



Original Article

# Factors affecting the participation of the local community in tourism development of Quang Ninh Province

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Received: November 13, 2024

Revised: November 25, 2024; Accepted: December 25, 2024

**Abstract:** This study explores the factors influencing local community participation in tourism development in Quang Ninh province. The proposed hypotheses suggest that both objective and subjective factors impact tourism development, including local residents' awareness, government support policies, economic benefits, community participation capacity, heritage promotion, attitudes toward tourism, and social influence. Data were collected from a survey of 255 residents at various tourist sites and areas within Quang Ninh province. The findings indicate that key determinants of local community participation include personal awareness, social influence, economic benefits, attitudes toward tourism, seasonal factors, government investment support, participation capacity, and heritage promotion.

**Keywords:** Local community, Quang Ninh province, tourism.

## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry in Vietnam is developing rapidly and outstandingly, becoming one of the economic sectors with an important role in the national economy, gradually developing into a spearhead economic sector. Local community participation-based tourism development has become an important topic of discussion in recent years, as the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities has become increasingly clear. The growth of tourism has led to environmental degradation, increased competition for resources and local communities, leading to calls for a more sustainable approach to tourism development (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015).

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been shown to support regional economic and social development, leading to increased employment opportunities and preservation of local arts, culture, and environments. Community participation is considered an effective tool to attract the local residents' support for sustainable and competitive tourism destinations.

Quang Ninh - the leading destination in Vietnam, is considered one of the provinces with the most outstanding and unique tourism resources in the country. This place not only has Ha Long Bay - a world heritage and natural wonder, the famous Yen Tu scenic spot, which attracts millions of visitors every year but also has more than 600 historical relics and monuments, and other scenic spots. Thanks to these advantages, over the years, the province's

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<https://doi.org/10.57110/vnu-jeb.v5i2.308>

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smokeless industry has made rapid development steps. Currently, Quang Ninh is striving to become an international tourism center and a leading national tourist destination. The project "Recovering and sustainably developing Quang Ninh tourism industry by 2025, with a vision towards 2030" has been approved. During the 2020-2023 period, eight training courses were organized for approximately one thousand two hundred local government officials in charge of tourism, cultural officials at the commune/ward level, village/hamlet heads, tourism accommodation establishments, tourism site management boards, businesses, and local communities involved in tourism activities in Mong Cai, Quang Yen, Hai Ha, Binh Lieu, Tien Yen, Dam Ha, and Co To districts. In collaboration with JICA, Japan, a successful community-based ecotourism model was established on Quan Lan and Van Don islands. Famtrips were also organized to Binh Lieu, Tien Yen, Ba Che, Dong Trieu, Uong Bi, and Quang Yen districts to support the development of local community-based tourism. This most outstanding and unique calendar of events in the country, plays an important role in the development of Quang Ninh province. This research explores factors, thereby providing solutions and recommendations to promote tourism development in Quang Ninh province.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is the interaction between relationships in a societal festival, in which, benefits and costs are the two main components that determine the quality of that relationship. Costs and benefits need to be balanced to prevent conflicts and disputes that could lead to divisions. Explained through human interaction with social relationships, it is the result of a process of exchanging benefits. Relationships are only sustainable if everyone is fair about each other's benefits and if the benefits received are proportional to the price paid. According to Searle (1991), there are five main factors to describe SET. SET is widely used in research on human cognition and attitudes toward tourism and tourism development. It also explains why people like or dislike tourism in their community. One application of SET is the study by Perdue et al. (1990) on residential communities in Colorado. This research model begins by examining the characteristics of individuals and the personal benefits they receive from tourism activities, leading to their awareness of the tourism's impact on the community. Ap's (1992a) study assumed local community participation.

