FACTORS IMPACTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TIEN GIANG

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism development plays a crucial role in enhancing a destination's competitiveness while preserving its natural and cultural resources. This study examines the factors influencing sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang. Specifically, the study explores the impact of technology, community participation and tourism policy on the sustainable tourism development in the province. In this study, technology, community participation and tourism policy serve as independent variables, while sustainable tourism development is the dependent variable. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to collect data from 186 tourists in Tien Giang. Based on the findings, several implications are proposed to help policymakers and tourism businesses foster sustainable tourism practices, ensuring long-term economic, social and environmental benefits for the province.

Key words: Sustainable tourism, technology, community participation, tourism policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism development is a global priority, playing a crucial role in balancing economic growth with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage [1]. In Vietnam, the Mekong Delta, known for its ecological and cultural diversity, faces significant challenges in maintaining sustainable tourism practices amid rising visitor numbers. Among the provinces in this region, Tien Giang stands out due to its favorable natural conditions and extensive river networks. The province is situated along the mighty Tien River, which nourishes its fertile land, making it a prime destination for eco-tourism and agritourism. Visitors are drawn to its lush orchards, scenic river landscapes and a unique system of interconnected canals that provide an authentic experience of the delta's water-based culture. However, rapid tourism growth in Tien Giang has raised concerns about environmental degradation, cultural commodification and the equitable distribution of economic benefits. Without proper management, increased tourism activities may lead to excessive waste, overuse of natural resources and disruption of local traditions. As a result, there is an urgent need for a sustainable approach that ensures tourism contributes positively to the region's development while minimizing its negative consequences. Three key factors that can impact sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang are technology, community participation and tourism policy. The integration of modern technology in tourism management, marketing, and service delivery can enhance efficiency while minimizing environmental impacts [2]. Digital platforms and smart tourism applications have the potential to improve visitor experience while reducing physical strain on local resources [3]. Likewise, community participation is essential for ensuring that local residents benefit economically from tourism while preserving their cultural identity [4].

When locals are actively engaged in tourism planning and decision-making, they are more likely to support and sustain the industry in the long term. Tourism policies, on the other hand, serve as the foundation for guiding sustainable practices and managing tourism growth effectively [5]. Well-designed policies can promote responsible tourism behavior, regulate business operations and encourage investments in green infrastructure [6]. While sustainable tourism development has been widely studied, a specific research gap exists in the context of Tien Giang, Vietnam, where rapid tourism growth threatens to undermine the region's ecological and cultural integrity. Although much research has examined the broader implications of technology, community participation, and tourism policy on sustainable tourism, limited attention has been given to how these factors uniquely influence tourism development in Tien Giang's specific socio-economic and environmental context. The findings from this study aim to fill this gap by examining how the interplay of these factors can lead to more sustainable tourism outcomes in the province. This study aims to analyzing the factors affecting sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang. Sustainable tourism development remains an urgent issue both in theory and practice, as destinations worldwide strive to balance economic growth with environmental and cultural preservation. Despite existing studies, there is a lack of integrative research that links key factors such as technology, community participation, and tourism policy into a cohesive framework tailored to local contexts like Tien Giang. This study addresses this gap by proposing a research model grounded in sustainable tourism theory, aiming to explore the causal relationships among these factors and their impact on sustainable tourism outcomes. The incorporation of empirical data enables the development of practical, evidence-based solutions that go beyond previous descriptive research. These solutions include innovative technological applications, strategies to deepen genuine community engagement, and policy recommendations designed to mitigate negative impacts of tourism growth. By advancing both theoretical understanding and actionable interventions, this study contributes new insights to sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang. The research highlights the urgent need for coordinated efforts among stakeholders to implement sustainable practices effectively. This integrated approach seeks to foster long-term resilience and sustainability in the region's tourism sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism is a development approach that ensures tourism activities contribute to economic prosperity while preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations [2]. It emphasizes the responsible use of natural landscapes, heritage sites and biodiversity, preventing degradation caused by over-tourism and unregulated expansion. Unlike conventional tourism, which often prioritizes short-term economic gains, sustainable tourism focuses on long-term resilience by minimizing environmental footprints and promoting eco-friendly practices. One of its core principles is maintaining the ecological balance of destinations through strategies such as waste management, energy efficiency and water conservation. Sustainable tourism also enhances local economies by generating employment opportunities and supporting small-scale enterprises that align with conservation efforts [1]. The preservation of cultural identity is equally vital, as sustainable tourism seeks to protect traditional knowledge, indigenous practices and historical landmarks from commercialization and homogenization. Through responsible visitor management, destinations can mitigate the risks of overcrowding, ensuring that tourism benefits both residents and travelers without compromising quality of life. The concept of carrying capacity plays a crucial role in sustainable tourism planning, as it helps assess the number of visitors an area can sustain without causing negative social or environmental impacts. Sustainable

