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LOCAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NGU MY THANH VILLAGE, QUANG DIEN DISTRICT, HUE CITY

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Abstract

This paper examines the level of support of local people for tourism development based on the assessment of awareness of the impacts of tourism development and local people's attitudes towards local tourism. Social exchange theory (SET) is the basis for this study. The results of in-depth interviews with 15 households and 2 local managers to understand local people's awareness and attitudes towards tourism development at the community tourism site of Ngu My Thanh. The research results show that local people recognize many socio-economic benefits from tourism development in the locality, but negative impacts from tourism activities in terms of culture, society, and environment have not appeared much. At the same time, some current difficulties and limitations in tourism development at Ngu My Thanh have also been clarified. On that basis, the study has helped competent authorities to develop future policies and strategies to enhance people's consensus on tourism development at the community tourism site of Ngu My Thanh.

Keywords: *Social exchange theory, support, tourism development, Ngu My Thanh.*

1. Problem statement

In the context of strong tourism development on a global scale, the success and sustainability of tourism development strategies increasingly depend on the awareness, attitude and level of participation of local communities - key factors determining the effectiveness and longevity of tourism policies and projects [1–7, 13]. Understanding the impact of tourism on the economic, social, cultural and environmental life of the community not only contributes to improving the effectiveness of development strategies but also ensures the equitable distribution of social benefits [7]. Practice shows that tourism development projects that lack consensus and support from local communities often do not achieve the expected results [14]. Therefore, the community is not only an affected group but also a central factor determining the success and sustainability of local tourism development [8–12].

Ngu My Thanh Village, Quang Loi Commune, Quang Dien District, Thua Thien Hue Province - recognized as a community ecotourism destination in 2023 - is a locality with great potential for developing unique tourism. Located close to the Tam Giang lagoon system and known as "Ngu My Thanh Mural Village", this place possesses a unique river landscape and a system of murals rich in cultural and artistic values reflecting the life of the lagoon. These factors not only create a unique attraction but also open up opportunities to develop a community ecotourism model associated with preserving local identity.

However, the reality shows that tourism activities in Ngu My Thanh village have not yet fully exploited their inherent potential. Although it has been shaped as a tourist destination, the locality has not yet attracted a significant number of visitors. The service system is still rudimentary, tourism activities develop spontaneously, lacking professional organization, while

the types of services are monotonous and not diversified. In particular, one of the important reasons is that the awareness and attitude of the local community towards tourism development have not received due attention [15]. This poses an urgent need to assess the level of understanding, support and expectations of local people towards community tourism.

From that perspective, this study was conducted to find out: (1) How do people perceive the impacts of tourism in the locality?; (2) What are people's intentions and aspirations when participating in local tourism activities?? and (3) Do people have a supportive attitude towards tourism development in the locality? Answering these questions not only contributes to assessing the role and readiness of the community in tourism development, but also provides a practical basis for planning appropriate, effective and sustainable tourism policies in the locality.

2. Overview of studies on social exchange theory in the field of tourism

Social exchange theory (SET) was developed by George Homans [16] and Peter Blau [17], emphasizing that social relationships are built on the exchange of benefits between individuals or groups. According to SET, people engage in social interactions when they believe that the benefits will outweigh the costs. Factors such as trust, power and fairness play important roles in maintaining and developing these relationships [18].

In the tourism field, this theory is widely used to explain the attitudes and behaviors of local communities, especially the level of support for tourism development activities. People will tend to support tourism if they perceive that the benefits derived from this activity-both material and immaterial-outweigh the negative impacts they have to bear [19, 20].

Perdue et al. [21] were the first authors to apply SET in the context of tourism research by distinguishing between groups of residents who benefit from tourism and those who do not, and including intermediate variables such as support for special tourism taxes, barriers to development, and expectations about the community's future. Ap's [19] study further developed this approach by analyzing residents' perceptions of economic benefits in more depth, although it did not clarify why economic factors dominate their assessments.

Jurowski et al. [22] extended the model by adding factors such as community attachment and attitudes towards natural resource conservation, to explain differences in perceptions of tourism impacts across three main dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Gursoy and Rutherford [20] further improved the model by classifying people's perceptions into five groups: economic benefits, social benefits, cultural benefits, social costs and cultural costs. However, this model did not consider environmental impacts.

In the context of an Australian study, Dyer et al. [23] asserted that perceptions of economic and cultural benefits were the most influential factors influencing local people's attitudes toward tourism development.

In Vietnam, SET has been applied in a number of studies to analyze local residents' attitudes towards tourism development. Studies such as Pham Minh Huong [24] in Ba Be National Park and Chau Thi Minh Ngoc & Dam Le Tan Anh [25] in Hue city have inherited and adjusted the above models to suit local socio-cultural conditions. In particular, the latter study divided the impacts of tourism into eight cognitive groups, spanning four main areas: economic, social, cultural and environmental, in both positive and negative directions.