In tourism activities, participation contributes to economic, cultural, and social development. However, this decision may not always come from themselves but may be imposed by others (Kayat, 2002). According to Paul (1987) and Pretty (1995), the participation process can take place within the framework of a program, project or a specific development phase. In particular, Paul's (1987) definition reflects the broad meaning of the community participation process and is explained by the expanded perspective of the World Bank. Aref et al. (2010) also argue that participation includes participation in idea generation, planning, decision-making, investment and profit-sharing, and engagement in planned activities...

According to Nguyen (2016), people's awareness of the impacts of tourism development is partly based on their perception of its economic, cultural, social and environmental impacts. These perceptions, whether actual or expected, can in turn influence their participation in tourism development. Simmons (1994) identified another factor affecting people's perception of tourism development - their self-assessment of their tourism knowledge. He found that the more knowledgeable individuals consider themselves about tourism, the more confident they are in participating in its development.

Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) found that age, household income, and education level are related to people's perceptions of tourism. Similarly, Chen and Starosta (2000). discovered that the gender and age of urban residents influence their views on tourism destinations. Harrill (2004) reviewed the literature on attitudes toward tourism development and summarized age and gender as the most commonly used determinants of their attitude.

Oviedo Garcia et al. (2008) categorized tourism impacts into three aspects: economic, environmental and social. According to Zhang (2010) environmental sustainability is a key aspect of tourism impact, reflecting individual awareness of the role tourism plays in improving the local environment through its development.

### 2.2. Theory of planned behavior

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an extension of the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Ajzen (1980). TPB is widely applicable and highly predictive. Both theories apply to voluntary behavior and are based on rational thoughts and intentions. Additionally, TPB has been used by researchers in many various fields such as marketing, psychology, management, medicine, and finance. Based on the finding of TRA, Ajzen (1991) introduced TPB to overcome the limitations of the previous model.

### 3. Hypothesis and research model

The research model and hypotheses are presented in Figure 1. This research innovatively explores the relationship between public perception of tourism's impacts, attitudes toward tourism development, and the subsequent level of local community participation. The study clearly identifies the benefits local residents receive from tourism activities, which may include income, job opportunities, and cultural development, as well as assessing the level of awareness and understanding within the local community regarding their role in tourism

development. Developing community-based tourism enables each locality to highlight unique features, encourage community participation, and create products that allow tourists to experience the daily lives of the community, and to enjoy and feel the distinctive local cultural values. Promoting the image of the locality's world heritage sites also influences the local residents' participation in tourism development. This is also a novel aspect of the research model, reflecting specific characteristics of tourism in Quang Ninh province.

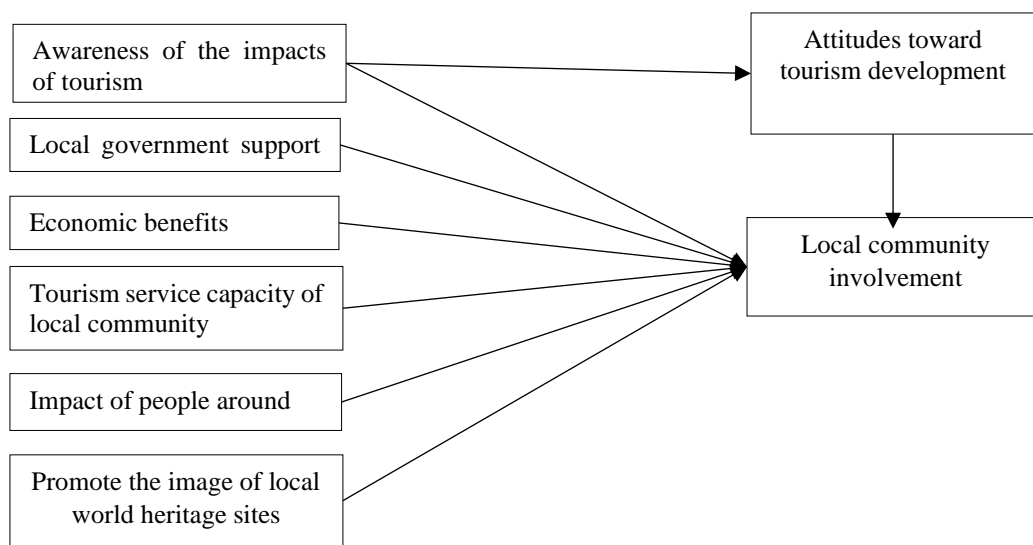


Figure 1: Research model

Source: Author.

