

Study on local community awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the awareness of responsible tourism among the local community in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province, Vietnam. Responsible tourism is recognized as a pivotal element for sustainable development, addressing environmental, cultural, and social challenges in tourism. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and observational research, this study assesses community knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and implementation of responsible tourism practices. The findings reveal limited awareness and engagement among residents, despite their acknowledgment of tourism's economic, social, and environmental impacts. Factors such as inadequate communication, insufficient training, and limited collaboration among stakeholders hinder the development of responsible tourism. The study highlights the need for targeted educational campaigns, capacity-building initiatives, and enhanced stakeholder cooperation to foster sustainable tourism practices. Proposed solutions include community-driven awareness programs, eco-friendly tourism practices, and the integration of responsible tourism principles into local policies. These efforts aim to empower the community, protect resources, and enhance the tourism experience, positioning Tam Dao as a sustainable tourism destination.*

Key word: *Responsible tourism, Local community awareness, Sustainable development, Stakeholder collaboration, Tam Dao tourism*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Responsible tourism has increasingly been recognized as a cornerstone for sustainable development, addressing environmental, cultural, and social challenges faced by the tourism industry. According to Goodwin (2011), responsible tourism is not only about minimizing negative impacts but also about optimizing economic, social, and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. This concept requires active involvement from tourism managers, businesses, local communities, and travelers. The rapid growth of the global and regional tourism industry has created significant pressure on natural ecosystems and posed challenges in preserving cultural values and ensuring community benefits.

In Vietnam, the tourism industry has witnessed remarkable growth over the past decade. According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (2023), Vietnam ranked 7th globally in destination search volume on Google Destination Insights during the first half of 2023 [1]. Localities such as Hanoi, Da Nang, and Phu Quoc have consistently recorded a rise in international arrivals, driving economic growth and creating jobs for millions of workers. However, rapid development has also led to several negative consequences, including environmental pollution, ecological imbalance, and the erosion of traditional culture. These challenges are particularly evident in high-demand destinations like Tam Dao Town, Vinh Phuc Province.

Tam Dao is one of the most attractive destinations in northern Vietnam, renowned for its cool climate, unique natural landscapes, and rich biodiversity. Additionally, it preserves significant cultural and historical values, such as the Tây Thiên Temple and traditional festivals. According to the Vinh Phuc People's Committee (2023), Tam Dao received over 1.2 million visitors in 2022, generating substantial local revenue [2]. However, this rapid growth has also led to significant pressure on natural resources and infrastructure. Issues such as water pollution, waste overload, and the erosion of cultural heritage have emerged as critical concerns. The local community in Tam Dao plays a vital role in promoting tourism development but is also directly impacted by its negative effects. Research by Nguyen Ngoc Linh (2020) revealed that in many Vietnamese tourist destinations, local residents often engage in tourism activities spontaneously, lacking the knowledge and skills required for sustainable tourism management [3]. This not only leads to inefficient resource utilization but also creates social conflicts and lowers the quality of tourism services.

Community awareness of responsible tourism is pivotal for the success of sustainable development policies and significantly influences the destination's image and tourism brand. Scheyvens (2011) argued that enhancing awareness and fostering community participation in responsible tourism activities is the most effective way to ensure that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed while mitigating negative impacts

[4]. In Tam Dao, although several programs and policies aim to promote sustainable tourism, implementation has been limited due to insufficient engagement from the local community. Another critical aspect is the collaboration among tourism stakeholders. According to UNWTO (2021), effective cooperation between governments, businesses, communities, and tourists is essential to promoting responsible tourism. In Tam Dao, establishing training programs and capacity-building initiatives for local residents on sustainable tourism not only improves their livelihoods but also contributes to the preservation of cultural values and natural resources [5].

However, it is essential to recognize that each tourism destination has unique cultural, economic, and social characteristics. Therefore, solutions for responsible tourism development must be tailored to the specific context of each locality. This study aims to assess the awareness of the local community in Tam Dao regarding responsible tourism and propose practical and feasible solutions to promote sustainable development. Researching local community awareness of responsible tourism holds both theoretical and practical significance. The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, tourism businesses, and communities to develop effective programs and strategies for sustainable development. Furthermore, improving the awareness and skills of the local community will play a crucial role in environmental protection, cultural preservation, and enhancing service quality in Tam Dao, positioning it as a leading sustainable tourism destination in the region.

II. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

The research is conducted at the Tam Dao tourist area in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province, with primary data collected from December 2023 to April 2024, and secondary data from 2019 to 2024.

