

Governance and Community Perceptions in Ly Son Island and Sa Huynh Beach Area, Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam

Phan Thanh Vinh^{1*}

¹University of Finance -Marketing, Vietnam

*Corresponding Author Email: phanvinh@ufm.edu.vn

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Abstract: Sustainable tourism development necessitates adaptive governance frameworks that prioritize both the perceptions and active engagement of local communities. This study investigates the perspectives of long-term residents in two emerging coastal destinations in Quang Ngai province—Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area—with regard to the perceived impacts of tourism. Data were collected from a randomly selected sample of 300 residents using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated statistically significant differences between the two sites. Respondents in Ly Son Island showed a more explicit awareness of both the positive outcomes of tourism (e.g., job creation, infrastructure development) and its adverse effects (e.g., environmental degradation, overcrowding). Conversely, residents in the Sa Huynh Beach Area expressed more cautious views, likely reflecting the nascent stage of tourism development in the locality. Drawing on these findings, the study recommends destination-specific governance strategies: for Ly Son Island, a more regulated development model with enhanced mechanisms for community consultation is suggested; for the Sa Huynh Beach Area, efforts should center on capacity building and the promotion of community-based tourism initiatives.

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Introduction

Understanding residents' perceptions of tourism development remains central to sustainable destination management. While early tourism studies emphasized economic gains and community uplift, subsequent research has highlighted the complex social and environmental repercussions of unchecked growth. Contemporary frameworks now stress the importance of community well-being, place attachment, and participatory governance in promoting sustainable tourism outcomes.

Emerging literature points to the critical role of governance mechanisms and local engagement in shaping residents' attitudes toward tourism. Studies emphasize that perceived empowerment, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation significantly influence public support, particularly in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas. Yet, empirical research remains limited in emerging destinations locations experiencing rapid tourism growth alongside governance and institutional constraints.

Vietnam's tourism landscape exemplifies these dynamics. In Quang Ngai province, Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area are gaining prominence due to their natural beauty and cultural

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heritage. However, their tourism development paths diverge: Ly Son has undergone significant infrastructure growth and tourist inflow, whereas Sa Huynh remains at an earlier developmental stage. These contrasting trajectories present a unique opportunity to examine how communities perceive tourism impacts and how governance adapts accordingly.

This study assesses and compares local perceptions of tourism in Ly Son and Sa Huynh, exploring how differing levels of tourism maturity affect attitudes toward benefits, challenges, and governance effectiveness. Drawing on survey data from 300 residents, it contributes to the discourse on adaptive, community-sensitive governance models in coastal and island destinations. By employing a comparative approach, this research offers insights into how resident perspectives can inform more inclusive and context-appropriate tourism policies.

The Role of Stakeholders in Destination Governance

As tourism systems increasingly embrace sustainable and inclusive paradigms, destination governance has shifted from a traditionally centralized, state-led model to a more dynamic and participatory approach. Contemporary governance frameworks emphasize multidimensional stakeholder interaction, where decision-making is shaped through continuous collaboration among local governments, private enterprises, resident communities, civil society organizations, and tourists (Bramwell & Lane, 2011).

These stakeholders are no longer seen as discrete entities but as interdependent actors jointly producing strategic visions, coordination mechanisms, and accountability structures for tourism development. Local governments serve as institutional coordinators, responsible for regulatory design, transparency, and strategic planning. The private sector, including tourism operators and investors, functions as an engine of economic activity and innovation but is increasingly held accountable for ethical conduct and sustainable practices (Bregoli et al., 2021). Resident communities, being the most directly affected by tourism, are central to preserving cultural identity, safeguarding heritage, and shaping authentic tourist experiences. Civil society organizations and grassroots groups act as intermediaries, fostering inclusive dialogue and promoting the voices of marginalized groups in governance processes (Hall, 2011).

Tourists, previously peripheral in governance discourse, now exert substantial influence through ethical consumption and support for sustainable destinations. Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, adapted by Bramwell and Lane (2011) to the tourism domain, underlines that effective governance is less about hierarchical control and more about equitable power-sharing, trust-building, and local consensus. Within this model, communities are both beneficiaries and co-creators of tourism trajectories.