#### 3.1. Awareness of the impacts of tourism

Oviedo Garcia et al. (2008) divide tourism impacts into three aspects: economic, environmental and social. According to Zhang (2010) environmental sustainability is an aspect of tourism impact that is perceived and reflects individual awareness of the need to improve tourism's effects on the environment.

Improving the local environment through tourism development is a key factor in fostering sustainable tourism practices. Simmons (1994) found that the more people consider themselves as knowledgeable about tourism, the more confident they are in participating in tourism development. Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) found that age, household income, and education level are related to people's perception of tourism. For example, thanks to their disclosure, the higher an individual's level of education, the more positive they feel about tourism. According to Zhang (2010), environmental sustainability is an aspect of perceived tourism impact, reflecting how local

residents perceive the improvement to the local environment resulting from tourism development.

*H1: Awareness of tourism impacts has a positive effect on attitudes towards tourism development.*

*H2: Awareness of the impacts of tourism has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

#### 3.2 Attitudes toward tourism development

The attitude of the local community to tourism development is an important factor determining the success and sustainability of a tourist destination. Several studies have shown that a positive attitude towards tourism development and tourists from the local population leads to a more positive behavior supporting tourism in the host communities (Obradović and Tešin, 2023; Kummitha et al, 2023). Local communities are increasingly socioeconomically affected by tourism development, which can lead to the development of both positive and negative attitudes based on

perceived impacts (Blackie et al., 2023). Indigenous people in tourist destinations have shown to be willing to contribute their resources to tourism development in their area, which can enhance their self-worth and impacting the competitiveness of rural tourism (Hoh et al., 2023; Ruiz-Ballesteros & González-Portillo, 2024; Alamineh et al., 2023). Once a negative attitude has developed, it is difficult to change that attitude (Kotler et al., 2010). In the studies by Perdue et al. (1990) and Látková and Vogt (2012), people's attitudes toward tourism development are classified as "Additional support for tourism development" and "Limited support for tourism development". Other studies examine attitudes toward tourism development as a dependent factor influenced by various independent factors.

*H3: Attitudes toward tourism development have a positive effect on local community involvement.*

### 3.3. Local government support policy

According to Bozdaglar (2023), local government plays an important role in influencing local community tourism participation. Studies have shown that people's participation in tourism development positively affects their attitudes toward tourism growth and development.

*H4: Local government support policy has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

### 3.4. Economic benefits

The concept of economic benefits of tourism refers to the positive effects that tourism activities have on the economy of a region or community (Icoz & Icoz, 2019; Wei et al., 2024). Tourism development is essentially aimed at the welfare of the community, as it can expand employment, increase income for the surrounding local community, and boost overall economic growth (Mahendra et al., 2022). A study conducted by McGehee and Andereck found that individual and community benefits derived from tourism influenced people to support tourism development. If tourism developers positively impact the local economy (for example, creating new jobs), residents are more likely to support further development. Resident participation in tourism development projects has a positive impact on tourism planning and implementation, leading to a sustainable approach and improved quality of life in terms of socio-economic development and culture. Thereby, local communities participating in tourism development can experience improved economic conditions through job creation, increased income, and growth of local businesses.

*H5: Economic benefit has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

### 3.5. Tourism service capacity of local community

The capacity of the local community to serve tourism not only includes services such as motels, restaurants, and tour guides, but is also related to the conservation and sustainable development of tourism resources, while creating job opportunities and strengthening the local economy. In tourism development, the process of improving community capacity can be seen as the capacity of people in the community to participate in tourism activities. Tourism developers often tend to invest in community training as a means of contributing to long-term development (Aref et al., 2010).

