

Developing Green Tourism in Da Nang City

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the global shift towards sustainable development, green tourism is emerging as an important strategy to enhance competitiveness and protect local resources. This paper aims to identify factors affecting green tourism development in Da Nang city, and evaluate the role of green tourism in enhancing destination competitiveness. Based on the inheritance of international studies and the theoretical framework of sustainable development management, a research model was built with five hypotheses, tested using the PLS-SEM method with survey data from 312 subjects related to tourism activities in Da Nang. The results show that policy, business, community and technology factors all have a positive impact on green tourism development, in which policy is the factor with the strongest impact. In addition, green tourism development is also proven to have a significant impact on tourism competitiveness. Based on these results, the study proposes policy implications to promote a more comprehensive and effective green tourism governance model in developing cities.

Keywords: Green tourism; Tourism competitiveness; Public policy; Tourism businesses; Local community; Da Nang city

1. INTRODUCTION

The continuous increase in tourism activities around the world in recent decades has contributed significantly to economic growth, promoted cultural exchange and improved livelihoods of local communities. However, these benefits have come with significant environmental consequences such as air and water pollution, biodiversity loss and over-consumption of resources (Gössling & Peeters, 2015). Faced with increasing pressures from climate change and the need for sustainable development, the global tourism industry has been strongly transforming towards “greening” its activities and operating processes. In this context, green tourism has emerged as an environmentally friendly tourism model, focusing on sustainable development, harmonizing economic, social and ecological goals (UNWTO, 2020; Mihalic, 2016).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020), green tourism is not only a strategic choice, but also an urgent requirement in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, when consumers become more sensitive to the ethical, ecological and sustainable factors of destinations. Also according to the analysis of Gössling et al. (2015), the transition to a green tourism model helps countries and localities limit negative impacts on the environment, while expanding the tourism market share by attracting tourists with a high awareness of nature protection. Not only that, Bramwell & Lane (2011) emphasized the role of green tourism as a “conductor” in promoting integrated local governance initiatives and raising public awareness about the environment.

In the context of this global shift, many Asian countries have pioneered the development of green tourism models in key destinations such as Chiang Mai (Thailand), Jeju (Korea), Kyoto (Japan) or Bali (Indonesia). Studies in these regions have shown that building a successful green tourism strategy requires close coordination between three entities: government business community, along with a clear assessment system and environmental management tools (Stone & Rogerson, 2019; Pranaditya et al., 2021). In addition, digital technology and digital transformation are also playing an increasingly important role in supporting communication, monitoring and improving green tourism management processes (Becken & Hay, 2007; Hall, 2019).

Vietnam, with its long coastline and diverse ecosystems, is facing great opportunities to shape and develop green tourism models suitable for regional characteristics. Among the localities that are active in tourism development, Da Nang city stands out thanks to its strategic location, modern infrastructure, and clear policy orientation on sustainable development. According to UNDP Vietnam (2022), Da Nang is one of the few localities with specific initiatives such as building an environmental city, developing plastic waste-free tourism, and implementing a "smoke-free tourism" program on Son Tra peninsula. However, there are still significant challenges: the lack of a comprehensive green tourism assessment criteria system, uneven awareness among participating groups (tourists, small businesses, people), and limited coordination between parties (Le et al., 2023).

In that context, in-depth research on green tourism development in Da Nang is necessary and has clear theoretical and practical significance. Based on the inheritance of international academic approaches to sustainable development and tourism management, this article aims at three specific objectives:

- (1) Systematize theoretical basis and concepts related to green tourism;
- (2) Analyze the current status of green tourism implementation in Da Nang from policy and practical perspectives;
- (3) Propose a suitable strategic model, promote the active participation of stakeholders towards a sustainable and effective green tourism ecosystem.

The study is expected to contribute to establishing an academic foundation for urban green tourism models in Vietnam, while providing practical evidence for policy makers, businesses and researchers in building environmentally friendly tourism development strategies that focus on people and ecosystems.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

Concept and characteristics of green tourism

Green tourism is a form of tourism that emphasizes environmental friendliness, responsibility to the local community, and aims for sustainable development on all three pillars: economic, social and ecological. According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019), green tourism is a form of tourism that helps minimize negative impacts on the natural environment, while optimizing benefits for local people and tourists.