Although the above studies have contributed to enriching the theoretical and empirical foundation of SET in tourism, most of them still use quantitative methods. The reliance on questionnaires and statistics may limit the application of SET in tourism research. Because the

attitude of local communities towards tourism development is formed based on the balance between the benefits received and the costs incurred in the process of interacting with stakeholders. However, this attitude does not only depend on the qualitative benefits but is also influenced by intermediate factors such as beliefs, perceptions of fairness, power, cultural values and social expectations. These are emotional factors, difficult to quantify and often overlooked. in studies using quantitative methods [26].

In this context, qualitative research methods are considered an effective tool to gain a deeper understanding of individual experiences, psychological motivations, and the specific social context of the community. Through techniques such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, qualitative methods allow researchers to explore how to explain the benefits and costs of tourism activities, and clarify the role of trust, perceptions of fairness, and community engagement in shaping attitudes of support or opposition. Not only providing rich, in-depth data, this approach also contributes to building a more comprehensive and realistic picture of social relationships, thereby improving the effectiveness and applicability of SET theory in local tourism development research [27].

3. Research methods

The qualitative research method used includes field observation and in-depth interviews conducted in Ngu My Thanh village, Quang Dien district, Hue city, Vietnam. Field research and observation allow to capture information about the research area as well as the situation of local community participation in tourism development.

Data Collection: The data collection process for this study was conducted based on the principles of Charmaz 's constructivist grounded theory [28] and used a combination of field research [29], observation and in-depth interviews [27] with participants to access the actual context of the research area and the views of local people in tourism development. This approach allows the researcher to interact directly with the community and collect in-depth, contextual information. Field research was conducted in early April 2025 in Ngu My Thanh village to study the local practice and observe local people's activities in tourism development.

The in-depth interview method was officially conducted on April 12, 2025 with 14 local residents and 03 local managers to collect comprehensive and diverse information according to their perspectives (perceptions and attitudes) in tourism development. The research team used semi-structured questions [27] to exploit the depth of in-depth information, combined with a purposeful sampling method. (purposive sampling). Accordingly, participants are selected based on the criteria of being able to understand, directly experience or be related to local tourism activities. The sample size is determined based on the principle of achieving information – when the conversations no longer yielded new data relevant to the research question. After interviewing 17 people and cross-referencing the observational data, the team found that the information collected was sufficient to include in the analysis.

Data analysis: Data were analyzed according to the principles of constructivist theory, allowing for an iterative process and the discovery of new factors [28]. Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, allowing the researcher to refine themes as they emerged. NVivo 26, a qualitative data analysis tool, was used to manage and organize the data, facilitating the identification and comparison of codes across different sources. Memo writing further supported the analysis process, helping to capture content and reflections that developed throughout the research. Theoretical sampling was used to analyze content in depth on emerging categories, ensuring that final themes were fully developed and based on participants' perspectives. The

opinions of 17 interviewees were arranged into themes based on coded data analysis and highlighted the views (perceptions, attitudes) of Ngu My Thanh villagers towards local tourism development.

Proposed research model: The proposed research model is built on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) framework to explain the support of the local community for community tourism development in Ngu My Thanh Village. Combined with the research questions posed on the basis of the practical situation in the research area, the research team proposed a model to clearly identify the factors affecting the support of the community in tourism development in the locality, thereby providing appropriate policy suggestions, ensuring sustainability, and consensus. and harmonize the benefits in the process of tourism development in Ngu My Thanh village as follows:

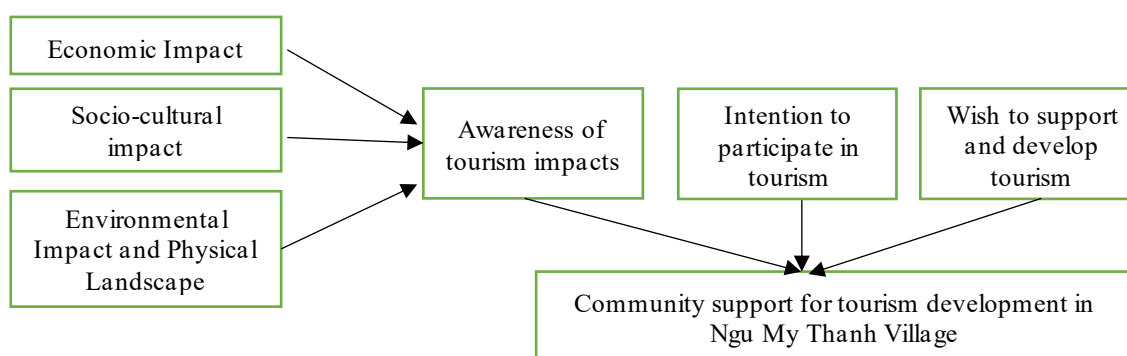


Figure 1. Proposed research model

(Source: Proposal Research Team, 2025)

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Situation of community tourism development in Ngu My Thanh village

Ngu My Thanh village is a village in Quang Loi commune, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province. With an area of 3,245.28 hectares. Ngu My Thanh fishing village is a fishing village located next to Tam Giang lagoon (bordering Tam Giang lagoon to the east), originally made up of hydroelectric fishermen who lived by fishing, living on boats and drifting on the lagoon, with the original name of Van My Thanh. With a history of formation and development over nearly a century, Ngu My Thanh is one of the traditional and typical fishing villages associated with Tam Giang lagoon - the largest brackish water lagoon in Southeast Asia.