*H6: Tourism service capacity of local community has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

### 3.6. Impact of people around

Peer impact refers to the influence that individuals, organizations, or social groups have on another individual, community, or system (Yang, 2021; Sakcharoen et al., 2024). One study found that residents' participation in tourism development significantly influences their attitudes toward development, both directly and indirectly by increasing their positive perceptions of the tourism development calendar (Yang, 2021). The involvement of those around you in tourism can have both positive and negative effects. The research team found that people's participation in local tourism is no exception - when they see their family and friends participating in tourism or observe other neighboring areas having success in tourism development, people themselves are motivated and inclined to participate.

*H7: The influence of people around has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

### 3.7. Promote the image of local world heritage sites

The term "heritage" is used here to include sites, monuments, locations, and areas that have been designated by a competent authority because of their perceived value. World Heritage Sites are those recognized by UNESCO at the highest international level with a perceived value that benefits the global community, including future generations. Community-based tourism development focuses on each locality identifying its unique features, mobilizing the community to participate, and creating products in which tourists can experience the daily life of the community and enjoy the benefits, and appreciate the unique indigenous cultural values.

The obligation to ‘identify, protect, conserve, and present’ World Heritage properties is a key component of the World Heritage Convention. Understanding how people's promotion of local heritage supports tourism development is essential.

*H8: Promotion of the image of local world heritage has a positive effect on local community involvement.*

## 4. Methodology and data

### 4.1. Research tools

The study uses survey methods to collect primary data. The questionnaire is designed based on an overview of previous studies related to the image of the tourist destination and aligned with the research objectives. The factors and scales were developed from relevant studies and adjusted after in-depth interviews with ten experts including lecturers in tourism service administration, tourism business administrators, and local tourism managers.

In this study, the research process is designed in two stages. In the first phase, a qualitative method is used to systematize the theoretical basis and propose a research model on factors affecting local community participation in tourism development. To accomplish this, the document synthesis method is used to build an initial theoretical model. Then, in-depth interviews with experts and group discussion methods with managers and relevant departments are conducted to develop a scale system for the proposed research model.

In the following stage, quantitative methods are used to test the appropriateness of the model and scale in the research framework. On the other hand, the impact of each factor on users' expectations of reading effectiveness and intention to continue using e-books will be evaluated. In other words, this study employs a mixed research method, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

### 4.2. Survey form and data collection

The survey form of this study was selected using the purposeful sampling method. For the

sample size, this study uses Bollen's (1998) sample size calculation, which is  $n * 5$  observations (where  $n$  is the number of scales). With a questionnaire consisting of 33 scales for 7 independent variables and 1 dependent variable, the minimum sample size of this study is  $33 * 5 = 125$ .

The format of the survey involved sending questionnaires directly to tourists in Quang Ninh and through email, Zalo, and Facebook to the guests who had traveled there. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 270 valid responses were collected. Thus, 255 responses were used for inclusion in the analysis.

### 4.3. Data processing

The collected data were processed using SPSS 20.0 software. Before analysis, the scales were evaluated for reliability through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) factor for 7 variables in the proposed model. Next, the author uses the correlation test to determine the relationships between the variables in the model. Finally, regression analysis was conducted to verify the relationship between the variables. The regression model takes the following form:

$$TG = 0.450 * TD + 0.420 * DG + 0.222 * NL + 0.219 * QB + 0.173 * LI + Ei$$

In this model, TG represents the values when the independent variables are 0, evaluating the effects of factors other than those identified in the model on the dependent variables. TD, DG, NL, QB, LI are the overall regression coefficients for TG with their corresponding independent variables. Ei represents the error term.

