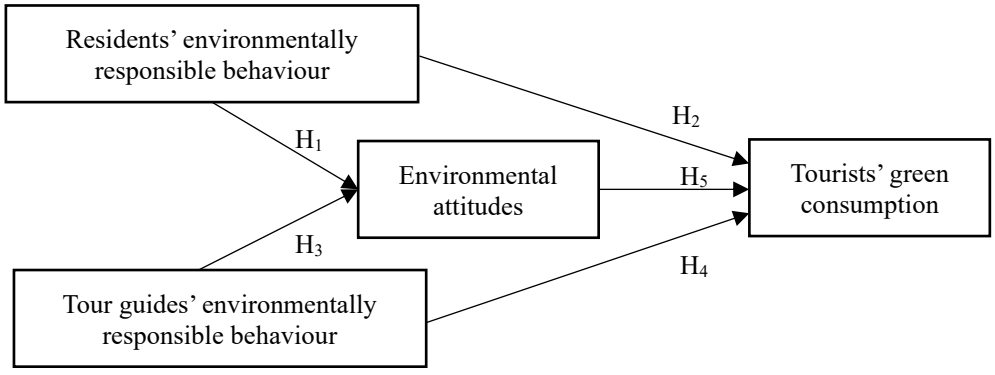

Figure 1. Theoretical model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and data collection

Data was collected using a questionnaire distributed directly to visitors at rural tourism sites in Hoi An, including Thanh Ha Pottery Village, Tra Que Vegetable Village, and Bay Mau Coconut Forest. The questionnaire was designed in both Vietnamese and English to accommodate the target respondents. Convenience sampling method was employed. After screening out invalid responses, a total of 320 valid questionnaires was obtained.

3.2. Measurement instrument

All scales were adopted from previous studies (Table 1). The scales for "Residents' environmentally responsible behavior" and "Tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior" were adopted from Hu, et al. [2] study, each consisting of 6 measurement items. The "Environmental attitudes" scale was developed based on Nekmahmud, et al. [20] research, comprising 3 measurement items. The "Tourists' green consumption" scale was adopted from Hu, et al. [2] study, consisting of 7 measurement items. These scales have been validated for reliability and validity in prior studies, making them suitable for the current research context on tourists' green consumption behavior.

Table 1. Measurement instrument

Items	Sources
Residents' environmentally responsible behavior (RES)	Hu, et al. [2]
RES1. Residents comply with relevant regulations to not destroy the destination's environment	
RES2. Residents are willing to attend environmental cleaning activities	
RES3. Residents try to convince partners to protect the natural environment	
RES4. Residents try to not disrupt the fauna and flora of the destination	
RES5. Residents attach importance to environmental protection	
RES6. Residents try to guide tourists to engage in environmental protection	
Tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior (TES)	Hu, et al. [2]
TES1. Tour guides comply with relevant regulations to not destroy the destination's environment	
TES2. Tour guides are willing to attend environmental cleaning activities	
TES3. Tour guides try to convince partners to protect the natural environment	
TES4. Tour guides try to not disrupt the fauna and flora of the destination	
TES5. Tour guides attach importance to environmental protection	
TES6. Tour guides try to guide tourists to engage in environmental protection	
Environmental attitudes (ENA)	Nekmahmud, et al. [20]
ENA1. I am favourable to purchasing environmental-friendly products/services when I travel	

ENA2. During my travelling, I feel much better about myself when I purchase environmental- friendly products	
ENA3. It is worth using environmental-friendly products during my travels because it will help in conserving natural resources	
ENA4. Use of environmental-friendly products/services will reduce pollution to improve the environment of tourist places	
Tourists' green consumption (TGC)	Hu, et al. [2]
TGC1. I use public transport when possible	
TGC2. I walk and/or cycle when possible	
TGC3. I would buy local eco-products	
TGC4. I would stay at a green hotel when travelling	
TGC5. I would consider saving energy at a hotel	
TGC6. I would try to dispose of garbage properly	
TGC7. I would pick up the rubbish that I see during my trip	