On May 6, 2023, according to Decision No. 1007/QD-UBND, the Ngu My Thanh community tourism site in Ngu My Thanh village, Quang Loi commune, Quang Dien district, Thua Thien Hue province was recognized by the People's Committee of Thua Thien Hue province as a community ecotourism site. Under the management organization of the tourist site, Tam Giang Quang Loi Community Tourism Service Cooperative [30].

Organizational model of Tam Giang Community Tourism Cooperative, Quang Loi:

Tam Giang Community Tourism Cooperative, Quang Loi was established in December 2021, with the aim of exploiting and effectively promoting the potential and advantages of Tam Giang lagoon. This is a new and promising direction for developing community tourism in the locality. The Cooperative's operating model is divided into 7 service groups with 50 participating members, including: Boat service (17 members), boat (2 members), Homestay (6 members), cuisine (5 members), craft villages (5 members), Agriculture (Vegetables, crops) (10 members), tour guides (5 members). The Cooperative has encouraged people to actively participate with the desire to turn this unique tourism product into an attractive tourist product.

Members of the Cooperative will play a connecting role, organizing tours for customers to destinations such as Bich Hoa village, vegetable village, traditional bamboo and rattan weaving village, revolutionary historical relics, scenic spots and eco-tourism in the area. From these activities, diverse and rich experiential tours are built such as: rice planting, planting and harvesting crops, casting nets, releasing traps, casting traps, catching snails, rowing Sup boats on the lagoon,... thereby helping visitors better understand the working life, activities and culture of the local community.

Total number of visitors to Ngu My Thanh village in recent years:

Table 1. Number of visitors to Ngu My Thanh village over 3 years (2022-2024)

| Target | Unit | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Total visitors | LK | 4600 | 6700 | 6850 |
| Inland | LK | 3450 | 4550 | 4600 |
| International | LK | 1150 | 2150 | 2250 |

(Tam Giang Community Tourism Cooperative, Quang Loi, 2025)

Through the number of visitors to Ngu My Thanh village in recent years as recorded above, we can see that more and more tourists know and choose to travel here. Ngu My Thanh beach has gradually become known to many people and created a unique, distinct feature and gradually rose to become one of the leading community ecotourism destinations in Thua Thien Hue province.

4.2. Characteristics of the survey subjects

Table 2. Profile of interviewees

| STT | Respondent | Sex | Age | Job | Service Provision |
|-----|---------------------|--------|-----|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Respondent 1 (R01) | Male | 50 | Cooperative Management | Agriculture |
| 2 | Respondent 2 (R02) | Female | 36 | Staff of Quang Loi Commune Cultural Department | Not yet joined |
| 3 | Respondent 3 (R03) | Male | 45 | Fishery | Boat |
| 4 | Respondent 4 (R04) | Male | 57 | Fishery | Boat |
| 5 | Respondent 5 (R05) | Female | 48 | Fishery | Boat, “Chò” |
| 6 | Respondent 6 (R06) | Male | 62 | Fishery | Boat, “Chò” |
| 7 | Respondent 7 (R07) | Male | 72 | Craft village | Craft village |
| 8 | Respondent 8 (R08) | Female | 40 | Craft village | Craft village |
| 9 | Respondent 9 (R09) | Female | 39 | Trade | Homestay |
| 10 | Respondent 10 (R10) | Female | 52 | Trade | Homestay |
| 11 | Respondent 11 (R11) | Female | 44 | Agriculture | Cuisine |
| 12 | Respondent 12 (R12) | Female | 37 | Agriculture | Cuisine |
| 13 | Respondent 13 (R13) | Female | 33 | Trade | Tour guide |
| 14 | Respondent 14 (R14) | Female | 30 | Cooperative Officer | Tour guide |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--------|----|---------|----------------|
| 15 | Respondent 15 (R15) | Male | 42 | Fishery | Not yet joined |
| 16 | Respondent 16 (R16) | Male | 70 | Fishery | Not yet joined |
| 17 | Respondent 17 (R17) | Female | 46 | Fishery | Not yet joined |

To collect primary data, the study used in-depth interviews with local people in Ngu My Thanh village, Quang Dien district, Hue city, Vietnam. Using non-probability sampling techniques, the study approached 17 people who have participated and have not participated in tourism, including: 4 respondents who have not participated in local tourism services and 13 respondents participated in tourism activities belonging to tourism service groups of Tam Giang Community Tourism Cooperative, Quang Loi. Of which, 02 respondents provided boat and “Chở” services, 02 respondent provided boat services, 02 respondents provided craft village services, 02 respondents provided homestay services, 02 respondents provided culinary services, 01 provides agricultural services, 02 respondent provides tour guide services. Most of the interviews were conducted at people's homes or at the headquarters of the Community Tourism Cooperative, a few people were interviewed at the boat dock, food court and market. In terms of age ratio, 12/17 respondents were aged 30 - 50 years old (accounting for 70.6 %), while the subjects aged 50 - 70 years old had 4/17 respondents (accounting for 23.5 %), the least being the age Over 70 years old only 01/17 respondents (accounting for 5.9 %).