Unlike mass tourism, green tourism emphasizes the efficient use of natural resources, reduces carbon emissions, promotes responsible consumption, and encourages tourists to engage with local values (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). The prominent features of green tourism include: prioritizing sustainable transportation; using environmentally friendly products and services; promoting meaningful cultural interactions with the community; and integrating environmental education into the tourism experience (Gössling & Hall, 2006).

In addition, the trend of "regenerative tourism" is expanding the scope of green tourism by not only limiting it to "minimizing negative impacts", but also aiming at "restoring and enriching" ecosystems and community values (Hughes & Scheyvens, 2016). In the context of the global response to the environmental crisis and post-COVID-19, green tourism is considered a suitable solution to reshape the future of the smokeless industry.

Sustainable development framework and application in tourism

The core theoretical basis of green tourism originates from the three-pillar sustainable development model: economic social environmental, proposed by Elkington (1997) with the concept of "triple bottom line". In this theoretical framework, each tourism activity needs to be evaluated not only based on financial efficiency but also considering the impact on natural resources and the quality of life of the host community.

Green tourism is a means to realize sustainable development in the tourism industry, aiming to balance the benefits between current and future generations (UNEP, 2011). Mihalic (2016) proposed the concept of "responsustainable tourism", combining responsibility and sustainability, to emphasize that tourism development cannot lack ethical commitment and accountability from all stakeholders - from management agencies, businesses to tourists.

To support the implementation of sustainable development principles in practice, many international organizations have developed a system of criteria for evaluating green tourism destinations, notably the Green Destinations

Standard. This set of standards includes groups of indicators on destination management, environmental and climate protection, cultural and community preservation, local economic support and visitor experience management ([Green Destinations, 2022](#)). Applying these criteria helps localities have specific tools to measure, monitor and improve the quality of green tourism development.

Ecosystem approach in green tourism development

One of the modern approaches that effectively explains the development of green tourism is the ecosystem approach. Accordingly, tourism does not exist as a separate sector but is part of a large ecosystem, which includes complex interactions between subjects: government, businesses, tourists, people, social organizations and the natural environment ([Baggio et al., 2010](#)).

The ecosystem model allows for an approach to green tourism development as a cross-sectoral process that requires collaboration, data sharing, and joint action from stakeholders. In the study of Gretzel et al. (2015), the integration of smart tourism technologies is considered a key solution to effectively coordinate and manage the green tourism value chain. These technologies can support emissions monitoring, real-time resource management, and personalization of eco-friendly tourism information for tourists.

An ecosystem approach also allows cities - like Da Nang - to integrate green tourism into sustainable urban development strategies, conserve coastal habitats and enhance resilience to climate change.

The role of destination policy and governance

Policy factors play a fundamental role in shaping and guiding the development of green tourism at the local and national levels. According to Hall (2011), to develop green tourism sustainably, there needs to be a flexible institutional framework that facilitates community initiatives and promotes innovation in tourism business models.

The policy needs to ensure three main functions: (1) creating incentives through financial incentives and legal instruments; (2) promoting institutional capacity and multi-stakeholder governance; (3) monitoring and evaluating implementation effectiveness on a standardized basis. Research by Ashley & Roe (2002) shows that public-private-community partnership (PPCP) models are effective solutions to both ensure resources and maintain fairness and transparency in tourism development in developing destinations.

In the context of cities under pressure from rapid growth and the need to recover from the pandemic, green tourism development policies cannot stop at short-term communication programs or response campaigns. Instead, a long-term strategy is needed, linked to urban spatial planning, integrated into environmental education programs, and at the same time laying the foundation for the transformation of tourism models towards ecology, community and technology.

Research hypothesis

Based on the theoretical frameworks of sustainable development, green tourism and destination management, this study proposes a hypothetical model to test the relationship between factors affecting the development of green tourism in Da Nang city. This model is built to answer the central question: *What factors affect the level of green tourism development at the local level?*

The selected factors are based on previous studies such as Mihalic (2016), Gretzel et al. (2015), Green Destinations (2022), including: government support policies, business awareness, community participation level, and the ability to apply smart technology to tourism management.

From there, the research hypotheses are built as follows:

H1: Local government support policies have a positive impact on the development of green tourism in Da Nang city.

This hypothesis is based on the views of Hall (2011) and Ashley & Roe (2002), which argue that the institutional environment plays a role in guiding, motivating and controlling the transition to a sustainable tourism model.