3.3. Analytical technique

The primary analytical technique employed is Partial least squares – structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0 software to test the relationships among variables in the research model. First, the measurement model is assessed to examine the reliability and validity of the scales, including convergent validity through Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), as well as discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Next, the structural model is evaluated to analyze the relationships between latent variables by estimating Path Coefficients and testing their statistical significance using T-value and p-value statistics through the Bootstrapping method. Additionally, the study checks for multicollinearity among independent variables using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to ensure model stability.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Assessment of measurement model

Table 2 shows that Cronbach's Alpha for the constructs ranges from 0.856 to 0.918; the outer loadings of all items exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.5; composite reliability ranges from 0.893 to 0.943 (greater than 0.7); and the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.5 [23]. Therefore, the scale ensures reliability and convergent validity. Additionally, according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE (values on the diagonal) for each construct is greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients of that construct with other constructs in the research model. The values of the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for each construct are all below 0.9. Therefore, the scale ensures discriminant validity.

Table 2. Assessment of measurement model

Constructs	CA	OL	CR	AVE	Fornell-Larcker criterion				Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)			
					RES	TES	ENA	TGC	RES	TES	ENA	TGC
RES	0.893	0.722 - 0.862	0.918	0.652	**0.808**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TES	0.856	0.723 - 0.827	0.893	0.583	-0.010	**0.763**	-	-	0.056	-	-	-
ENA	0.918	0.833 - 0.960	0.943	0.805	0.526	0.373	**0.897**	-	0.579	0.418	-	-
TGC	0.907	0.760 - 0.828	0.926	0.642	0.525	0.414	0.661	**0.801**	0.582	0.468	0.723	-

Note: CA - Cronbach's Alpha; OL – Outer Loading; CR - Composite Reliability, AVE - Average Variance Extracted

4.2. Assessment of structural models

Lowry and Gaskin [24] note that multicollinearity issues may exist between related exogenous and endogenous variables. Wong [25] suggests that when the variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeds 5 or falls below 0.2, this indicates the presence of multicollinearity problems among latent variables. As shown in Table 3, all VIF are below the threshold of 5, the maximum VIF value is 2.200 (less than 5), and the minimum value is 1 (greater than 0.2), indicating that multicollinearity does not occur among the latent variables.

Table 3. Collinearity Statistics (VIF) – Inner Model – Matrix

Constructs	ENA	RES	TES	TGC
ENA	-	-	-	1.724
RES	1.000	-	-	1.485
TES	1.000	-	-	1.247
TGC	-	-	-	-

Path coefficient and t-value analysis reveals that RES and TES positively impact ENA (R2 = 42,0%), while RES, TES, and ENA positively impact TGC (R2 = 54,0%) (Figure 2). All relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming hypotheses H1 through H5.