tourism also fosters cross-cultural understanding by encouraging respectful interactions between tourists and local communities, promoting cultural appreciation rather than exploitation. Its implementation requires comprehensive monitoring and evaluation to ensure that sustainability goals are met and continuously improved over time. The growth of specialized tourism forms, such as ecotourism and heritage tourism, provides alternatives to mass tourism by offering immersive experiences that emphasize conservation and education. Sustainable tourism further aligns with global environmental commitments, such as climate action initiatives and biodiversity protection programs, reinforcing the importance of tourism in achieving sustainability objectives. In addition, the integration of sustainable tourism within national and regional development plans strengthens destination resilience against economic and environmental vulnerabilities. Governments, businesses, and local communities play interconnected roles in ensuring that tourism development aligns with sustainability principles.

2.2. Technology

Technology plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by improving operational efficiency, reducing environmental impact and optimizing resource utilization [1]. It enhances sustainability by enabling precise demand forecasting, efficient resource allocation and effective conservation strategies. Digital innovations facilitate real-time monitoring of environmental conditions, helping to protect fragile ecosystems and manage tourism flows responsibly [3]. Additionally, technology supports the reduction of material waste and energy consumption through the digitization of services, minimizing reliance on traditional resource-intensive processes [2]. Smart destination management systems contribute to sustainability by preventing over-tourism and promoting balanced visitor distribution. Moreover, technology influences responsible tourism behavior by fostering awareness of environmental conservation and encouraging eco-friendly travel choices [3]. The integration of sustainable practices within the tourism industry is further strengthened by technology-driven monitoring tools that track and mitigate ecological footprints. By optimizing transportation networks and improving mobility solutions, technology aids in reducing tourism-related carbon emissions. It also enables the implementation of sustainability metrics that help businesses and travelers make more informed, eco-conscious decisions [1]. Technology serves as a transformative force in sustainable tourism, ensuring long-term environmental, economic and social benefits.

2.3. Community participation

Community participation in tourism is a critical component of sustainable tourism, as it fosters inclusive governance and equitable decision-making processes [4]. By integrating local perspectives, community involvement enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of tourism policies, ensuring that development aligns with broader sustainability goals. Economically, community participation contributes to a more balanced distribution of tourism benefits, reducing disparities and strengthening local economies. Socially, community participation supports cultural integrity by maintaining traditional practices and reinforcing collective identity [7]. In terms of environmental sustainability, community participation facilitates the adoption of conservation-oriented policies and encourages responsible resource management [8]. The integration of local knowledge into tourism governance structures enhances resilience by enabling adaptive strategies that respond to ecological and socio-economic changes. Moreover, community participation fosters transparency and accountability, mitigating the risks of unsustainable tourism practices [4]. Strengthening community participation in tourism development also promotes long-term stability by reducing dependency on external stakeholders. Through collective decision-making, communities become more capable of addressing tourism-related challenges while maximizing sustainability outcomes [8].

Community participation serves as a foundation for transforming tourism into a more inclusive and adaptive system that prioritizes long-term socio-economic and environmental well-being.

2.4. Tourism policy

Tourism policy constitutes a framework of regulations, strategic directives and governance mechanisms that shape the sustainable development of the tourism sector [6]. As a fundamental instrument of tourism management, tourism policy establishes guidelines that balance economic expansion, social inclusivity and environmental preservation. The formulation and enforcement of tourism policy are integral to mitigating adverse environmental consequences by regulating tourism activities within ecological limits. Additionally, tourism policy influences the equitable distribution of economic benefits, ensuring that tourism growth does not lead to socio-economic disparities [5]. From a socio-cultural perspective, tourism policy safeguards cultural heritage by preventing the erosion of traditional practices and minimizing the risks of cultural commodification. The establishment of tourism policies enhances the resilience of tourism destinations by fostering adaptive management strategies that respond to evolving sustainability challenges. Furthermore, policy-driven governance structures improve institutional accountability and stakeholder coordination, reinforcing long-term destination management [6]. Tourism policy also plays a crucial role in monitoring carrying capacity, thereby preventing environmental degradation and overcrowding. By integrating sustainability principles into tourism governance, tourism policy contributes to the development of a responsible tourism industry that aligns with long-term sustainability objectives [9]. A well-structured tourism policy framework serves as a mechanism for optimizing tourism's contributions to environmental integrity, socio-economic equity and cultural preservation.