Research consistently finds that inclusive governance mechanisms—characterized by transparent communication, codified stakeholder roles, and participatory monitoring—are more likely to produce resilient, equitable, and socially accepted outcomes (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Institutionalizing such stakeholder collaboration enhances not only governance legitimacy but also a destination's capacity to respond to internal and external pressures.

Residents' Perceptions of Sustainable Destination Development

Understanding residents' perceptions is fundamental to achieving sustainable destination development. Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021), in a comprehensive systematic review of 88 peer-reviewed studies, identified three principal dimensions influencing residents' support for sustainable tourism: community participation, perceived impacts, and trust in governance. Their findings

underscore that meaningful involvement in tourism decision-making fosters empowerment and ownership, both of which are essential to sustaining long-term community support.

The review also emphasizes the mediating roles of constructs such as place attachment, perceived benefits, and social capital in shaping governance outcomes. However, it also highlights a persistent lack of conceptual clarity and fragmentation in how sustainable tourism governance is defined and applied. The authors call for more coherent theoretical frameworks and encourage future research into emerging topics such as smart governance and post-pandemic adaptive strategies.

The foundational definition of sustainable tourism, as articulated by the UNWTO and UNEP, refers to tourism that “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). This definition reinforces the importance of achieving balance across economic viability, environmental protection, and social equity.

In 2021, the UNWTO further elaborated the concept by introducing the notion of intergenerational responsibility emphasizing the need to preserve cultural, environmental, and economic values for future generations while ensuring equitable benefit distribution and safeguarding cultural authenticity.

Community engagement remains a central tenet of sustainable tourism, given that residents are the primary recipients of tourism’s benefits and burdens. Integrating local perspectives into tourism planning enhances policy legitimacy and implementation effectiveness, especially under community-based development models (Aas et al., 2005). Active resident participation fosters social consensus, strengthens local resilience, and enhances a destination’s adaptive capacity (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012).

While tourism has proven effective in promoting employment, investment, and infrastructure improvements, recent scholarship acknowledges growing public sensitivity to its negative externalities including overtourism, congestion, and cultural commodification (Milano et al., 2019). In response, scholars advocate for participatory governance that aligns tourism strategies with local values and sustainability principles (Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2019).

Socially, tourism presents both opportunities and challenges. It can strengthen community pride and improve public services, but rapid growth may also generate insecurity, privacy loss, and disruption of daily life. Environmentally, residents are often first to recognize ecological strain. Although initiatives like ecotourism are generally welcomed, unregulated growth has been linked to pollution, biodiversity loss, and landscape degradation (Gössling & Hall, 2006).

Thus, integrating local communities into governance is not merely normative but essential. Transparent communication, institutionalized feedback mechanisms, and genuine participation in planning and monitoring are critical to ensuring socially legitimate, environmentally responsible, and economically balanced tourism development.

Research Method

To assess residents’ perceptions of tourism-induced impacts, a structured questionnaire incorporating a four-point Likert scale was administered. Respondents rated their level of agreement with a series of statements addressing the economic, social, and environmental effects of tourism, using a scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly agree”) to 4 (“Strongly disagree”). This measurement framework enabled the quantification of subjective attitudes, providing a standardized metric for evaluating the degree of local support or concern regarding tourism development.

The survey was conducted across two study sites in Quang Ngai province: Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area. Participants were selected from long-term residents, with the sampling design structured to reflect demographic diversity in terms of gender, age, and occupational status. A total of 300 valid responses were collected, evenly divided between the two locations (150 from each site). Random sampling was employed within residential clusters to minimize selection bias and enhance the external validity of the findings.

Descriptive statistical methods were used for data analysis. Frequency distributions, measures of central tendency (mean values), and measures of variability (standard deviations and variances) were calculated to summarize and interpret resident attitudes. This analytical approach facilitated both intra-site assessments and comparative evaluations between the two destinations.