The research employs the following main methodological groups:

- Data collection methods

Secondary data related to the local community's awareness of responsible tourism in the Tam Dao tourist area will be collected from documents, books, internet sources, and statistical reports from government agencies such as the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. These documents provide an overview of the research topic and the tourism activities in the area.

For primary data, the observation method will be used to record events and behaviors of the local community within the Tam Dao tourist area. This method includes both direct and indirect observation. Direct observation allows the researcher to participate in the daily activities of the local community, while indirect observation helps to record phenomena and behaviors without intervening in the community's activities.

Additionally, the survey method combined with semi-structured interviews will be employed to gather primary data from the local community. The survey will include both closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect detailed information about the community's awareness of responsible tourism. Interviews will be conducted directly with households involved in tourism activities. The diagram, chart, and image methods will also be used to analyze and present data related to tourism resources and infrastructure, identifying trends and spatial distribution patterns of tourism resources in the area.

- Data and information processing methods

The collected data will be processed using descriptive statistics to analyze tourism activities and related factors. The data will be entered into Excel software for analysis, and the results will be presented in graphical form to provide objective conclusions.

Subsequently, the synthesis analysis method will be applied to organize and structure both primary and secondary data, providing a comprehensive view of the research subject. Finally, the SWOT analysis method will be used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges related to the development of local community awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, leading to appropriate solutions.

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF LEVELS OF AWARENESS IN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The concept of responsible tourism

Responsible tourism is a concept that emphasizes the awareness and responsibility of tourists towards the environment, culture, and local communities throughout their travel and tourism activities. Responsible tourism is not just a personal recreational activity but also has widespread social and environmental impacts. Key factors to consider in responsible tourism include:

Environmental responsibility: Tourists need to be aware of the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, such as pollution, unsustainable resource exploitation, and waste generation. Measures like energy conservation, waste reduction, and protection of natural areas are crucial.

Cultural responsibility: Tourism can affect the local culture and traditions. Tourists should respect and protect the local culture, learn and interact in a respectful manner, and avoid altering the cultural values of the community.

Responsibility to local communities: Tourism can provide economic opportunities for communities but can also lead to inequality and unfair competition. Tourists should support local communities by purchasing local products and services, generating income and employment, and participating in community activities.

According to the South African Tourism and Environmental Agency (1996), responsible tourism is defined as: “Tourism activities that are environmentally responsible through sustainable resource use, socially responsible by engaging local communities in the tourism industry, and ensuring safety for tourists” [6].

According to the Cape Town Declaration 2002, the fundamental principles of responsible tourism include: Sustainable use of environmental resources: Ensuring that tourism does not harm natural resources, conserving heritage, and biodiversity. Respecting the social culture of local communities: Protecting and promoting cultural values, maintaining local identities. Ensuring economic fairness: Fairly distributing the benefits of tourism to local communities, creating sustainable employment, and contributing to poverty alleviation [7].

The Vietnam Tourism Department defines responsible tourism as an essential factor for sustainable development, including environmental protection, respect for local culture, economic development, and the creation of quality tourism products: “Responsible tourism helps drive economic growth, ensures environmental integrity, promotes social equity, enhances labor, fosters values, and respects local cultures, creating high-quality tourism products with cultural content, ethical values, and a higher value of experience” [8].

Objectives of responsible tourism

Responsible tourism, when introduced, carries a deep sense of concern with the hope of building a sustainable tourism industry. Therefore, the objectives set within this framework aim to develop policies that prevent the negative consequences that may arise from tourism activities.

Environmental protection objective, this objective aims to ensure that tourism activities do not harm or deplete local resources and ecosystems. Measures such as waste reduction, energy conservation, sustainable tourism practices, and recycling can be implemented to protect the environment in tourism areas.

Local economic development objective, the goal of this objective is to foster diversified economic growth at the local level through tourism. By generating new sources of income for local communities, tourism can help improve living standards, create jobs, and develop infrastructure.

Preservation and restoration of local culture objective, this objective seeks to protect and maintain the traditional cultural values of local communities, preserve historical landmarks, and safeguard traditional arts and customs. Tourism can serve as a symbol of local culture, encouraging the conservation and restoration of traditions and cultural values.

Cultural awareness and exchange objective, the aim of this objective is to create opportunities for learning and cultural exchange. Tourists can gain insights into local culture and experience the lifestyles of local residents through activities such as visiting historical sites and participating in local festivals and cultural events.

Enhancement of security and information for tourists objective, this objective is focused on ensuring the safety of tourists and providing them with relevant information throughout their journeys. Effective safety measures and reliable tourism information, including details about local culture and security conditions, are provided to ensure the safety and comfort of tourists.