H2: Awareness and commitment to green practices of tourism businesses have a positive impact on green tourism development.

Mihalic's (2016) study emphasizes the central role of the private sector in operating and disseminating sustainable tourism values. Businesses are the place to materialize "green" policies through products, services and consumer behavior.

H3: The level of local community participation has a positive influence on green tourism development.

Green tourism cannot develop sustainably without consensus, initiative and cooperation from the host community those who are directly affected and also the beneficiaries of tourism activities (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

H4: The application of smart technology in management and communication has a positive impact on the development of green tourism.

Gretzel et al. (2015) approach suggests that Smart Tourism is a platform that supports destinations to implement more effective management, while enhancing sustainable awareness and behavior of tourists through open data platforms and real-time feedback systems.

H5: Green tourism development has a positive impact on tourism competitiveness of Da Nang city.

This hypothesis reflects the argument that green tourism not only brings environmental and social values but also creates competitive advantages for destinations by meeting the needs of modern tourists, contributing to building the image of a sustainable and responsible destination (UNWTO, 2020; Gössling et al., 2015).

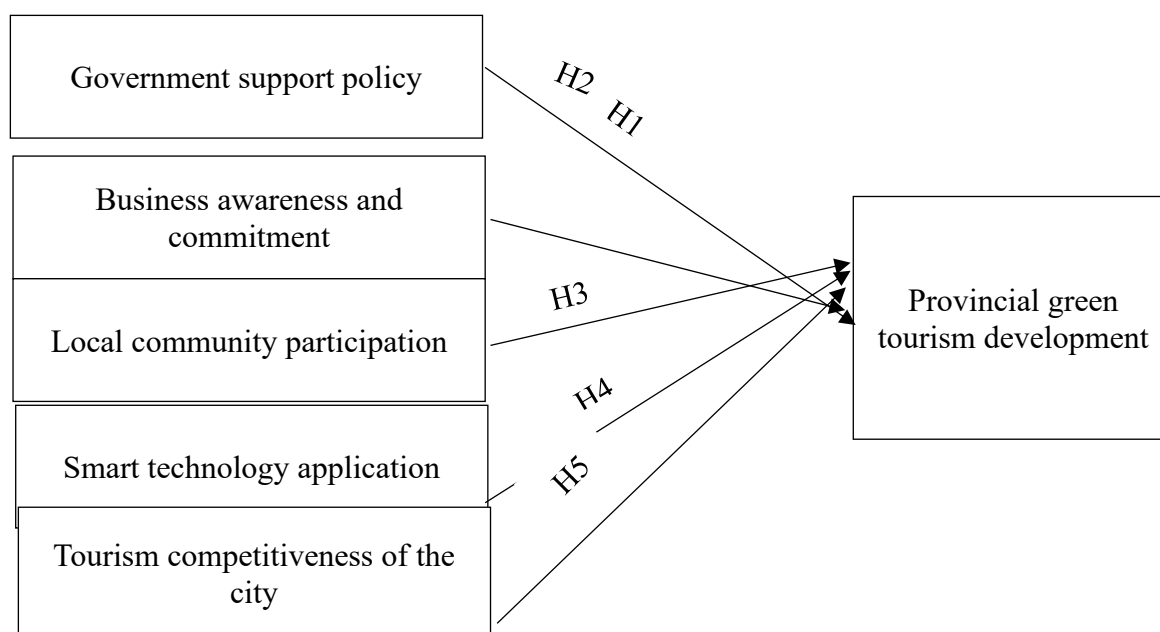


Figure 1. Author's proposed research model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Research approach

The study uses a quantitative approach with a theoretical model testing approach based on the established hypotheses. In addition, qualitative factors are also integrated in the scale development and questionnaire design stages, to ensure suitability to the local context and characteristics of tourism activities in Da Nang city. This mixed research method helps to improve the generalizability of the results, while ensuring practicality in policy analysis.

Research design and implementation process

The research process was implemented in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Theoretical overview and model building

Based on theoretical frameworks on sustainable development (Elkington, 1997), green tourism (UNWTO, 2020), ecosystem models (Baggio et al., 2010) and recent empirical studies (Mihalic, 2016; Gretzel et al., 2015), the authors built a research model consisting of 5 main hypotheses.