The resulting dataset offers empirically grounded insights into local perceptions of tourism impacts and governance efficacy. These findings provide a valuable evidence base for designing context-sensitive tourism policies that prioritize community engagement, address site-specific concerns, and promote sustainable development pathways tailored to the distinct characteristics of each locality.

Result and Discussion

Results

Destination Management in Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area

Within Quang Ngai Province, Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area are increasingly recognized as emerging tourism destinations, complementing traditional economic activities such as agriculture and fisheries. Ly Son's development trajectory has been shaped by its distinctive volcanic landscape and maritime heritage, with tourism gaining momentum since the early 2000s alongside its well-known garlic cultivation and offshore fishing industries. In contrast, the Sa Huynh Beach Area associated with the ancient Sa Huynh archaeological culture (c. 1000 BCE–200 CE) and traditional salt production has witnessed notable tourism growth since the 2010s, driven by cultural and coastal tourism.

At the provincial level, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Quang Ngai is responsible for overarching tourism policy, strategic planning, and interjurisdictional coordination. On Ly Son Island, the Division of Culture and Information administers district-level tourism policy, organizes promotional events, and oversees cultural preservation. In the Sa Huynh Beach Area, governance is managed by the People's Committee of Duc Pho Town through specialized units, particularly the Division of Culture and Information, which oversees infrastructure development, marketing, and the promotion of CBT.

While governance structures remain largely state-led, community participation has gained importance, particularly in Sa Huynh. A notable example is the "Conservation of Traditional Salt Fields" project jointly supported by UNDP and GEF which integrates environmental education, cultural revitalization, and experiential tourism development. Go Co Village exemplifies this approach, offering visitors immersive experiences in pottery, salt-making, culinary heritage, and spiritual practices. In Ly Son, community involvement is more informal, with grassroots efforts such as coral reef conservation and the Ly Son Garlic Tourism Festival enhancing cultural pride and environmental awareness.

Despite these initiatives, differences in participatory governance persist. In Sa Huynh, approximately 50% of residents engage in organized cultural tourism events, reflecting a more

structured and institutionalized model of community involvement. Conversely, Ly Son's approach remains predominantly event-driven and informal, limiting resident influence in decision-making processes and diminishing the perceived legitimacy of governance efforts.

Multilevel coordination supports tourism development in both destinations. While the provincial department formulates broad strategic frameworks and facilitates partnerships, local authorities adapt these to contextual needs, manage cultural assets, and implement CBT initiatives. Key promotional strategies include festival organization, media engagement, and destination branding campaigns aimed at enhancing regional visibility.

Quang Ngai's tourism vision positions Ly Son as a marine ecotourism hub and Sa Huynh as a cultural tourism destination. Infrastructure upgrades including coastal roads, seaports, and passenger terminals are prioritized alongside incentives for private sector investment in cultural preservation. Heritage programs supported by international organizations are increasingly embedded in the province's sustainable tourism strategy.

Nonetheless, substantive and equitable community participation remains limited. In both destinations, particularly among marginalized groups such as farmers and fishers, formal mechanisms for stakeholder engagement are underdeveloped. While Sa Huynh has advanced participatory governance to a degree, issues of inclusivity, representation, and implementation persist. In Ly Son, reliance on informal channels further restricts local input into governance processes.

These structural discrepancies significantly influence residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and shape their support for sustainability initiatives such as marine conservation and heritage preservation. Although both locations have adopted elements of community-based and rural tourism, institutional, economic, and organizational barriers continue to hinder the full integration of local voices. At present, most community perspectives are mediated through government actors rather than expressed via formal participatory frameworks.

Bridging the gap between policy rhetoric and governance practice is thus imperative. Empowering residents as co-decision makers is not only essential for improving governance legitimacy but also for leveraging the transformative potential of communities in advancing inclusive and sustainable tourism development.

Residents' Perceptions of the Economic Impacts of Tourism

In Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area two strategically significant destinations within Quang Ngai Province resident perceptions of tourism's economic impacts reflect a nuanced blend of optimism and apprehension. A substantial proportion of respondents view tourism as a positive force for local economic transformation, citing its role in expanding employment opportunities across accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation, and tour operations. Furthermore, tourism-induced growth has spurred public and private investment in infrastructure and services, thereby contributing to broader processes of economic diversification and modernization.