Principles of responsible tourism

The Responsible Tourism framework outlined in the Responsible Tourism Development Toolkit in Vietnam, supported by the European Union [9], establishes three fundamental principles. First, the economic principle emphasizes the need to assess the economic impacts of tourism projects, ensuring that development is appropriate and beneficial to local communities while minimizing negative effects. Second, the social principle advocates for active community participation in policy-making, assessing social impacts of tourism projects, and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, while respecting and preserving local cultures. Finally, the environmental principle stresses the importance of evaluating environmental impacts, using resources sustainably, reducing pollution, and protecting ecosystems.

In addition to these principles, the roles of tourism management authorities, businesses, hotels, service providers, and local communities are crucial for implementing responsible tourism. Management authorities should establish clear tourism development policies, support businesses and local communities, and organize training sessions to raise awareness. Travel agencies and accommodations must adhere to environmental principles, train personnel, and create responsible tourism products. Local communities should respect and support tourists, while tourists themselves need to understand and comply with local customs, protect the environment, and preserve local culture. Vietnam's tourism industry has made significant progress, but challenges remain in managing and organizing tourism activities. The Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy to 2020, with a vision for 2030, has outlined solutions for promoting responsible tourism to achieve sustainability. To achieve this goal, close coordination between sectors and management levels is essential.

The key principles of responsible tourism include respecting culture and information, protecting the environment, engaging with local communities, education and communication, and ensuring safety and security

for both tourists and local communities. These principles ensure that tourism benefits not only tourists but also local communities while safeguarding the environment.

The benefits of responsible tourism

Responsible tourism offers substantial benefits to a wide range of stakeholders, including the economy, environment, and local communities. It plays a vital role in minimizing the negative impacts on these sectors, while promoting positive economic outcomes and enhancing the welfare of local populations. Through its focus on sustainability, it helps reduce the ecological footprint of tourism and ensures that tourism activities are aligned with the long-term preservation of the environment and social well-being. Moreover, responsible tourism promotes better working conditions and supports local participation in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods. It also plays a significant role in the conservation of cultural heritage and natural resources, ensuring that both are preserved for future generations. Additionally, responsible tourism creates opportunities for enriching experiences for visitors, allowing them to interact with local communities and immerse themselves in local traditions and lifestyles. This approach fosters greater awareness of cultural, social, and environmental issues, leading to a more informed and respectful attitude between tourists and the host communities.

According to Vietnam's responsible tourism toolkit, the approach brings benefits not only to businesses but also to customers and local populations. For businesses, responsible tourism creates income and employment opportunities, contributing to local and national economic growth. By fostering positive relationships with visitors and the community, it helps build a strong and reputable brand image. For tourists, responsible tourism provides unique and meaningful experiences, offering them opportunities to relax and connect with locals in a culturally rich and immersive environment. Tourists can learn about and appreciate the local culture, traditions, and way of life, while also contributing to the well-being of the destination. For local communities, responsible tourism generates economic benefits through the creation of jobs, business opportunities, and sustainable sources of income. It also promotes the preservation of the local culture and environment by encouraging the community to protect its heritage and resources for the benefit of future generations.

One of the core principles of responsible tourism is its focus on sustainability. It seeks to balance economic growth with the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, ensuring that tourism activities do not deplete or damage these vital assets. Responsible tourism protects the environment by supporting eco-friendly practices and reducing the impact of tourism on local ecosystems. It also strengthens local communities by creating job opportunities, improving living standards, and fostering a sense of pride and responsibility toward local heritage. Moreover, responsible tourism supports cultural preservation, encouraging visitors to respect and learn about the local culture, while helping communities maintain and promote their cultural traditions. This approach promotes a more equitable and inclusive society by fostering awareness of human rights, social justice, and solidarity, both among tourists and the host communities. By balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities, responsible tourism plays a crucial role in ensuring that tourism contributes to a sustainable future for all stakeholders involved. This makes responsible tourism an essential element in creating a harmonious and sustainable tourism sector.

Local communities and tourism activities

Local communities are defined as groups of individuals, households, and organizations operating within a specific geographic area, unified by shared interests, objectives, and responsibilities. Members of these communities typically share cultural, social, and economic values and collaborate to improve the quality of life in their local area. Their activities are often organized through self-governing groups, non-profit organizations, or political and religious entities. Local communities include villages, towns, or small urban areas, characterized by mutual support in addressing common challenges, fostering economic and social development, and ensuring sustainability.