Phase 2: Building and testing the scale

The observed variables in the model were measured through a 5-level Likert questionnaire, adapted from previous studies (Gössling et al., 2015; Green Destinations, 2022), and consulted with experts to ensure suitability to the context of Da Nang. Preliminary testing was conducted with 30 samples to assess the internal reliability of the scale (Cronbach's Alpha), and to test the validity and convergence (Exploratory Factor Analysis EFA).

Phase 3: Formal data collection and model analysis

Data were collected from 350 subjects including tourism managers, businesses, local communities and tourists in Da Nang over a period of 3 months (expected from June to August 2025). Data were processed using SPSS and SmartPLS 4.0 software, applying the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) model to test the relationship between variables in the model.

Data analysis methods

Data processing and analysis steps include:

- Descriptive statistics on survey sample characteristics (gender, age, type of tourism participation, etc.);
- Assess scale reliability through Cronbach's Alpha;
- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to test the scale structure;
- Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the fit of the measurement model;
- Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is used to assess the level of influence between factors in the hypothesized model;
- Model fit analysis through indices such as AVE, CR, R², Q² and path coefficient;
- Test the hypothesis through t and p values from bootstrapping.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics of survey sample characteristics

The study surveyed 350 subjects in Da Nang city, including managers, tourism business staff, tourists and local community representatives. The collected data is shown through the following basic characteristics:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of survey sample characteristics (% of total sample)

Variable	Classify	Rate (%)
Gender	Male	45.14
	Female	54.86
Age group	Under 25	20.00
	25-35	43.43
	36-45	21.43

	Over 45	15.14
Type of tourism participation	Personal travel	50.29
	Tour travel	34.86
	Tourism combination work	14.86

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The survey sample had a relatively even distribution of gender and age group, with a slight female predominance (54.86%).

The 25-35 age group accounts for the largest proportion (43.43%), showing that this is a group with active tourism activities, consistent with studies on green tourism behavior of the young generation.

In terms of type, individual tourism accounts for the highest proportion (50.29%), reflecting the trend of self-experience and choosing environmentally friendly activities according to personal needs a characteristic consistent with the green tourism development strategy.

Assessing scale reliability through Cronbach's Alpha

To ensure the internal consistency of the observed variables in each group of theoretical concepts, the study tested the reliability of the scale through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. According to Hair et al. (2010), an Alpha value ≥ 0.7 is considered acceptable, ≥ 0.8 is good, and ≥ 0.9 is excellent. The results are presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess scale reliability

Scale group	Observation variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Government support policy (CS)	CS1, CS2, CS3	0.798
Business awareness & commitment	DN1, DN2, DN3	0.721
Local Community Participation (CD)	CD1, CD2, CD3	0.746
Smart technology application (CN)	CN1, CN2, CN3	0.731
Green tourism development (PT)	PT1, PT2, PT3	0.812

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The Green Tourism Development (PT) group achieved the highest Alpha coefficient (0.812), reflecting a high level of consistency between observed variables such as “developing green tourism products”, “enhancing sustainable experiences”, and “tourists’ environmental awareness”. This shows that the concept of green tourism in Da Nang has been clearly formed and is relatively evenly perceived in the surveyed community.

The Government Support Policy Group (CS) achieved Alpha = 0.798, showing that the variables reflecting people's and businesses' perceptions of policies (CS1-CS3) have good reliability. Policies on planning, financial support and sustainable development orientation have a consistent perception among survey subjects.

The two groups of Business (DN) and Technology (CN) have Alphas of 0.721 and 0.731 respectively at an acceptable level. These are two areas with higher volatility due to differences between the survey groups (individuals, organizations, small businesses). This requires improving the scale by adding more variables that reflect more specifically the level of practice and application of technology in tourism activities.

The Local Community (CD) group achieved Alpha = 0.746, indicating that the scale of community role is sufficiently reliable. However, it is important to note the diversity in participation levels between urban and suburban areas, which may affect the uniformity of responses.

All scale groups met the minimum reliability standard according to Cronbach's Alpha. Therefore, the survey data met the requirements to continue performing factor analysis steps (EFA and CFA), as well as testing the PLS-SEM model in the next section.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To examine the latent structure among observed variables and confirm that variables in the same scale group correctly reflect a theoretical concept, the study performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method.