4.3. Encryption analysis results

The data collected provided insights into local people's perspectives on the relationship between community support and tourism development. After being coded using NVivo 26 software, the responses were categorized into key themes (see Table 2). Specifically, community support is realized through people's awareness, attitudes, participation intentions, and aspirations. Community tourism development includes the roles of both people and government. Table 2 details the themes and corresponding coding from the perspectives of 17 local people, clearly illustrating the key features and highlighting the relationships between them.

Table 3. Themes - codes

| Themes | Codes | Keywords |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Local community support | - Awareness: + <i>Positive economic impact</i> | + Increase income + Increase the value of local products + Improve employment opportunities + Improve working conditions, reduce heavy labor + Attracting young resources for local development |
| | + <i>Positive impact on culture and society</i> | + Happy spiritual life, communication + Strengthen community cohesion + Contribute to improving social security, reducing social evils and unemployment rate + Promote local culture |
| | + <i>Positive impact on environment and physical landscape</i> | + Infrastructure development: roads, electricity, water, lighting + Increase awareness of environmental protection: keep clean, do not litter + Change the appearance of living space, improve landscape: Renovated houses, check-in points. |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| | + <i>Negative impacts</i> | + Service quality is not consistent + Competitive price + No risk yet because there are not many customers, no big impact yet |
| | - Opinions /wish in tourism development | + People themselves need to change their awareness and thinking in the way they do tourism. + Strengthen government support for local communities: knowledge and skills in tourism, propaganda activities to disseminate information about the benefits of tourism + Be determined in implementing mechanisms and policies to support local tourism: promotional activities, legal procedures, investment in upgrading infrastructure, preferential loan support, monitoring service quality and prices, etc |
| | - Attitude towards local tourism development | + Fully support local tourism development + Intention to participate in tourism: - People who have participated will continue to participate - People who have not participated yet have the desire to participate when conditions permit |
| Developing community tourism | The role of local people | Direct service providers, participate in and benefit from tourism |
| | The role of government | Organize, support, coordinate and enhance community capacity |

4.4. Local community awareness of tourism impacts at Ngu My Thanh community tourism site

Through in -depth interviews with 14 people, 03 local managers,, the results show that community tourism here not only has a positive impact on economic factors but also improves spiritual life, improves community solidarity and protects the environment. Tourism also contributes to the preservation and promotion of unique local cultural values. At the same time, some negative impacts have also appeared, although not many. These contents are analyzed and summarized by the research team in Table 2 above.

4.4.1. Positive economic impact

Community tourism in Ngu My Thanh has brought clear economic benefits to local residents, especially in diversifying and enhancing their livelihoods. According to the survey, 15/17 residents said that tourism has created more job opportunities during difficult seasonal times, such as the rainy season when fishing activities are interrupted. Related jobs such as rowing, guiding tours, serving food, organizing experiences (rowing sup, pouring nets, pedaling ponds, etc.), and selling local products are all actively participated by the residents.

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory (SET), these positive responses can be explained through the principle of trade-offs between “costs” and “benefits”. People are willing to participate in tourism activities because they perceive specific and immediate economic benefits – such as increased income, less work, and increased demand for local products. This creates a positive reinforcing cycle, causing people to maintain and support community-based tourism as a form of beneficial exchange [31],[32].

In addition, tourism is also considered a factor to reduce labor pressure in the traditional fisheries sector, which is risky and unstable. This not only improves income but also improves the quality of life, helping people feel that the trade-off in time and effort is reasonable.

“Before, I only fished, now I also row a boat to transport passengers, my income has increased significantly” (R04).

“Tourists love to buy fish sauce, enjoy and buy seafood in this area. We clean it and sell it at a better price” (R09).

“Before, I spent all day at the lagoon. Now that there are more tourists, I work in tourism, which is less tiring” (R06).

One benefit that cannot be overlooked is the reinvestment of young human resources in the locality. Five out of 17 households reported that their children who had worked far away have now returned to participate in tourism, taking on the role of tour guides, boatmen, chefs or opening homestays. This is clear evidence of the expansion of local development opportunities, helping to create social incentives to maintain and restructure local labor – an indirect but long-term effect of the social exchange process that brings specific benefits to community members.

“Before, my son worked in Saigon, now he comes back to work in tourism and opens a homestay, I'm very happy” (R10).

In summary, according to the SET theoretical framework, people are willing to support and participate in tourism activities because they see clear and sustainable economic benefits, with acceptable participation costs (effort, career change). This creates a foundation of social consensus for the development of community tourism in Ngu My Thanh.

4.4.2. Positive socio- cultural impact

Community tourism in Ngu My Thanh Village not only brings material benefits but also promotes positive changes in cultural and social life. According to the survey, 9/17 residents said that contact with tourists makes them feel more open, sociable and confident in communication. This reflects a form of spiritual benefit - an important factor often overlooked in tourism impact assessments, but emphasized in Social Exchange Theory (SET).

SET suggests that when community members experience social and emotional benefits – such as pride, respect, or community engagement – they are more likely to continue supporting those activities, because these emotional rewards are as valuable as or greater than the material benefits. Positive changes such as being happier and friendlier when interacting with visitors are evidence of successful “social exchange” between the community and visitors.