According to the Institute for conservation, restoration, and utilization of Natural tourism resources, local communities play a central role as legitimate custodians of natural tourism resources. They possess practical expertise in conserving and leveraging these resources while integrating cultural values, customs, traditions, and the leadership of community figures such as village elders and leaders. By applying indigenous knowledge and customary laws, local communities significantly contribute to the sustainable development of tourism.

The role of local communities in tourism activities: Local communities hold a pivotal position in the development and success of tourism, serving as key contributors to the sustainability and effectiveness of the industry. One of their primary functions lies in the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. With extensive knowledge of local history, culture, and geographical features, these communities play an essential role in safeguarding cultural traditions and natural resources. Beyond mere conservation, they offer authentic representations of their cultural and natural heritage to visitors, thereby enhancing the overall tourist experience.

Additionally, local communities actively engage in the tourism value chain by providing various services and products, including guided tours, accommodations, dining experiences, shopping opportunities, and recreational activities. This participation not only generates economic benefits for the community but also creates unique and engaging experiences for tourists, thereby contributing to the distinctive appeal of the destination. The contributions of local communities to tourism transcend economic benefits, encompassing the protection of cultural heritage, natural resources, and the environment. By fulfilling these roles, local communities play a fundamental part in fostering sustainable tourism development, ensuring long-term positive impacts for both the industry and their regions.

The impact of tourism activities on local communities: Tourism, as a non-polluting industry, has seen remarkable growth and exerts multifaceted impacts on the lives of local communities, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions. Economically, tourism generates employment, increases income, and promotes local business development. Activities such as accommodation, transportation, dining, and retail contribute to stable revenue streams for residents while boosting auxiliary industries. However, the influx of tourists may strain local resources and raise prices, potentially exacerbating economic inequalities within the community. Environmentally, tourism can aid in preserving natural landscapes and resources when effectively managed. Conversely, overexploitation, waste generation, and pollution from transportation may lead to environmental degradation and threaten biodiversity. Culturally and socially, tourism plays a role in promoting and preserving cultural heritage, fostering pride in local identities. However, the pressure from tourists and shifts in economic structures may alter or erode traditional cultural values.

To ensure sustainable tourism development, active participation from local communities is essential in preserving cultural heritage, managing resources, and crafting balanced strategies that harmonize economic, environmental, and social benefits.

Levels of Awareness

In *The Principles of Psychology*, William James categorizes awareness into two primary levels [10]:

- Primitive Consciousness: This is a basic, automatic state of awareness, present in animals and early humans. It represents fundamental perception, reacting directly to environmental stimuli without complex processing.

- Higher Consciousness: This more advanced level of awareness involves conscious thought (awareness of surroundings) and self-consciousness (reflective thinking, moral awareness, and social responsibility).

In *The Extended Mind*, Andy Clark and David Chalmers introduce the concept of super cognition, which expands awareness beyond the human brain to include the tools and environment around us. They argue that cognition is not solely confined to the brain but is extended through external tools such as pens, paper, computers, and smartphones. These tools are not merely aids but integral components of cognitive processes, enhancing our ability to process and organize information.

Building on these theories, this study adopts three levels of awareness to suit the context of exploring the local community's perception of responsible tourism:

- Primitive Awareness: Basic and natural recognition of stimuli, requiring no learning or training.

- Higher Awareness: Deeper understanding achieved through education and experience, encompassing reasoning, logic, and analytical thinking.

- Super Awareness: The highest level of awareness, linked to spiritual values, ethics, and a sense of responsibility toward the community and the environment.

Additionally, this study utilizes Benjamin S. Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning (1956) to structure levels of awareness into practical forms:

- Knowing, equivalent to remembering, involves the initial reception of information.

- Understanding and accepting, corresponding to applying, reflect the ability to analyze and use knowledge in practice.

- Implementing, aligning with analyzing, evaluating, and creating, represents active application and the generation of new values or solutions.

The integration of theories from William James, Andy Clark, David Chalmers, and Bloom's Taxonomy provides a detailed and systematic framework for evaluating and enhancing awareness of responsible tourism within the local community. This approach allows for identifying tailored solutions to foster sustainable tourism development effectively.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Tourism activities and their impact on the local community in Tam Dao

Tourism activities in Tam Dao

Tourism activities refer to the actions people undertake when traveling and staying in places outside their usual residence to explore, experience, and enjoy cultural, historical, natural, and novel attractions.