## 5. Research results

### 5.1. Verify the reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha)

Reliability refers to whether a researcher uses consistent measures and, depending on how the findings are classified, whether the results hold up or not. In other words, it concerns the reliability and relevance of the research (Bryman et al., 2008).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Scale	Number of observed variables	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient	Lowest variable total correlation coefficient
Awareness of the impacts of tourism (NT)	5	.769	.488
Attitudes toward tourism development (TD)	5	.822	.337
Local government support policy (DG)	5	.825	.583
Economic benefits (LI)	5	.686	.281
Tourism service capacity of local community (NL)	4	.705	.557
Impact of people around (AH)	5	.808	.514
Promote the image of local world heritage sites (QB)	3	.700	.340

Source: Author.

The reliability of the scale is evaluated using the consistency principle through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This study applied Cronbach's Alpha reliability after conducting an EFA to eliminate inappropriate variables because these create spurious factors (Nguyen, 2014).

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of all variables is  $> 0.6$ , and the lowest total correlation coefficient of all variables is  $> 0.3$  after eliminating some variables with coefficients  $< 0.3$ .

### 5.2. Correlation analysis (Pearson)

Correlation analysis (Pearson) shows the suitability of the components in the regression model. The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is used to quantify the strength of the linear relationship between two quantitative variables.

Correlation is a test that examines each pair of variables independently, regardless of the presence of other variables. Since the correlation result of a variable pair remains the same, even when multiple variables are analyzed together, it is possible to perform correlation analysis on variables in the model simultaneously and evaluate the correlation between each pair of variables. The correlation coefficient of all 7 variables (TG, TD, NT, ĐG, LI, NL, AH, QB) are greater than 0.5, indicating a strong linear relationship among these variables.

### 5.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Factor analysis is used to summarize data and reduce the set of observed factors into main factors which are then used in subsequent analysis and testing (called factors). These shortened factors are more meaningful but still contain most of the information content of the original set of observed variables. EFA was used to test the conceptual validity of the scale. A necessary condition for applying factor analysis is that the variables must be correlated with each other (i.e., measured variables reflect different aspects of the same common factor). Therefore, if the test shows no statistical significance, factor

analysis should not be applied to the variables in question. Additionally, observed variables that were eliminated in the previous Cronbach's Alpha step will not be included in the EFA test.

### 5.4. Linear regression model (regression)

The R value represents a simple correlation and is 0.746 (Column R), indicating a high degree of correlation. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.554 shows that the independent variable included in the regression accounts for 55.4% of the variation in the dependent variable, with the remaining 44.6% attributed to variables outside the model and random errors. The Durbin Watson coefficient of 1.570 falls within the range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating that no first-order serial correlation exists. The results in the ANOVA table show that the Sig. F test = 0.000  $< 0.05$ , confirming the regression model is appropriate. The Sig. t-test for the regression coefficients of the independent variables DDG, LI, NL, QB, TD are all  $< 0.05$ , meaning these independent variables are meaningful in explaining the dependent variable. However, the Sig. t-test of the regression coefficient of the independent variable AH is  $0.783 > 0.05$ , meaning not statistically significant and has no impact on the dependent variable. Therefore, this variable was removed from the model. The VIF coefficients of the independent variables that were not eliminated were all  $< 10$ , indicating that no multi-collinearity occurred.

Thus, the results of multivariate regression analysis show that among the 5 variables included in the analysis, the variables ĐG, NL, TD have regression coefficients greater than 0, indicating positive values. This suggests that the independent variables included in the regression analysis all impact the dependent variable in the same direction. If the variables LI and QB have regression coefficients less than 0, indicating negative values, this means these independent variables have an opposite effect on the dependent variable.

Table 2: Significance testing of regression coefficients

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.537	.272		1.973	.050		
F_ĐG	.564	.101	.420	5.614	.000	.232	4.312
F_LI	-.259	.066	-.173	-3.922	.000	.668	1.497
1 F_NL	.254	.074	.222	3.422	.001	.308	3.242
F_AH	.019	.070	.017	.276	.783	.360	2.775
F_QB	-.320	.091	-.219	-3.541	.000	.339	2.947
F_TD	.577	.090	.450	6.442	.000	.265	3.767

a. Dependent Variable: F\_TG

Source: Author. The Sig. F test = 0.000  $< 0.05$ , indicating the multiple linear regression model fits the data set and can be used.

