

# Perceptions of Key Stakeholders Towards Sustainable Tourism Development: A Case Study in Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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## Abstract

Tourism is one of the key economic drivers not only in Vietnam but also in the world. This study explores the awareness and perceptions of key stakeholders such as local residents, tourism businesses, and tourists on sustainable tourism development in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches have been used with the secondary and primary data to provide insights on the subject. The secondary data is from vast sources, including the governmental department of tourism, statistical departments, annual all-level governmental reports, businesses, and others. The primary data is from the survey by questionnaires with 230 enterprises, 720 local residents, and 670 tourists and from the semi-structured and in-depth interviews conducted with local residents, businesses, tourists, local authorities' officers, and especially with 5 experts who are also stakeholders of Mekong Delta tourism. The results will help the related authorities understand the awareness and perceptions of the key stakeholders and deliver valuable information and a concrete delineated roadmap toward sustainable tourism development of the research settings.

**Keywords:** Destination Management, Stakeholders, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

**JEL Classification Code:** M0, M10, Z30, Z32

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is presently recognized as one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors. The tourism industry not only generates revenues for a country and cultural wealth, but it is also one of the most important economic engines for growth and development (WTTC, 2017; Chamidah et al., 2020). As expected, economic growth is made up of many factors that, when analyzed separately, make the tourism industry more attractive. According to the WTTC (2017), tourism employs 319 million people, and it is expected that this figure will reach 421 million

by 2029. This means that tourism is not only a growing economic engine but also an employment engine in itself, since it is the industry with the best evolution in terms of job creation, just behind the manufacturing sector (Vu et al., 2020). Sustainable development - including tourism development - is the general trend of all economies. Sustainability is often related to a balanced environment. Is the process of development that satisfies the needs of the present. All of this without affecting the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs. Sustainable tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus-building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. The Vietnam tourism industry is growing yearly, achieving many very crucial results, and serving as a key economic sector. It can be affirmed that 2019 is a very successful year for Vietnamese tourism, not only shown in the statistics on the number of

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