Tam Dao town, located in Vinh Phuc province, has long been recognized as one of the most popular tourist destinations in northern Vietnam. Each year, it attracts a large number of visitors, especially on weekends and

during holidays. After the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism activities in Tam Dao have been gradually recovering. Numerous hotels, resorts, and guesthouses have reopened, catering to the growing demands of visitors. Although the number of visitors has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, the trend shows steady growth. Accommodation, dining, and entertainment services are thriving, particularly in the summer and during festival periods, as Tam Dao's cool climate makes it a preferred destination for those seeking respite from the summer heat.

Visitor characteristics and economic contributions

Most tourists visiting Tam Dao come from major urban centers or nearby provinces, thanks to its convenient location, accessible transportation, and affordable travel costs. During peak seasons, tourism revenue in the town consistently reaches high levels, competing with other nearby destinations. Statistics show that tourism revenue accounts for the largest proportion of the local economy, with annual growth rates ranging from 25–55% (excluding the pandemic period). To maintain its appeal, Tam Dao continuously innovates its tourism products, shifting from local specialties such as hill chicken and su su vegetables to cultural events.

Impact of tourism on the local community in Tam Dao

Tourism activities in Tam Dao significantly influence the lives and socio-economic conditions of the local community, with both positive and negative impacts.

The tourism industry has several positive impacts on local communities. It generates numerous employment opportunities across various sectors, including hospitality, dining, transportation, tour guiding, and handicrafts, thereby enhancing the local workforce's skills and contributing to professional growth. Furthermore, tourism-related businesses such as lodging, food services, and retail significantly boost the income levels of local residents, promoting financial stability within the community. To meet the needs of increasing tourist numbers, infrastructure improvements have been made, including the upgrading of transportation systems, roads, utilities, and public facilities. These developments foster socio-economic growth and improve the quality of life in Tam Dao.

Negative impacts of tourism include the phenomenon of tourism overload, where an influx of tourists during peak seasons can put considerable pressure on local infrastructure, leading to issues such as traffic congestion and environmental degradation, including air, water, and noise pollution. Furthermore, unsustainable tourism development can lead to the deterioration of traditional cultural values and the depletion of natural resources, as local environments and cultural heritage sites become over-exploited. Additionally, interactions between tourists and local communities may contribute to cultural changes, potentially resulting in shifts in local customs and values, as well as the erosion of traditional practices.

Towards sustainable tourism development: To minimize negative impacts and maximize the benefits of tourism, sustainable management strategies are essential. Developing tourism plans, implementing policies to protect resources, and raising visitor awareness about respecting local culture and the environment are critical measures. These efforts aim to ensure balanced development across the economy, society, and environment in Tam Dao.

4.2. Perception of responsible tourism in the local community of Tam Dao town

Survey sample description

The author conducted a survey with 50 samples, consisting of 20 females (40%) and 30 males (60%). The majority of participants were between 26 and 45 years old (52%), followed by 46 to 60 years old (26%), 18 to 25 years old (16%), and over 60 years old (6%). The survey included two groups: 25 households directly involved in tourism business (50%) and 25 households indirectly involved (50%). To ensure objectivity, the survey was evenly distributed between these two groups.

The survey form also collected information on the scale of business and the length of residence in Tam Dao to analyze how perceptions have changed over time. The results indicated that most participants had lived in Tam Dao for 2-5 years (52%) and 5-10 years (38%). Regarding educational background, 7 individuals had a college/university degree, 40 had a high school diploma, and 3 had completed up to grade 6.

All 50 survey forms were valid and fully completed, with 16 questions aimed at gathering the local community's opinions on responsible tourism.

The “Know” level of the local community's awareness of responsible tourism

The author conducted a survey to assess the level of awareness of the local community about responsible tourism. The results show that, out of 50 participants, 34% (17 people) had never heard the term “responsible tourism”, 42% (21 people) had heard it at least once, and only 24% (12 people) had heard it many times (Figure 1).