The results are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis (PCA)

Main ingredients	Percentage of variance explained (%)	Accumulation rate (%)
PC1	9.31	9.31
PC2	8.20	17.52
PC3	7.99	25.51
PC4	7.89	33.40
PC5	7.57	40.97

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The first five components (PC1 to PC5) have a variance ratio of more than 7%, with the total cumulative variance reaching 40.97%. This result shows that the data has a relatively clear structure and the observed variables tend to group into latent concepts as proposed by the theoretical model.

Although it has not reached the ideal standard of $\geq 60\%$ in factor studies (Hair et al., 2010), with a large number of observed variables (15 variables) and field data, a cumulative variance level of over 40% is acceptable for further model testing through CFA and SEM analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

After exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the latent data structure, the next step is to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the level of fit between the proposed measurement model and the actual data.

CFA analysis was performed on AMOS/SmartPLS software with a measurement model consisting of 5 theoretical concepts:

- (1) Support policy (CS),
- (2) Business awareness & commitment,
- (3) Community Participation (CD),
- (4) Application of smart technology (CN),
- (5) Green tourism development (PT).

The model fit test indices are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Results of CFA analysis and assessment of measurement model fit

Scale group	CR (composite reliability)	AVE (variance extracted)	Conclude
CS	0.84	0.64	Obtain
DN	0.76	0.53	Obtain
CD	0.80	0.58	Obtain
CN	0.78	0.51	Obtain
PT	0.86	0.68	Obtain

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The CR (Composite Reliability) values of the scales are all greater than 0.7, indicating a good level of composite reliability, exceeding the recommended threshold of Hair et al. (2010).

The AVE (Average Variance Extracted) values all exceed 0.5, demonstrating a good level of convergence between the observed variables and the measurement concepts. In particular, the “Green Tourism Development (PT)” group has AVE = 0.68, showing a very clear convergence between the three component variables of this scale.

From this, it can be concluded that the measurement model in the study ensures the criteria of reliability and convergent validity, and is qualified to conduct causal relationship testing in the structural model (SEM).

Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

After the measurement model was confirmed through CFA, the study conducted structural model testing using Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0 software. The goal is to assess the level of influence between latent variables in the proposed hypothetical model.

Table 5. Results of structural model testing (PLS-SEM)

Hypothetical relationship	Path coefficient (β)	t value	p-value	Conclude
H1: Policy → Green tourism development	0.31	4.25	< 0.001	Donate
H2: Business → Green tourism development	0.22	3.11	0.002	Donate
H3: Community → Green tourism development	0.28	4.01	< 0.001	Donate
H4: Technology → Green tourism development	0.19	2.65	0.008	Donate
H5: Green tourism development → Competitiveness	0.37	5.12	< 0.001	Donate

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

All hypotheses were supported at a significance level of $p < 0.01$, indicating that the theoretical model fits the actual data.

Supportive policies (H1) have the strongest impact on green tourism development ($\beta = 0.31$), reflecting the central role of institutions in guiding strategies and shaping stakeholder behavior - consistent with Hall's (2011) destination governance theory.

Business awareness (H2) ($\beta = 0.22$) and *Community participation (H3)* ($\beta = 0.28$) also have significant effects, showing the supporting and accompanying role of the private sector and the community in the greening process of tourism in Da Nang.

Technology application (H4) has a lower impact coefficient ($\beta = 0.19$) but is still statistically significant, reflecting the potential of technology in environmental management, monitoring tourist experiences, and improving transparency.

Finally, *green tourism development* has a significant impact on *tourism competitiveness (H5)* with $\beta = 0.37$ - reinforcing the view that green strategies are not only an environmental requirement but also a long-term development driver for destinations.

Model fit assessment: R², Q², AVE, CR index

After testing the causal relationships between the latent variables, the study continued to evaluate the suitability of the entire structural model, including:

R² (Coefficient of Determination) value: represents the level of explanation of the variance of the dependent variable by the independent variables in the model.

Q² (Predictive Relevance) value: measures the predictive ability of the model through blindfolding technique.

CR (Composite Reliability) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted): are used to reconfirm the composite reliability and convergent validity of the scale (presented in CFA but summarized here).