However, these perceived benefits are tempered by growing concerns over socio-economic vulnerabilities associated with tourism-driven development. Residents frequently report increases in the cost of living, particularly within high-traffic tourist zones, where inflationary pressures affect essential goods and services. In addition, employment in the tourism sector is often seasonal and precarious, leaving workers exposed to fluctuations in demand and external shocks such as extreme weather or economic downturns.

Despite these concerns, the majority of residents associate tourism with improved living standards, reflecting a cautiously optimistic outlook on its developmental potential. These

perceptions are instrumental in gauging the extent of social consensus around local tourism policies and offer critical insights for governance. They highlight the importance of formulating context-sensitive strategies that not only harness economic benefits but also safeguard community welfare, promote employment stability, and enhance socio-economic resilience.

By integrating these resident perspectives into tourism planning, local authorities can better align economic development objectives with the lived realities and aspirations of host communities, thereby fostering more inclusive and sustainable tourism outcomes

Table 1. Residents’ perceptions of the economic impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island and Sa Huynh Beach Area.

The economic impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island	Value	The economic impacts of tourism in Sa Huynh Beach Area	Value
New employment possibilities	1.45	New employment possibilities	1.35
Promote investment	1.75	Promote investment	1.65
Rising cost of living	1.55	Rising cost of living	1.50
The instability of seasonal employment	2.50	The instability of seasonal employment	2.35
Residents’ standard of living has improved	3.00	Residents’ standard of living has improved	2.85

Survey results indicate that residents of both Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area generally maintain favorable perceptions of tourism’s economic contributions. The indicator “New employment opportunities” received the lowest mean scores 1.45 in Ly Son and 1.35 in Sa Huynh on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly agree, 4 = Strongly disagree), signaling strong agreement regarding tourism’s role in job creation. This finding is consistent with observable employment restructuring in both destinations, particularly in service-oriented sectors such as accommodation, food and beverage, transport, and tour operations.

Similarly, the statement “Promotes investment” was positively rated, with average scores of 1.75 in Ly Son and 1.65 in Sa Huynh. These results suggest broad community acknowledgment of tourism’s capacity to stimulate investment in physical infrastructure and auxiliary services, thereby acting as a catalyst for broader local economic development.

However, concerns about the precarity of tourism-related employment were also evident. The indicator “Instability of seasonal employment” yielded higher average scores of 2.50 in Ly Son and 2.35 in Sa Huynh, reflecting apprehension about the volatility of income and job security due to seasonal fluctuations and external vulnerabilities. These perceptions underscore the structural challenges associated with tourism-led labor markets.

Furthermore, the indicator “Rising cost of living” was moderately rated (1.55 in Ly Son and 1.50 in Sa Huynh), suggesting resident awareness of inflationary pressures particularly concerning essential goods and services—that are often attributed to increased tourism demand.

Interestingly, the item “Improvement in residents’ standard of living” received the highest mean values (3.00 in Ly Son and 2.85 in Sa Huynh), indicating a comparatively lower level of agreement. While tourism is recognized for stimulating economic activity, its equitable and tangible contribution to household welfare remains less definitive from the perspective of residents.

In summary, residents across both sites perceive tourism as a key driver of economic growth, particularly through job creation and investment attraction. Nonetheless, significant concerns remain regarding employment sustainability, income volatility, and inflation. These findings highlight the importance of designing inclusive and resilient economic policies that mitigate vulnerabilities and

ensure the equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Integrating community feedback into policymaking processes is essential to fostering social consensus and enhancing the long-term sustainability of tourism development in Quang Ngai Province.

Residents' Perceptions of the Social Impacts of Tourism

Residents of Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area exhibit a nuanced understanding of the social consequences of tourism, acknowledging both its beneficial contributions and the socio-cultural challenges accompanying destination development. A significant portion of respondents emphasized that tourism has facilitated tangible improvements in public infrastructure and community amenities. Enhancements such as renovated cultural centers, upgraded road systems, and improved communal spaces were cited as mutually beneficial assets serving both tourists and local residents.