The research model developed for this study is based on existing theories of sustainable tourism and aims to explore the causal relationships between the three independent variables: technology, community participation, and tourism policy, and the dependent variable, sustainable tourism development. The hypotheses proposed in this study are designed to test whether these factors positively influence sustainable tourism development. The development of these hypotheses was informed by a review of existing literature that underscores the importance of these factors in fostering sustainable tourism practices. These variables were selected based on their relevance to the Tien Giang context, where technology can enhance operational efficiency, community participation ensures equitable economic benefits, and tourism policies can regulate the pace of tourism development to prevent negative environmental impacts. In addition, the research model incorporates the concept of sustainability as the overarching goal, where economic, environmental, and socio-cultural factors must be balanced. The integration of these three key components: technology, community participation, and tourism policy, within the model aligns with the literature and supports the goal of fostering a more sustainable tourism development trajectory in Tien Giang. The research proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Technology has a positive impact on sustainable tourism.

H2: Community participation has a positive impact on sustainable tourism.

H3: Tourism policy has a positive impact on sustainable tourism.

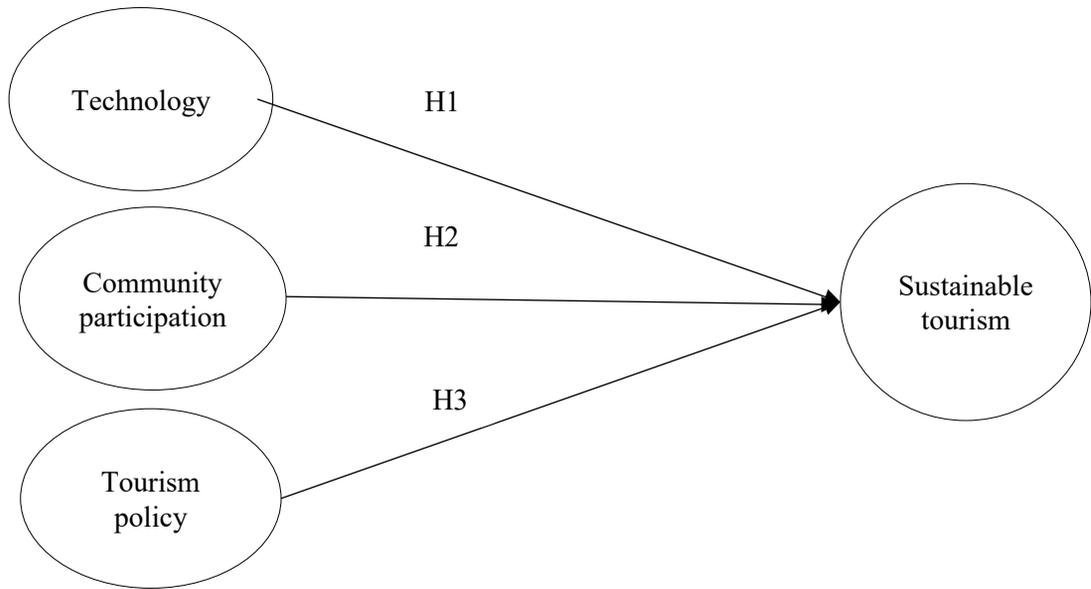The proposed research model is as follows:

Figure 1. Conceptual framework
(Source: Researchers' analysis results, 2025)

3. METHODOLOGY

The research model consists of four components: (1) Technology, (2) Community participation, (3) Tourism policy and (4) Sustainable tourism. The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the Sustainable Tourism Model, which considers three independent variables: technology, community participation, and tourism policy, that influence sustainable tourism development. This framework draws upon existing literature and seeks to extend the understanding of how these factors contribute to sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang, particularly by considering the local context. The framework also accounts for the dynamic relationship between environmental conservation, community well-being and economic growth. Further clarification is provided by aligning the conceptual model with recent findings from studies by Loureiro and Nascimento (2021), Rustini et al. (2022), Khan et al. (2021) and Tyan et al. (2021), which emphasize the transformative role of these factors in promoting sustainable tourism.