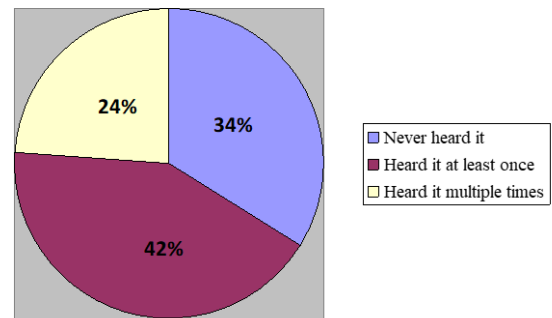


Figure 1. The “Know” level

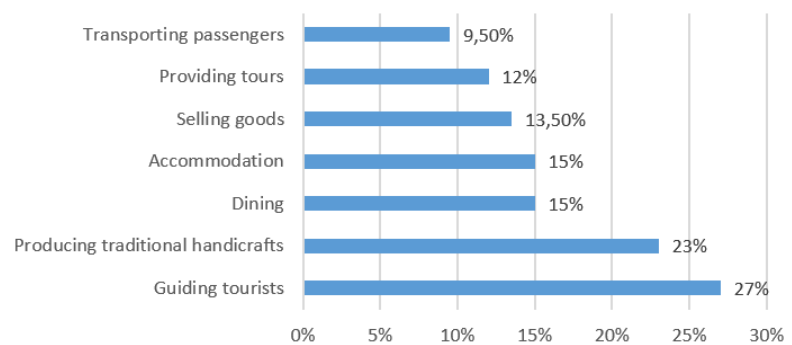
While all participants recognized the importance of tourism, their awareness of “responsible tourism” remains limited. The dissemination of information to the local community is not widespread. Most of the respondents learned about the concept through meetings, seminars, and training sessions organized by local authorities, while a small portion learned through social media channels. This highlights the crucial role of local leadership and organizations in transmitting information. It is essential to enhance communication efforts and improve infrastructure to facilitate easier access to information about responsible tourism for the local community.

The level of “Understanding” of responsible tourism in the local community

The level of understanding of responsible tourism in the local community plays a crucial role in building awareness. However, the survey results show that the locals still have limited understanding of this concept. In response to the survey question, “How do you understand responsible tourism?”, only 8 people (16%) gave a complete and accurate definition, 12 people (24%) understood part of the concept, and 30 people (60%) only associated it with environmental protection. When asked, “Who do you think is responsible for implementing responsible tourism?”, the majority of the locals believed it was the responsibility of tourists, with 35 people (70%) stating it was the responsibility of tourists, 12 people (24%) saying it was everyone’s responsibility, and 3 people (6%) stating it was the responsibility of local authorities. This shows that the locals have not fully recognized the role of the community and local government in responsible tourism.

In the survey about services related to responsible tourism, through the question “Which services do you think contribute to the development of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province?”, the results show that the locals lack a comprehensive understanding. Services such as tour guiding (27%), traditional handicraft production (23%), and accommodation and catering services (15%) were recognized as having an impact, but were not considered crucial factors in the development of responsible tourism. When asked, “What do you think will happen if responsible tourism is not implemented?”, 41 people (82%) only recognized the environmental impact, with 6 people (12%) giving a complete response about the impacts on the environment, society, economy, and people. However, 3 people (6%) believed that the failure to implement responsible tourism would not have much of an effect because they were not directly involved in tourism businesses.

Figure 2. Services related to responsible tourism according to the opinions of the local community in Tam Dao



These results highlight the need to raise awareness about responsible tourism in the local community, not only through tourists but also through policies and public awareness activities by relevant authorities to protect the environment and develop sustainable tourism.

The “Acceptance” level of the local community towards responsible tourism

In Tam Dao Town, Vinh Phuc Province, the survey results indicate that the majority of local people do not perceive the development of responsible tourism as their responsibility. They believe that tourists and local authorities are primarily responsible for the impacts of tourism, while their role is seen as minimal. When asking households with higher education and those involved in tourism businesses, many stated that the development of responsible tourism is everyone’s duty, as all parties benefit from tourism. To assess the level of acceptance, the

author asked an open-ended question: "What responsibility do you and your family have regarding tourism? Why?". The results showed that 34 people (68%) believed that the responsibility of families toward tourism is to maintain public cleanliness and carry out assigned tasks. This reflects a reluctance to do more than others or a fear of being criticized if they take action while others do not.

However, some people stated that they do not feel responsible because they do not rely on tourism for their livelihood and do not see the necessity of participating in responsible tourism development activities. Due to a lack of understanding of the concept and role of responsible tourism, local residents in Tam Dao Town face challenges in accepting these practices. Furthermore, the author asked, "Would you like to receive more policies to develop responsible tourism?" to measure the level of acceptance. The survey results showed that 47 people (94%) expressed a desire for more responsible tourism policies, while only 3 people (6%) answered negatively. This indicates that the local community genuinely wants to be involved in responsible tourism development, but unresolved issues have led to misconceptions and hesitations regarding the implementation of responsible tourism.

The "Implementation" level of the local community towards responsible tourism

Based on observations of tourism in Tam Dao Town, Vinh Phuc Province, the author does not rate the level of responsible tourism implementation highly in this area. Although waste management programs are conducted, they primarily focus on waste disposal and do not address broader tourism-related issues. The training programs on responsible tourism are still limited.