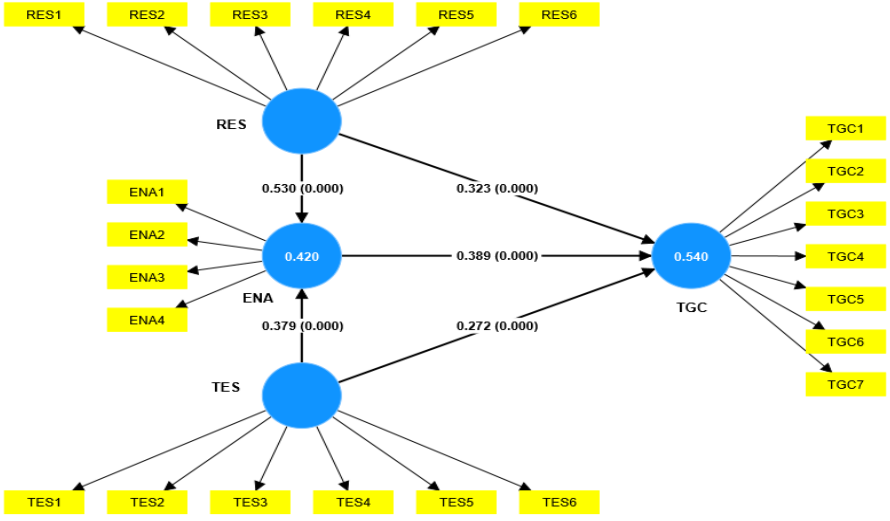

Figure 2. Output of the structural model

The study found that the relationships between different factors had positive impacts at various levels, with effect size f Square (f^2) ranging from 0.129 to 0.484 (Table 4). According to Cohen [26] guidelines, an f^2 less than 0.02 indicates little to no impact, 0.02 to 0.15 suggests a small impact, 0.15 to 0.35 indicates a medium impact, and values greater than or equal to 0.35 show a large impact. The strongest relationship was between RES and ENA (H1), with a large impact ($f^2 = 0.484$). The relationship between TES and ENA (H3) had a medium impact ($f^2 = 0.247$). Both the relationships between RES and TGC (H2) and ENA and TGC (H5) showed medium impacts, with f^2 values of 0.153 and 0.191, respectively. Lastly, the relationship between TES and TGC (H4) had only a small impact.

Table 4. Results of structural path model

Hypothese	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P values	Result	f^2
H1: RES => ENA	0.530	11.653	0.000	Supported	0.484
H2: RES => TGC	0.323	5.633	0.000	Supported	0.153
H3: TES => ENA	0.379	7.731	0.000	Supported	0.247
H4: TES => TGC	0.272	4.523	0.000	Supported	0.129
H5: ENA => TGC	0.389	5.092	0.000	Supported	0.191

4.3 Discussion

The results of this study provide useful insights into the factors influencing tourists' green consumption behavior in the context of rural tourism in Vietnam. The findings support all five hypotheses, confirming the positive impact of both residents' and tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior on tourists' environmental attitudes and green consumption.

Specifically, the study found that residents' environmentally responsible behavior had the strongest direct effect on tourists' environmental attitudes ($f^2 = 0.484$). This aligns with previous research showing that residents' positive attitudes and actions related to sustainable tourism and environmental protection can shape visitors' perceptions and attitudes [2-4]. When tourists observe local people engaging in eco-friendly practices, it raises their awareness and fosters pro-environmental attitudes.

Tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior also significantly influenced tourists' environmental attitudes, although to a lesser degree than residents ($f^2 = 0.247$). This finding is consistent with recent studies highlighting the role of tour guides in promoting sustainable tourism and influencing visitor behavior [5, 6]. As key intermediaries between tourists and destinations, guides can educate and encourage environmentally conscious attitudes and choices.

Furthermore, the study confirmed the direct positive effects of both residents' and tour guides' environmentally responsible behavior on tourists' actual green consumption ($f^2 = 0.153$ and 0.129 respectively). This extends previous research that primarily focused on the impact of stakeholder actions on tourists' attitudes or intentions [2, 3]. The findings suggest that observing eco-friendly practices not only shapes tourists' mindset but also translates into concrete sustainable behaviors like using public transport, buying local products, and properly disposing of waste.

Notably, tourists' environmental attitudes emerged as a significant predictor of their green consumption ($f^2 = 0.191$), lending support to the attitude-behavior relationship posited by TPB [17]. While some studies have reported an attitude-behavior gap in sustainable tourism [12, 13], the current findings align with research confirming the link between pro-environmental

attitudes and eco-friendly tourist behaviors [20, 21]. However, the modest effect size suggests that additional factors beyond attitudes likely influence green consumption.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between the environmentally responsible behavior of local residents and tour guides, tourists' environmental attitudes, and their green consumption in the context of rural tourism in Quang Nam, Vietnam. The results confirm the significant positive impact of both residents' and tour guides' environmentally responsible actions on shaping tourists' environmental attitudes and encouraging their green consumption. This underscores the crucial role that these stakeholders play in promoting sustainable tourism practices. By engaging in eco-friendly behaviors and adhering to environmental norms, residents and guides serve as powerful stimuli that raises tourists' awareness, foster positive attitudes, and ultimately drive responsible choices. The study also highlights the importance of tourists' environmental attitudes in predicting their actual green consumption behavior. This finding lends support to the attitude-behavior link proposed by the Theory of Planned Behavior and suggests that cultivating pro-environmental attitudes is a key step towards encouraging sustainable tourist practices. However, the modest effect size indicates that additional factors beyond attitudes, such as social norms, perceived behavioral control, and contextual influences, likely play a role in shaping green consumption.