## 6. Conclusion

Local communities are often motivated to participate in sustainable tourism activities. This may include education about environmental protection, cultural preservation, and the creation of tourism experiences that have a positive impact on the community. Recently, community tourism has been recognized as a development model that contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable development, while providing interesting experiences for tourists by leveraging the tourism resources within the community. Community tourism promotes the role of local people in participating and planning tourism development.

Some areas in Quang Ninh, such as Dong Trieu, Van Don, Binh Lieu and Ba Che, have implemented community tourism models, but these are still fragmented, not sustainable, and underutilize their potential. However, these areas are poised for strong growth in community tourism, based on the indigenous cultural values of mountainous regions and the ecological resources of coastal areas.

In recent years, tourism infrastructure has been a key focus in Quang Ninh, attracting investment to ensure the sustainable development of local tourism. The province has mobilized significant resources from non-budget capital to invest in projects, including Bach Dang Bridge, Ha Long - Van Don Expressway, Tien Yen - Mong Cai Expressway, and several ports.

In particular, the province also focuses on attracting investment in high-quality accommodation facilities and tourism service systems, ensuring comfort and satisfaction for tourists. As a result, many high-end hotel management corporations have established a presence in Quang Ninh.

Based on research findings, awareness is the factor that is least affected when it comes to deciding local community participation. The research team has proposed several solutions to promote public awareness in tourism development in the province through various initiatives.

Additionally, according to the research results, the influence of people around them has little impact on individuals' decisions to participate. Therefore, to encourage stronger local community participation in tourism development, the most important factor is support from the government and relevant ministries and departments.

Although participating in tourism development brings many benefits, these benefits are still not sufficient to attract people to engage in tourism development. There are numerous ways to increase the benefits for people involved in tourism, while also creating a positive impact for the local community. Some

ideas proposed by the research team suggest that local authorities need to make adjustments to enhance the appeal for people to get involved.

Some recommendations to agencies to attract local people to participate in tourism development in Quang Ninh province include ministries, ministerial-level agencies, government agencies, and the People's Committees of the province and centrally-run cities. These entities are responsible for thoroughly understanding and raising awareness of the position, role, importance, value, effectiveness, and impact of the tourism industry. This will help promote a proactive, positive and responsible attitude from relevant stakeholders with a comprehensive, inclusive, and all-encompassing approach. In addition, it is necessary to create a favorable business environment that encourages innovation and creative startups, while developing business forces and forming tourism businesses with strong brands. Support should also be provided to small and medium-sized enterprises and tourism businesses to apply science and technology, promote digital transformation, and gain access to capital sources.

Quang Ninh has significant potential and advantages for tourism development, including its geographical location, natural and human resources, cultural tourist assets, and valuable cultural heritage. It is evident that the active participation of the local communities is essential as they play a key role in shaping the cultural environment, lifestyle, and identity of the destination-factors that are important in attracting tourists. Therefore, to develop community-based tourism, preserving and promoting indigenous values is critical. This can only be achieved if people truly understand the value of the natural and human resources, benefit from tourism that is aligned with these values, and are committed to preserving and protecting them. Only then can community-based tourism development be truly sustainable.

Therefore, researching factors affecting the decision to participate of local communities in tourism development in Quang Ninh province has theoretical and practical significance, serving as a catalyst to encourage local community participation.

However, there are certain limitations due to the large size of Quang Ninh province, with many tourist spots and areas, making it challenging to specifically survey the local community. As a result, the research team utilized a survey to collect data. Additionally, the study only analyzed a few factors affecting local communities' participation in tourism development, while many others could also influence their involvement.

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