To explore the local community's willingness to participate, the author asked, "Would you like to participate in planning and decision-making regarding the development of local community awareness on responsible tourism?" 47 people (94%) answered yes, while 3 people (6%) answered no.

In practice, the implementation of responsible tourism by the local community in Tam Dao Town has not been very effective. However, the survey shows that most people are willing to engage in responsible tourism practices. They also expressed a desire to voice their opinions and participate in the decision-making process related to tourism development. Therefore, the local authorities need to engage more closely with the community, gather their opinions, and listen to the residents more effectively.

The policies implemented by local authorities in recent years have been carefully considered, focusing on environmental, economic, and social protection and development. However, this may still not be sufficient. Evidence of this is seen when the author asked, "Have you participated in any training courses on responsible tourism development?" Only 7 people (14%) responded that they had attended several courses, 25 people (50%) attended a few sessions, and 18 people (36%) had not participated. For those who had not attended, the author followed up with, "If not, would you like to participate?" 15 people (30%) answered yes, and 3 people (6%) answered no.

Specialized training courses are crucial in raising awareness of responsible tourism. A solid foundation will help local residents take the right steps and avoid potential mistakes. To further investigate the readiness of residents to engage in responsible tourism, the author asked, "If there were a project to raise awareness about responsible tourism in your area, would you be willing to participate?" Only 1 person (2%) answered no, 2 people (4%) were unsure, and 47 people (94%) answered yes. This suggests that some households may have hesitations, but they believe their community deserves to thrive and are willing to address any unresolved issues. At the end of the survey, the author posed an open-ended question to gather more insights: "Do you have any ideas for raising awareness of responsible tourism in the local community?" The author was fortunate to receive many valuable and objective suggestions, which significantly helped the research process.

General situation

Survey results on the local community's awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province reveal several issues that need improvement:

- Incomplete Awareness: The majority of the local community is not fully aware of responsible tourism and the importance of environmental, cultural, and economic protection in sustainable tourism development.
- Unsustainable Resource Exploitation: The exploitation of natural resources, particularly forests and water, is not effectively managed, leading to environmental degradation and negative impacts on local livelihoods.
- Lack of Responsible Tourism Activities: Responsible tourism activities such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and community-based tourism are underdeveloped, contributing to the decline in environmental and cultural quality.
- Lack of Sustainable Tourism Management System: There is no sustainable tourism management system in place, resulting in inadequate tourism infrastructure that does not meet visitor demands or ensure the protection of local environmental and cultural resources.
- Lack of Collaboration Among Stakeholders: The lack of cooperation among stakeholders such as local authorities, tourism businesses, and the community prevents the development of sustainable tourism practices.

To address these issues, it is essential to raise community awareness of responsible tourism, establish a sustainable tourism management system, encourage collaboration among stakeholders, and promote responsible tourism activities such as ecotourism and community-based tourism.

4.3. Some solutions to enhance local community awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province

To raise awareness about responsible tourism within the local community in Tam Dao Town, Vinh Phuc Province, it is essential to implement solutions that align with the current situation, ensuring sustainable tourism development, while protecting the environment and preserving the cultural values of the region. The current awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao is still limited, particularly regarding environmental protection, community-based tourism development, and the preservation of traditional cultural values. Therefore, the following solutions will help improve the situation and encourage community involvement in sustainable tourism development.

- *Organizing awareness campaigns and educational programs about responsible tourism:*

Although local authorities have made efforts to raise awareness about environmental protection and sustainable tourism, the understanding of these issues within the community remains limited. To address this, awareness campaigns, workshops, and training programs about the negative impacts of unmanaged tourism—such as waste pollution and its effect on the landscape—should be organized. These programs need to emphasize the importance of protecting natural resources, wildlife, and preserving local cultural values in the context of tourism development. Local media, including community radio, television, and social media, can also play a significant role in spreading this message.

- *Promoting environmental protection in tourism activities:*

One of the pressing concerns in Tam Dao is environmental pollution, especially plastic waste and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. To tackle this, it is crucial to strengthen environmental protection activities, such as waste collection, waste segregation, encouraging the use of recyclable materials, and reducing plastic consumption. Local authorities should collaborate with tourism businesses to launch initiatives to raise awareness among both tourists and locals about the importance of environmental protection in tourism. Events like eco-tourism festivals, tree planting activities, and the conservation of natural sites can help maintain the landscape and protect the environment.