Tourism is also perceived as a driver of cultural revitalization and collective identity. Many residents noted that increased visitor interest has elevated the visibility of local traditions, history, and heritage. In particular, tourism has contributed to the preservation and in some cases, revival of long-declining cultural practices such as traditional crafts, festivals, and regional cuisine. These processes are viewed as reinforcing cultural continuity and strengthening intergenerational ties within the community.

Nevertheless, the data also reveal growing concerns about negative social externalities, particularly during peak tourism periods. Key challenges identified by respondents include reduced personal privacy, overcrowding in residential areas, and increased pressure on public order and safety. These issues are perceived to strain existing infrastructure and disrupt daily life, especially in densely populated zones and core tourist hubs.

These findings highlight the need for proactive, inclusive approaches to social governance in tourism development. Balancing visitor satisfaction with host community well-being requires more than infrastructure investment; it necessitates policies that prioritize civic order, cultural integrity, and community resilience. Institutionalizing community participation in the design, regulation, and oversight of tourism activities is essential to ensuring that tourism acts as a force for social cohesion rather than exacerbating social strain.

Table 2. Residents' perceptions of the social impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island and Sa Huynh Beach Area.

The social impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island	Value	The social impacts of tourism in Sa Huynh Beach Area	Value
Improvement of cultural infrastructure and community facilities	1.75	Improvement of cultural infrastructure and community facilities	1.60
Increased local pride and community recognition	1.85	Increased local pride and community recognition	1.70
Preservation of customs, traditional crafts and cultural heritage	2.25	Preservation of customs, traditional crafts and cultural heritage	2.10
Increase in public security issues during peak tourist seasons	3.51	Increase in public security issues during peak tourist seasons	3.40
Loss of privacy and overcrowding of living spaces	2.80	Loss of privacy and overcrowding of living spaces	2.90

Survey data from Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area indicate that residents generally perceive the social impacts of tourism positively, though important reservations remain, particularly during periods of high visitation.

Regarding perceived benefits, respondents in both communities expressed strong agreement with the idea that tourism contributes to social development. In Sa Huynh, the indicator “improvement of cultural infrastructure and community facilities” received an average score of 1.60, and “enhancement of local pride” averaged 1.70. These were slightly more favorable than the corresponding scores in Ly Son (1.75 and 1.85, respectively), suggesting that Sa Huynh’s emphasis on community-based tourism and heritage promotion has fostered greater optimism regarding tourism’s societal contributions. These findings also indicate that residents increasingly regard tourism not only as an economic driver but also as a catalyst for cultural revitalization and collective empowerment.

However, perceptions were less favorable when evaluating “preservation of customs, traditional crafts, and cultural heritage.” With mean scores of 2.25 in Ly Son and 2.10 in Sa Huynh, the data reflect moderate skepticism concerning the efficacy of current heritage conservation efforts. This may be attributed to limited community involvement in heritage initiatives, perceived superficiality of preservation programs, or apprehensions about the commodification of cultural practices.

Concerns about negative social externalities were also prominent. The indicator “increase in public security issues during peak tourism seasons” scored 3.51 in Ly Son and 3.40 in Sa Huynh—among the highest in the survey—signaling widespread anxiety over overcrowding, traffic congestion, and diminished public order. These perceptions likely stem from infrastructure strain and the limited capacity of local governance to manage surges in tourist activity.

In a similar vein, the indicator “loss of privacy and overcrowding of living spaces” received high average ratings: 2.80 in Ly Son and 2.90 in Sa Huynh. These findings reflect concerns over spatial intrusion and reduced residential quality of life, particularly acute in geographically constrained coastal and island communities where tourism growth intensifies competition over limited public and private space.