Table 1. Summary of the scales

Constructs	Research
Technology (TE)	Loureiro and Nascimento (2021) [1]
Community participation (CP)	Rustini et al. (2022) [8]
Tourism policy (TP)	Khan et al. (2021) [6]
Sustainable tourism (ST)	Tyan et al. (2021) [2]

(Source: Researchers' analysis results, 2025)

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang. The research framework incorporates three independent variables—technology, community participation and tourism policy—alongside

one dependent variable, sustainable tourism development. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect primary data, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of tourists' perspectives on the role of these factors. The study was carried out in Tien Giang using a purposive sampling approach between October 2024 and February 2025. The researchers gathered data from 194 tourists in Tien Giang. Initially, 300 questionnaires were distributed, but only 226 were returned, yielding a response rate of 75.3%. After reviewing the collected responses, the researchers excluded incomplete surveys, those with missing data or those where responses were overly uniform. Consequently, only 194 valid questionnaires were retained for further analysis. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions, measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to gauge respondents' agreement with statements regarding each factor's impact. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0, applying a series of statistical techniques to test the research hypotheses. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with values above 0.7 considered acceptable for internal consistency. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the strength and direction of relationships among variables, determining whether technology, community participation, and tourism policy were significantly associated with sustainable tourism development.To assess the predictive power of the independent variables, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, identifying the extent to which each factor contributed to sustainable tourism outcomes. The regression model's adequacy was evaluated using adjusted R^2 values, F-statistics, and p-values, ensuring statistical significance and robustness. A variance inflation factor (VIF) test was performed to check for multicollinearity issues among independent variables, ensuring model validity.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Reliability analysis

The research results in Table 2 show that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scales ranges from 0.745 to 0.832. Research results show that all scales have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient higher than 0.600, which shows that the scales used are reliable [10].

Table 2. Reliability coefficients

Scale	Cronbach alpha coefficient	No. of items
TE	0.832	6
CP	0.745	5
TP	0.819	5
ST	0.786	7

(Source: Researchers' analysis results, 2025)

4.2. Correlation analysis

The table 3 shows that Technology has a significant relationship with sustainable tourism at the value 0.002, which is less han 0.05. Community participation has a significant sustainable tourism at the value 0.013, which is less than 0.05. Tourism policy has a significant relationship with sustainable tourism at the value 0.004, which is less than 0.05.

Table 3. Correlation

		TE	CP	TP	ST
TE	Pearson Correlation	1	0.214*	0.385**	0.486**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.021	0.000	0.013
CP	Pearson Correlation	0.214*	1	0.196*	0.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.021		0.035	0.004
TP	Pearson Correlation	0.385**	0.196*	1	0.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.035		0.002
ST	Pearson Correlation	0.486**	0.385**	0.427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.013	0.004	0.002	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

(Source: Researchers' analysis results, 2025)

The table 3 shows that Technology has a significant relationship with sustainable tourism at the value 0.002, which is less han 0.05. Community participation has a significant sustainable tourism at the value 0.013, which is less than 0.05. Tourism policy has a significant relationship with sustainable tourism at the value 0.004, which is less than 0.05.

4.3. Multiple regression analysis

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis

Independent variable	Standard error	Beta	t-value	P
TE	0.065	0.486	9.513	0.013
CP	0.043	0.385	8.752	0.004
TP	0.052	0.427	9.116	0.002

N=194, Adjusted R^2 = 0.782, F = 58.848

(Source: Researchers' analysis results, 2025)