“Thanks to receiving tourists, I also feel happy and open up more to talk” (R11).
“Now that there is tourism, people contribute to help people in the village become more connected and happier” (R13).

In addition, 10/17 residents said that tourism has helped the community become more connected through coordinated activities such as service preparation, environmental sanitation, and reception organization. Collaboration to achieve common goals has created “social value” – one of the core elements in SET, increasing trust and community awareness.

Notably, 5/17 people stated that community-based tourism contributes to reducing social evils such as violence and gambling by creating more jobs, especially for young people. This is consistent with SET's explanation of the trade-off: when the community sees that the benefits of tourism (stable jobs, healthy environment) are higher than the risks of negative activities, they will tend to choose positive behaviors and maintain support.

“Thanks to tourism, young people now have jobs and are much less involved in social evils than before” (R02).

Another valuable impact highlighted by 9/17 residents is the revival of traditional cultural values. Tourism not only promotes the preservation but also revives traditional practices such as damming, pouring nets, making bamboo and rattan, or typical dishes. These elements – which were once lost – have now become valuable “trading assets”, bringing economic benefits and reputation to the community. SET believes that this cultural revival is the result of the community realizing that maintaining culture is not only spiritual but also an effective economic strategy.

“Tourists here really enjoy folk games and local cultural experiences such as making bamboo and rattan handicrafts, participating in experiences such as damming, pouring fish traps, etc. and enjoying local cuisine” (R07).

In summary, the spiritual, cultural, and social cohesion benefits enhanced local people's positive feelings, confirming the main thesis of SET: when people perceive the benefits to be greater than the costs – even intangible ones – they will be willing to sustain and develop community-based tourism.

4.4.3. Positive impact on the environment and physical landscape

Community tourism in Ngu My Thanh Village also plays a role as a driving force to improve infrastructure and raise environmental awareness in the community. According to the survey, 7/17 people said that environmental protection awareness has been significantly improved, especially in maintaining public hygiene and not littering in the lagoon. At the same time, 15/17 people noted positive changes in infrastructure systems such as concrete roads, electricity, water and public lighting.

SET can explain this phenomenon by viewing infrastructure improvements as a “social reward” that residents receive from participating in tourism development. Local government investment in infrastructure to support tourism not only provides direct benefits but also strengthens the community's belief in the value of tourism as a long-term development strategy. When residents perceive that these benefits can continue to increase if they maintain the landscape and continue to support tourism, they will proactively adjust their personal behavior – such as not littering, repairing their homes – to maintain this flow of benefits.

“Since more tourists have come, I see that the environment in the village is much more beautiful. People are more conscious of not littering to keep the community clean. Now there are concrete roads with lights, whereas before it was very dark” (R01).

In addition, 5/17 residents said that many households have invested in upgrading their homes, opening homestays or home-based restaurants to serve tourists. These actions demonstrate the belief that investing in living space will bring concrete benefits – a clear illustration of the principle of self-interest in SET. When people clearly see the opportunity to make a profit and improve their social status from tourism, they will actively participate in the process of infrastructure transformation.

“I see that many houses are now renovated to be more spacious and beautiful to welcome guests” (R09).

At the same time, according to the UNWTO sustainable tourism development theory [34], the participation of local people in environmental protection and small-scale infrastructure investment is a fundamental factor for sustainable tourism. The fact that SET explains this behavior as the result of a positive exchange chain - economic, social, environmental benefits - shows that

the community tourism model in Ngu My Thanh is converging the fundamental factors for sustainable development.

4.4.4. Some initial negative impacts of community tourism

Although community tourism in Ngu My Thanh has brought many positive benefits, some negative consequences have also begun to appear, mainly in the initial stages. 12/17 residents said that they have not seen any significant impact yet, due to the small number of visitors. However, some households have begun to record the phenomenon of unhealthy price competition and uneven service quality among businesses.

From a SET perspective, these are “social costs” or “perceived risks” – that is, factors that may cause people to reconsider their continued participation if they feel that the benefits do not outweigh the losses or the resulting stress. The lack of organization and common standards in operations makes some people feel tired or demotivated, especially when service outcomes are not recognized or compared unfairly.

“Seeing several households competing on price, whoever is cheaper, people follow, sometimes it is too cheap and then it is done carelessly. Then there are previous groups of guests who praise this place as fun but that place is messy, no one guides properly” (R05).

In addition, when the organizational model such as Cooperatives is still unstable, most of the activities are still spontaneous, the internal connection is still weak. According to Dredge & Jenkins [35] and Tosun [36], in the context of insufficient support from the government or lack of coordination mechanism, internal conflicts are easy to arise and affect the foundation of sustainable tourism development. This is a challenge that needs to be considered as part of the total social cost of the development process.

“There are not many visitors here yet, so I still don't see any impact of tourism on the locals” (R14).

SET helps explain that without cost-reducing mechanisms (competitive management, service capacity enhancement, etc.), public support will gradually decline. Therefore, maintaining fairness in the distribution of benefits and establishing social trust are key to maintaining public support.