5.2. Practical implications

These findings have several practical implications. Firstly, destination managers should actively engage residents and tour guides in sustainability initiatives, recognizing their influential role in shaping tourist behavior. This could involve providing environmental education and training programs, incentivizing eco-friendly practices, and fostering a sense of community ownership and pride in preserving natural resources. By empowering these stakeholders as sustainability ambassadors, destinations can create a ripple effect that extends to visitors. Secondly, the results underscore the need for targeted communication strategies aimed at enhancing tourists' environmental knowledge, concern, and attitudes. This could include developing educational materials, interpretive signage, and guided experiences that highlight the ecological significance of the destination and encourage responsible tourism practices. By raising awareness and fostering a connection to the natural environment, destinations can cultivate a mindset of stewardship among visitors. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of creating an enabling environment that facilitates green consumption choices. This may involve improving infrastructure and services related to sustainable transportation, waste management, and eco-friendly accommodation options. By making responsible choices more accessible and convenient, destinations can help bridge the gap between positive attitudes and actual behavior.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

This study has some limitations that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, the study was conducted in a specific geographical context, focusing on rural destinations in Quang Nam, Vietnam. Future studies could explore the generalizability of the findings by replicating the research in other rural tourism settings, both within Vietnam and in other countries. Secondly, the study relied on self-reported data from tourists, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach,

combining survey data with observational studies or in-depth interviews, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' actual behaviors. Furthermore, the research model focused on a limited set of variables, primarily examining the influence of residents' and tour guides' behaviors on tourists' attitudes and green consumption. Future studies could expand the model by incorporating additional factors, such as tourists' environmental knowledge, place attachment, and perceived value of eco-friendly products and services.

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TÓM TẮT

THÚC ĐẨY TIÊU DÙNG XANH CỦA DU KHÁCH THÔNG QUA HÀNH VI CỦA NGƯỜI DÂN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG VÀ HƯỚNG DẪN VIÊN DU LỊCH: NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ DU LỊCH NÔNG THÔN TẠI TỈNH QUẢNG NAM, VIỆT NAM

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Sự phát triển của du lịch bền vững đã làm nổi bật tầm quan trọng của các yếu tố tác động đến hành vi thân thiện môi trường của du khách. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát mối quan hệ giữa hành vi có trách nhiệm môi trường của cư dân địa phương và hướng dẫn viên du lịch với thái độ môi trường và lựa chọn tiêu dùng xanh của du khách trong bối cảnh du lịch nông thôn tại Quảng Nam, Việt Nam. Áp dụng khung lý thuyết Kích thích - Chủ thể - Phản hồi (Stimulus - Organism - Response) và lý thuyết hành vi có kế hoạch (Theory of Planned Behavior), nghiên cứu tiến hành khảo sát định lượng với 320 du khách nội địa và quốc tế tại các điểm du lịch nông thôn ở Hội An. Kết quả phân tích bằng mô hình cấu trúc tuyến tính bình phương tối thiểu riêng phần (PLS-SEM) cho thấy hành vi có trách nhiệm với môi trường của cả cư dân địa phương và hướng dẫn viên du lịch đều tác động tích cực đến thái độ môi trường và thúc đẩy tiêu dùng xanh của du khách. Trong đó, hành vi của cư dân địa phương là yếu tố dự báo mạnh nhất đối với thái độ của du khách, tiếp đến là hành vi của hướng dẫn viên. Đồng thời, thái độ môi trường của du khách có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến hành vi tiêu dùng xanh thực tế. Nghiên cứu khẳng định vai trò quan trọng của cư dân địa phương và hướng dẫn viên du lịch như những đại sứ phát triển bền vững trong việc định hướng hành vi du lịch có trách nhiệm.

Từ khóa: Hành vi có trách nhiệm môi trường, tiêu dùng xanh, Quảng Nam, du lịch bền vững, du lịch nông thôn.