The value of F must be greater than 5. In this study, the value of F is 58.848, which is greater than 5. The value of adjusted R2 is 0.782. The results are approriate. If there is 1% change in the value of technology and other factors remain constant, sustainable tourism increases by 48.6%. If there is 1% change in the value of community participation and other factors remain constant, sustainable tourism increases by 38.5%. If there is 1% change in the value of tourism policy and other factors remain constant, sustainable tourism increases by 42.7%.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The study's purpose is to examine the effect of technology, community participation and tourism policy on sustainable tourism of enteprises in Ho Chi Minh City. The results suggest that sustainable tourism is positively impacted by technology. This result aligns with the findings drawn by Ali et al. (2020). Therefore, local authorities need to promote the adoption of technology in sustainable tourism development. To accelerate the integration of technology

in sustainable tourism, policymakers should prioritize digital transformation initiatives that enhance both environmental conservation and business efficiency. One key approach is the development of tourism infrastructure, incorporating automated energy management systems in hotels and resorts to reduce resource consumption. Additionally, the implementation of intelligent waste management solutions, such as sensor-based recycling systems, can minimize the environmental footprint of tourism activities. The expansion of virtual tourism experiences, including augmented and virtual reality applications, can provide alternative travel options that reduce physical congestion at popular destinations. Local governments should also support the adoption of cloud-based platforms for eco-certification, enabling tourism enterprises to track and report sustainability performance in a transparent manner. Furthermore, the use of geospatial analytics and predictive modeling can assist in designing tourism policies that proactively address environmental risks and visitor capacity limits. Encouraging the deployment of smart public transportation systems, such as electric shuttle services and AI-powered route optimization, can significantly lower carbon emissions in urban tourism hotspots. Digital payment solutions and e-ticketing platforms should be widely implemented to reduce paper waste and enhance transaction efficiency. Social media campaigns leveraging AI-driven content analysis can promote sustainable tourism behaviors by tailoring educational messages to different traveler demographics. Fostering collaboration between technology firms and tourism enterprises will drive continuous innovation, ensuring that digital advancements remain aligned with sustainability objectives. Investing in renewable energy technologies tailored for tourism facilities, such as solar-powered lighting and heating systems, can significantly reduce carbon footprints. Developing mobile apps that provide real-time environmental impact feedback to tourists encourages responsible behavior during their visits. Integrating blockchain technology can improve transparency in supply chains, ensuring sustainable sourcing of tourism-related goods and services. Implementing advanced water recycling and purification technologies at tourist sites helps conserve scarce water resources. Lastly, utilizing artificial intelligence to optimize visitor flow based on environmental sensitivity zones can protect fragile ecosystems while maintaining tourist satisfaction.

Moreover, the research results also indicate that community participation has a positive impact on sustainable tourism development. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rustini et al. (2022). Therefore, to promote community participation in sustainable tourism, tourism authorities need to implement inclusive governance mechanisms that actively involve local residents in decision-making and policy development. Establishing community-based tourism committees can facilitate structured engagement, ensuring that local perspectives are integrated into tourism strategies. Authorities should provide financial and technical support for community-led tourism initiatives, empowering local entrepreneurs to develop eco-friendly tourism enterprises. Capacity-building programs, including training in sustainable hospitality, environmental conservation and digital marketing, can equip residents with the necessary skills to participate effectively in the tourism sector. Encouraging partnerships between local communities and private tourism enterprises fosters co-management models that distribute economic benefits more equitably. Governments should also promote participatory environmental stewardship programs, where community members contribute to conservation efforts, such as reforestation, biodiversity monitoring and waste management. The adoption of digital platforms for knowledge-sharing and marketing can enhance the visibility of community-driven tourism experiences, attracting responsible travelers who align with sustainability principles. Policy frameworks should prioritize legal recognition and protection of community-led tourism enterprises to prevent exploitation by large corporations. Additionally, integrating local cultural heritage into tourism experiences can strengthen community identity while promoting responsible tourism practices. Local governments should support community-driven tourism festivals and cultural showcases can attract responsible tourists while preserving local traditions and promoting environmental awareness.

Establishing locally managed funds dedicated to sustainable tourism projects empowers residents to develop initiatives that align with ecological and economic goals. Enabling communities to participate in monitoring tourism's environmental impact through digital citizen science tools ensures ongoing protection of natural assets. Furthermore, investing in youth education programs focused on sustainable tourism nurtures future leaders who will champion eco-friendly and culturally respectful travel practices.