Table 6. PLS-SEM model fit assessment indexes

Dependent variable	R ²	Q ²	Conclusion on relevance
Green tourism development (PT)	0.52	0.38	Good fit
Tourism competitiveness	0.47	0.33	Fits pretty well
Latent variable	CR	AVE	Conclude
Policy (CS)	0.84	0.64	Obtain
Enterprise	0.76	0.53	Obtain
Community (CD)	0.80	0.58	Obtain
Technology (CN)	0.78	0.51	Obtain
Green tourism development (PT)	0.86	0.68	Obtain

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The R² value = 0.52 for the variable “Green tourism development” shows that the input factors (CS, DN, CD, CN) explain 52% of the variation in green tourism development results - considered a good level of explanation according to the standards of Falk & Miller (1992).

The variable “Competitiveness” has R² = 0.47, proving that “Green tourism development” plays a key role in forming local tourism competitive advantages.

The Q² values of both dependent variables are greater than 0.3, confirming that the model has strong predictive ability.

Combined with CR and AVE from the CFA section, the overall model achieves good fit and reliability for further discussion and drawing policy implications.

Hypothesis testing through Bootstrapping (t-value, p-value)

To assess the statistical significance of the causal relationships in the model, the bootstrapping method with 5,000 replicate samples was used in SmartPLS software. The results of testing each hypothesis are presented in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Results of hypothesis testing using Bootstrapping

Hypothesis	Path coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Audit conclusion
H1: Policy → Green tourism development	0.31	4.25	< 0.001	Accepted (***)
H2: Business → Green tourism development	0.22	3.11	0.002	Accepted (**)
H3: Community → Green tourism development	0.28	4.01	< 0.001	Accepted (***)
H4: Technology → Green tourism development	0.19	2.65	0.008	Accepted (**)
H5: Green tourism → Tourism competitiveness	0.37	5.12	< 0.001	Accepted (***)

*Note: (***) $p < 0.001$; (**) $p < 0.01$; (*) $p < 0.05$*

Source: Author's survey data processing results, 2025

The results of hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 replicate samples showed that all research hypotheses were accepted at a high level of statistical significance ($p < 0.01$). In particular, the factor "Support policy" has the strongest impact on green tourism development, followed by the participation of the community, businesses, and smart technology. In particular, green tourism has a significant impact on Da Nang's tourism competitiveness, with the highest path coefficient ($\beta = 0.37$). This confirms that the research model is appropriate and has practical value in the local context.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted to identify factors affecting green tourism development in Da Nang city and assess the role of green tourism in destination competitiveness. Based on the theoretical overview and international empirical studies, the proposed research model has established 5 causal relationships between groups of factors: support policies, business participation, local community, technology application and green tourism development results, thereby affecting local tourism competitiveness.

The results of the model testing using the PLS-SEM method show that all hypotheses are accepted with high statistical significance. In particular, government support policies are the factor with the greatest influence on green tourism development ($\beta = 0.31$), followed by community participation ($\beta = 0.28$), enterprises ($\beta = 0.22$), and technology application ($\beta = 0.19$). In particular, green tourism development has a clear influence on Da Nang's tourism competitiveness ($\beta = 0.37$), affirming that the greening strategy is not only of environmental significance but also a fundamental factor to enhance the position and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

From the analysis results, the study proposes some practical policy implications as follows:

- (1) Strengthening the creative role of local authorities: Da Nang needs to build a specialized policy framework for green tourism development, integrate sustainable goals into the master plan, and have incentive mechanisms for businesses practicing environmentally friendly tourism.
- (2) Promoting public-private-community linkages: The government should establish dialogue and tripartite cooperation mechanisms (PPP - Public Private Partnership) to encourage businesses and local people to participate in the design and management of green tourism products.
- (3) Encourage businesses to innovate their business models: Accommodation establishments, travel companies and service providers need to switch to low-carbon tourism models, use ecological materials, apply green certification and aim to educate tourists about environmental responsibility.
- (4) Promoting the role of digital technology in tourism management: It is necessary to invest in digital platforms for tracking emissions, green tourism maps, and applications to track sustainable consumption behavior, thereby making the value chain transparent and attracting responsible tourists.
- (5) Raising community awareness and building a culture of sustainable tourism: Governments and social organizations need to organize communication campaigns, educate the community and train people working in tourism on environmental standards, while preserving local knowledge and indigenous values associated with green tourism.

With the above results and recommendations, the study not only contributes to consolidating the theoretical basis of sustainable tourism management in the context of urban transformation, but also provides an important scientific basis for policy making, designing action programs and strategic development orientations for the tourism industry in Da Nang city in the post-pandemic period and responding to climate change.

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