4.5. Comments and Local community aspirations in tourism development at Ngu My Thanh community tourism site

Despite many difficulties in both infrastructure and skills, the people of Ngu My Thanh village still show enthusiasm and high initiative in developing community tourism. They not only maintain current tourism activities but also actively propose creative ideas to better exploit the unique cultural and ecological identity of the locality. One resident said:

“In the near future, we want to do a '2 days 1 night lagoon experience' tour, set up tents for guests to experience, sleep naturally in the cool space of the lagoon and 'experience a day as a fisherman’” (R14).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, these ideas and expectations are clear evidence that people are positively evaluating the exchange relationship between themselves and the tourism development process. They not only expect economic benefits, but also proactively shape the way they participate so that it is suitable for their capacity and protects community values. This reflects endogenous motivation - a core element for sustainable community tourism development.

When asked about their opinions and wishes for local authorities, people showed a clear awareness of their role in tourism development, and proposed specific groups of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of exchanges between the community and stakeholders.

First: People clearly recognize the need to change their mindset and improve their own capacity to participate more effectively in tourism activities.

In SET, effective communication depends not only on the benefits received, but also on the capacity to participate, including skills, knowledge and positive attitudes. The responses showed that people have a clear awareness of their own responsibilities, and at the same time, they want to change their thinking and behavior to suit a more professional tourism environment. 7/17 respondents mentioned this group of opinions.

“People need to be more open-minded, willing to learn and acquire knowledge and skills in tourism services, and spend more time on tourism” (R08).

“The local people themselves are shy and timid, they do not warmly welcome tourists, so the people need to change to be bolder, more enthusiastic, and friendlier in welcoming and introducing the unique values of their locality to tourists” (R02).

These opinions reflect the desire to transform internal exchange capacity to achieve higher benefits. According to SET, this change in perception is the decisive factor in people continuing to invest time, effort and personal resources in their relationship with the tourism industry.

Second: People proposed to increase support from local authorities to improve efficiency and reduce barriers when participating in tourism activities.

Nine out of 17 respondents expressed this opinion. Although people’s attitudes towards tourism are positive, SET believes that participation in social relations is still dominated by “costs” and “barriers” – such as lack of knowledge, skills or resources. In this context, the role of the government is expected to be as a facilitator to reduce exchange costs and improve implementation capacity for the community.

“We really hope that the government will promote and encourage people to actively participate in tourism, especially the youth. At the same time, the government should regularly organize training courses on foreign languages, communication skills, experience and ways of doing tourism for us” (R13).

From a SET perspective, if people feel that the government is a trustworthy exchange partner – willing to provide knowledge, skills, and opportunities – then the community’s engagement with tourism will become more sustainable, as they perceive fairness and profitability in this social relationship.

Third: People want the government to have more drastic, synchronous and practical policies, from capital support to infrastructure investment and promoting local image.

Six out of 17 respondents expressed a need for policy and institutional support, emphasizing the need for close coordination between the government and the community, towards a two-way, sustainable and responsible relationship. People expect the government to play the role of a sponsor in the exchange relationship – ensuring that the mechanisms, procedures and support conditions are actually put into practice and are suitable for their capacity.

“We hope the government will strongly support procedures, legal barriers and provide optimal support for us to make tourism more convenient” (R04).

“The government needs to invest and support facilities such as boats, electricity, water, infrastructure and invest in more beautiful check-in points for tourists” (R06).

“The higher authorities need to pay more attention to promoting local tourism, step up propaganda work, coordinate with travel companies to promote and introduce eco-tourism and community tourism programs in the lagoon” (R01).

“The government needs to issue policies and regulations to stabilize prices, prices go hand in hand with service quality, and avoid the current situation of price dumping and price competition” (R13).

“The government supports capital, creates a source of livelihood, and a stable source of income, giving us peace of mind when doing tourism” (R09).

According to SET, if support policies create favorable conditions for capital, infrastructure, and consumer markets, people will be more willing to invest in tourism, because then the "exchange value" they receive becomes clearer, more attractive, and more sustainable.

4.6. Attitude of local community in tourism development at Ngu My Thanh community tourism site

The results of the in-depth interviews showed a high level of consensus and a clear positive attitude among the people of Ngu My Thanh village towards the development of community-based tourism in the locality. Specifically, all 17/17 households surveyed expressed strong support for this type of tourism, of which 14 households are currently directly involved in tourism activities such as boating, serving food, selling local products or guiding tourists. This clearly reflects the people's belief in the benefits that tourism can bring – a core point in the Social Exchange Theory (SET), according to which individuals will develop positive attitudes towards social relationships that they consider to be economically, socially or spiritually beneficial.

“If our village has more tourism, it will have more income. If we only do fishing or farming, it will be very difficult and unstable” (R12).

The above statement demonstrates that people are comparing the costs and benefits between traditional livelihoods and new forms of livelihood (tourism), thereby making a more positive choice. In SET, this evaluation process is a mechanism of “cognitive exchange” – when people consider not only material benefits but also stability and expectations for the future.