Besides, the research results also indicate that tourism policy has a positive impact on sustainable tourism development. This finding is similar to the results of Cheng et al. (2018). Therefore, to promote tourism policy in sustainable tourism development, tourism authorities need to establish comprehensive regulatory frameworks that integrate sustainability principles into all aspects of tourism governance. Implementing strict environmental impact assessments for tourism projects can ensure that development aligns with ecological conservation goals. Authorities should introduce incentive programs, such as tax reductions or financial support, for businesses that adopt sustainable tourism practices, including eco-certifications and carbon footprint reduction measures. Strengthening legal enforcement mechanisms can help mitigate unsustainable tourism activities, such as overexploitation of natural resources and excessive tourist congestion in fragile ecosystems. Additionally, integrating sustainability criteria into national tourism master plans can provide long-term strategic direction for responsible tourism development. Governments should foster multi-stakeholder collaboration by engaging local communities, private enterprises and environmental organizations in policy formulation and implementation. Developing clear guidelines on sustainable tourism investment can attract responsible investors while preventing environmentally and socially harmful projects. Authorities must also establish transparent monitoring and evaluation systems to track sustainability performance, ensuring continuous improvement in tourism management. Digital governance tools, such as smart data analytics, can support policymakers in making informed decisions based on real-time tourism trends and environmental conditions. Policymakers should prioritize the integration of adaptive management approaches that allow tourism policies to evolve responsively based on ongoing environmental and social feedback. Introducing mandatory sustainability education for all tourism-related license holders can foster a culture of responsibility across the sector. Encouraging decentralized policy-making empowers regional authorities to tailor sustainable tourism regulations according to local ecosystem sensitivities and community needs. Establishing tourism impact bonds can finance sustainability projects by linking investor returns to measurable environmental and social outcomes. Finally, embedding ethical tourism standards within policy frameworks ensures that respect for local cultures and equitable benefit-sharing are central to tourism development strategies.

6. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the key factors influencing sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang, focusing on technology, community participation and tourism policy. The findings indicate that these factors play a significant role in shaping a sustainable tourism framework that balances economic growth, environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Technology enhances tourism management efficiency, minimizes environmental impact and improves visitor experiences through smart applications and digital innovations. Community participation strengthens local engagement, ensuring that economic benefits are equitably distributed and cultural heritage is preserved. Tourism policy provides the regulatory foundation needed to guide responsible tourism development and enforce sustainability standards. Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was limited to 194 respondents, which may not fully

represent the diverse perspectives of all tourists involved in sustainable tourism development in Tien Giang. A larger sample size could provide more generalizable insights. Second, the study focused solely on Tien Giang, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other tourism destinations in Vietnam. Future studies should consider conducting comparative analyses across multiple regions to identify common patterns and regional differences in sustainable tourism development. Third, the study primarily relied on cross-sectional data, which captures responses at a single point in time. A longitudinal approach would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors evolve over time and how long-term policy changes impact sustainability outcomes. For future research, some directions could be explored. First, integrating qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews with tourism stakeholders, could provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing sustainable tourism practices. Second, additional variables, such as economic incentives, climate change adaptation strategies and governance mechanisms, could be examined to expand the research framework. Third, the specific impact of certain technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, in enhancing sustainable tourism management could be a future research direction.

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TÓM TẮT

CÁC YẾU TỐ TÁC ĐỘNG ĐẾN PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH BỀN VỮNG TẠI TIỀN GIANG

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Phát triển du lịch bền vững đóng vai trò then chốt trong việc nâng cao năng lực cạnh tranh của một điểm đến du lịch, đồng thời bảo tồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên và văn hóa của điểm đến du lịch. Nghiên cứu phân tích các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến phát triển du lịch bền vững tại tỉnh Tiền Giang. Nghiên cứu xem xét tác động của công nghệ, sự tham gia của cộng đồng địa phương và chính sách du lịch đối với sự phát triển du lịch bền vững tại Tiền Giang. Trong nghiên cứu này, công nghệ, sự tham gia của cộng đồng địa phương và chính sách du lịch là các biến độc lập, trong khi phát triển du lịch bền vững là biến phụ thuộc. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu được thu thập từ 186 du khách tại Tiền Giang. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu, nghiên cứu đề xuất một số hàm ý nhằm hỗ trợ các nhà hoạch định chính sách và doanh nghiệp du lịch thúc đẩy các hoạt động du lịch bền vững, bảo đảm lợi ích lâu dài về kinh tế, xã hội và môi trường tại Tiền Giang.

Từ khoá: Phát triển du lịch bền vững, công nghệ, sự tham gia của cộng đồng địa phương, chính sách du lịch.