- *Training and enhancing the capacity of local workforce in the tourism industry:*

The tourism workforce in Tam Dao currently lacks skills and has not been adequately trained in the principles of responsible tourism. To address this, training courses should be organized to improve local residents' skills in areas such as customer service, hospitality management, tour guiding, and sustainable tourism practices. These courses will not only enhance the quality of service but also help the community better understand the importance of environmental protection and responsible tourism development.

- *Strengthening cooperation among stakeholders in sustainable tourism development:*

Although Tam Dao has significant tourism potential, cooperation among stakeholders, such as local authorities, tourism businesses, and the community, is still limited. To improve awareness of responsible tourism, effective collaboration between these groups must be established. Local authorities should act as facilitators between the community and tourism businesses, encouraging joint participation in environmental protection and sustainable tourism initiatives. Such collaboration will not only help businesses improve their services but also enable the community to enhance their awareness and skills in tourism development.

- *Encouraging tourist participation in environmental conservation:*

Currently, tourists visiting Tam Dao primarily engage in sightseeing, with little involvement in environmental conservation activities. To address this, tourists should be encouraged to participate in activities such as waste collection, eco-tourism tours, or tree planting initiatives. Tourism operators should provide information about these activities and create opportunities for tourists to actively contribute to the protection of natural resources.

In conclusion, raising awareness about responsible tourism in Tam Dao requires the implementation of solutions that combine education, environmental protection, workforce training, and stakeholder collaboration. These efforts will help the local community better understand the benefits of sustainable tourism development while safeguarding resources and preserving traditional cultural values, ultimately creating a sustainable tourism environment in Tam Dao.

V. CONCLUSION

Responsible tourism refers to a form of tourism in which the local community actively and directly participates, ensuring that the benefits are directed towards them. However, for responsible tourism to thrive, certain specific conditions must be met, such as rich and diverse resources, a welcoming attitude from the local population, and, most importantly, the awareness of the local community regarding responsible tourism. The awareness of responsible tourism among the local community in Tam Dao Town, Vinh Phuc Province, has not yet seen substantial development, though positive changes have been observed in recent years. Notably, the

practice of overcharging tourists has significantly decreased, the local population has become more conscious of maintaining cleanliness in tourist areas, new and innovative tourism products have been introduced, and there has been a rise in the establishment of high-quality food and beverage businesses with scenic views, attracting a growing number of tourists for sightseeing and relaxation.

The research topic “Study of local community awareness of responsible tourism in Tam Dao town, Vinh Phuc province” has yielded the following findings:

Theoretical Contribution: The study has systematized the fundamental theoretical foundation of responsible tourism, providing a comprehensive overview of tourism activities and their socio-economic and environmental impacts on the local community in the Tam Dao tourism area. Using Bloom's taxonomy to assess awareness levels, the study identifies four levels of awareness that align with the research objectives: knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and implementation.

Practical Contribution: The study analyzes and evaluates the current state of the local community's awareness of responsible tourism, highlighting issues related to tourism resources, the capacity of tourism workers, infrastructure, security, and environmental considerations. Moreover, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the local community's perception of responsible tourism through the evaluations made by residents living and working in the area.

Key Findings:

The first result shows that tourism impacts the local community both positively and negatively across three main dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. Locals recognize the positive contributions of tourism, such as economic growth, stable employment, and the preservation of cultural heritage. However, there are also concerns, including environmental pollution, rising costs, and the dilution of local culture.

The second finding, based on the four levels of awareness, reveals that the concept of responsible tourism is still somewhat obscure in Tam Dao Town and has not been widely disseminated among the local population. Many residents misunderstand the nature of responsible tourism, often believing it to be a responsibility of the government or tourists, or that the benefits of responsible tourism mainly accrue to businesses. Despite this, the results of the survey show that the community acknowledges the importance and necessity of responsible tourism. Many residents expressed willingness to participate in responsible tourism practices, and even households not directly involved in tourism were open to engaging in such activities.

The author concludes that raising the awareness of the local community is crucial. This need is not limited to Tam Dao Town but applies to most tourist areas. Understanding the local situation, identifying strengths and opportunities, and addressing weaknesses and challenges are vital for the development of responsible tourism. To enhance awareness, the local population must be shown the benefits of engaging in responsible tourism, with continuous support from management authorities and the implementation of timely policies to assist the community.

The author hopes that the proposed solutions will contribute to increasing the local community's awareness of responsible tourism. The research topic has proven to be both interesting and significant for tourism activities in the area. However, due to the limitations of the author's capabilities, the thesis may have certain shortcomings, and the author welcomes feedback from professors, peers, and those interested in this field.

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