- Intention to participate in tourism of local people in Ngu My Thanh village:

Of the 14 households participating, the majority expressed a desire to continue their activities, as they have seen the practical benefits of participating in tourism. This indicates a high level of satisfaction in the exchange relationship, and it is this satisfaction that will motivate them to continue investing, maintaining and developing their role in the community tourism value chain. One resident shared:

“Since working in tourism, my family has had more income. My husband still goes fishing, but I stay home and work with guests” (R11).

SET explains that when people perceive both economic (additional income) and social (stable employment, increased personal role) exchange value, they will be willing to commit to the process for a long time.

On the other hand, although there are still 4 households that have not directly participated in tourism activities, it is noteworthy that all 4 households expressed their desire to participate in the future, if the appropriate conditions are met. Through in-depth discussions, the obstacles they encountered include lack of means (boats, docks), lack of skills and experience in serving customers, and especially limited material and human resources. These are factors that SET calls barriers to participation in exchange, when individuals do not feel competent enough to participate or perceive the costs (investment, risk) to be higher than the expected benefits.

One of the most prominent barriers mentioned by non-participating households was the instability of tourist arrivals, which made them hesitant to change their livelihoods or invest in tourism activities. One resident said:

“Some days there are many customers, some days there are no customers all day, so we do not dare to give up our main job or invest a large amount of capital to switch to tourism” (R15).

SET argues that the consistency and predictability of exchange benefits is an important factor influencing the decision to maintain or withdraw from a social relationship. If people feel that the benefits are not stable or predictable enough, they will temporarily postpone or withdraw from that value chain, in order to preserve personal resources.

In addition to material factors, some opinions also emphasized the limitations of tourism skills and experience such as lack of knowledge of communication with guests, service skills, and how to organize experiential activities. This shows that the level of willingness to participate depends not only on positive attitudes but also on the ability to implement exchanges - an important content in SET that, if not improved, can reduce the effectiveness of social relations between people and the tourism industry.

In summary, the analysis results show that positive attitudes and high consensus in the community are favorable foundations for the development of community tourism in Ngu My Thanh. However, in order for this exchange relationship to become sustainable, it is necessary to pay attention to factors that influence people's participation and maintenance decisions such as: stability of tourism demand, individual implementation capacity, and support from stakeholders. This is consistent with SET's orientation that social attitudes are the result of continuous assessment between costs - benefits, expectations - reality and fairness in resource distribution. Therefore, to maintain the existing consensus and convert positive attitudes into concrete actions, supporting policies should focus on: stabilize the number of tourists, enhance people's capacity, and reduce initial risks in the livelihood transition process. Only when people clearly feel that they are getting the value they deserve and can partially control the outcome, Only then will participation in community tourism be proactive, long-term and sustainable.

4.7. Discussion

The results obtained in this study confirm that community-based tourism in Ngu My Thanh has created multidimensional impacts, consistent with previous international studies. At the same time, the study also highlights the important role of the community and government in the development of community-based tourism in the locality, better understood through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET).

The development of community-based tourism in Ngu My Thanh is closely dependent on policy support and resources from the local government. The role of the government in creating a top-down value exchange mechanism, through supporting policies and organizations, is a factor that promotes community support and tourism development. This is similar to previous studies, affirming the important role of the government in providing resources and encouraging community participation [37].

“The government has had many support activities such as establishing the Tam Giang and Quang Loi Community Tourism Cooperative to connect and organize people to participate in providing tourism services associated with the characteristics of Tam Giang lagoon” (R1).

“Through mobilizing budget sources and project capital, the government has supported households participating in tourism with initial financial support for people to upgrade and repair services provided for tourism. Specifically: The dike system is supported with a budget of 20 million VND/year, the stilt house is supported with a budget of 15 million VND/unit; the toilet is supported with a budget of 7.5 million VND/unit; the well system providing fresh water is supported with a budget of 10 million VND/unit” (R14).

Within the SET framework, this is seen as an exchange between the government and the community, where the government “gives” resources in exchange for cooperation and commitment to tourism development from the people. However, the success of community tourism depends largely on the active participation and proactive role of the local community, demonstrating a bottom-up exchange model. The community is considered one of the key stakeholders, not only receiving economic benefits but also creating unique cultural and social values, contributing to the enrichment and diversification of tourism products [38, 39, 40, 41, 42]. The community’s active participation and close connection with tourism activities is a prerequisite for building sustainable and successful tourism products [43].

In Ngu My Thanh, people are not only the affected subjects but also the central factor in tourism development, both “exchangers” and “value recipients” in the social exchange chain. A cooperative manager shared:

“Local communities play a key role in developing sustainable tourism. No one understands the culture, customs, and local landscape better than the locals. They are the storytellers, the ones who connect tourists with the real life of this lagoon area” (R01).

Local communities possess traditional cultural values, customs, folk festivals, crafts and indigenous knowledge - valuable “soft resources” in developing community-based tourism. People also directly provide services such as homestay accommodation, cuisine, tour guides, and transportation, helping to create tourism products with indigenous imprints that attract tourists looking for unique experiences.

“People in Ngu My Thanh village are increasingly aware of the potential for tourism development in the locality. They not only participate in activities such as community tourism, homestays, boat services, but also actively protect the landscape and ecological environment. We have seen a very clear transformation in recent years.” (R02).

According to SET, the exchange between parties in community-based tourism is not only a material exchange but also includes social, cultural and environmental values, requiring the community to be guaranteed clear rights and responsibilities to maintain long-term and effective participation. Thus, the local community is not simply a “living with tourism” but a core factor determining the quality, sustainability and success of the destination. Sustainable tourism development therefore depends on establishing fair, transparent and beneficial exchange mechanisms for all stakeholders in the community.

5. Conclusion and research implications

Our study presents the results of a field trip to survey the people of Ngu My Thanh village about their attitudes and perceptions towards local tourism development. The findings in our analysis reaffirm the community's views (attitudes, perceptions) on the impacts of tourism through the opinions of local people. The significance of this study shows that tourism development cannot be without the support of the community, and at the same time affirms the role of the people in developing community-based tourism. This information is very useful, providing an important basis for orienting government policies in developing local tourism.

The study has provided important findings on the attitudes and perceptions of local communities in tourism development in Ngu My Thanh village, however, some gaps still exist, opening up many valuable future research directions in both theory and practice. The study only stops at a specific tourist destination in the initial development stage, without comparing between regions or time to determine stability and common results. Besides, the role of other linking

subjects outside the community and government (such as businesses, social organizations, travel agencies and media) has not been fully considered, especially in the context of community calendar requiring multi-agent integration. Qualitative research methods provide a lot of depth of information but need to be combined with quantitative data methods, creating the possibility of more systematic analysis of important mediating factors in social exchange theory – such as trust, perceptions of fairness, personal competence or stability of benefits. These gaps are the basis for expanding future research, both on methods, space and research area.

However, the study also showed people's awareness of the impacts of tourism; thereby determining their level of support when implementing tourism development projects in the locality. At the same time, some wishes and opinions of the people were also discussed to have a basis for the local government to propose some solutions to increase support and active participation of the people, ensuring sustainability and effectiveness in developing community-based tourism in Ngu My Thanh village as follows:

- Closely organize community tourism management model suitable for local scale

More tightly organize and manage the model “*Tam Giang, Quang Loi Community Tourism Cooperative*” is very necessary to strengthen the connection between households participating in tourism activities. This model will contribute to the fair distribution of benefits, clearly define the responsibilities among members and promote the spirit of cooperation. These management models need to have transparent operating procedures, effective internal monitoring mechanisms, and publicly posted service price lists to ensure fairness, reputation, and service quality for tourists.

- Developing typical tourism products of the lagoon

It is necessary to focus on building and developing tourism products with cultural and ecological characteristics of the lagoon such as: experiencing traditional fishing, visiting river landscapes, enjoying local cuisine, participating in traditional festivals, or lagoon and ecological tours. Designing tourism packages suitable for each customer group such as students, domestic tourists, groups of friends, families, etc. will help diversify customer sources and increase flexibility in tourism exploitation. Exploiting cultural identity factors will create differences and increase the attractiveness of the destination, thereby enhancing competitiveness with other localities.

- Enhance capacity and awareness of local communities on sustainable tourism

Regularly organize professional training courses to improve knowledge and practical tourism skills for local people. Training content should focus on skills such as: communicating with tourists, service skills, ensuring food hygiene and safety, protecting the environment and developing unique tourism products with local identity. In particular, it is necessary to encourage the participation of local youth through experiential education programs, support start-ups, promote the role of "creative core", thereby creating a young, dynamic and dedicated human resource for the long-term development of community tourism. In addition, it is necessary to Strengthen internal communication and propaganda to help people clearly understand the benefits, responsibilities and opportunities when participating in the tourism value chain.

- Improve infrastructure and space for tourism

Local authorities need to prioritize investment and upgrading of infrastructure systems serving tourism such as: internal transportation, marinas, public toilets, electricity and water systems. In addition, it is necessary to build more landscape spaces, attractive check-in points, community houses, reception points, signposts and compact architectural works suitable for the landscape to enhance the experience of tourists and contribute to building a friendly and attractive local image in the eyes of visitors.

- Strengthen promotion and market connection

It is necessary to promote community tourism through digital media channels such as social networks, websites, digital maps, and online tourism platforms. In addition, it is necessary to coordinate with travel agencies, schools, media organizations, and press agencies to expand the promotion network and attract tourists to the locality.

- Strengthen internal coordination and linkage mechanisms

It is necessary to establish a clear and close coordination mechanism between households, community organizations, local authorities and relevant parties in the process of managing and implementing tourism activities. In addition, the reasonable division of roles, responsibilities and benefits will help avoid conflicts of interest, while enhancing management efficiency and creating consensus in the community. In addition, there should be regular meetings, workshops to exchange experiences and feedback from tourists to update and adjust tourism activities to suit reality.

- Support financial policies and administrative procedures

Local authorities need to develop and implement financial support policies such as: preferential loans, interest rate reduction, credit guarantee support or providing community tourism development funds for households and organizations participating in tourism activities. In addition, it is necessary to simplify administrative procedures related to business registration, applying for tourism licenses, etc. to create favorable conditions for people to access resources and support policies effectively and promptly.

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