In summary, while tourism is recognized for its potential to strengthen cultural identity and improve community infrastructure, residents remain concerned about social disruptions, safety, and privacy. These insights underscore the need for integrated, community-informed tourism management strategies. Priority policy measures should include regulating visitor flows, investing in infrastructure upgrades, and institutionalizing community participation in tourism planning. Such approaches are vital for ensuring socially sustainable development and preserving the integrity of host communities in both Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area.

Residents’ Perceptions of the Environmental Impact of Tourism

Residents of Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area exhibit a growing awareness of the environmental consequences associated with rapid tourism development. While the tourism sector is broadly acknowledged as a contributor to economic and infrastructural gains, these perceived benefits are increasingly counterbalanced by concerns over environmental degradation, particularly during peak visitation periods. Local perceptions serve as critical early indicators of the sustainability challenges posed by unmanaged or poorly regulated tourism expansion.

On Ly Son Island, which is home to ecologically sensitive ecosystems such as coral reefs and coastal wetlands, residents have expressed strong apprehension about the pressure tourism places on natural resources. Reported concerns include noise pollution, wastewater discharge from hospitality

facilities, and vehicular emissions resulting from increased transport activity. These stressors are believed to contribute not only to ecological deterioration but also to diminished residential quality of life.

In the Sa Huynh Beach Area, environmental concerns are largely centered on the encroachment of tourism-related infrastructure onto agricultural lands, particularly along the coastal fringe. Additionally, the overuse of public infrastructure such as roads, parking areas, and communal spaces during high-demand periods raises questions about the area’s carrying capacity and the long-term viability of its tourism development model.

These perceptions highlight a growing sense of environmental stewardship among local populations and reveal a latent capacity for informal environmental monitoring at the community level. As such, they provide a valuable empirical foundation for shaping context-sensitive governance frameworks. Integrating resident perspectives into tourism planning processes is essential for developing adaptive policies that promote environmental sustainability while accommodating socio-economic development.

Responsive and participatory governance strategies that leverage local knowledge can help balance tourism growth with the preservation of ecological integrity. In both Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area, aligning tourism development with environmental limits is not only desirable but imperative for ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of these coastal destinations.

Table 3. Residents’ perceptions of the environmental impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area.

The environmental impacts of tourism in Ly Son Island	Value	The environmental impacts of tourism in Sa Huynh Beach Area	Value
Pressure on the protection of natural resources (Coral reefs, Coastal farmland)	1.95	Pressure on the protection of natural resources (Coral reefs, Coastal farmland)	2.10
Noise, water, and air pollution caused by tourism activities	2.50	Noise, water, and air pollution caused by tourism activities	2.40
Overload of parking facilities and local transportation infrastructure	2.75	Overload of parking facilities and local transportation infrastructure	2.60
Construction expansion altering the natural landscape	3.20	Construction expansion altering the natural landscape	3.10
Excessive tourist numbers placing pressure on the environment and living spaces	3.85	Excessive tourist numbers placing pressure on the environment and living spaces	3.70

Survey findings from Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area reveal a relatively high level of environmental awareness among residents regarding the impacts of tourism. While both communities express concern over tourism-induced environmental pressures, residents of Ly Son Island demonstrated slightly heightened sensitivity, likely reflecting the island’s more fragile ecosystems and rapid development trajectory.

The indicator “pressure on natural resource protection” received a lower mean score in Ly Son (M = 1.95) than in Sa Huynh (M = 2.10), indicating greater agreement among Ly Son respondents that tourism is contributing to the depletion of natural assets. This is consistent with the ecological vulnerabilities observed on the island, including coral reef degradation, coastline erosion, and shrinking agricultural land due to urban expansion.

Both communities identified pollution—including noise, water, and air pollution—as a pressing concern. Mean scores were 2.50 in Ly Son and 2.40 in Sa Huynh, reflecting moderate agreement that unregulated tourism services, such as transport systems and accommodation facilities, are generating

negative externalities. Additionally, the indicator “infrastructure strain” yielded relatively high scores ($M = 2.75$ in Ly Son; $M = 2.60$ in Sa Huynh), underscoring growing dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of existing facilities, particularly in terms of parking, public transport, and shared utilities. These strains are symptomatic of uneven public investment and insufficient planning in response to increased tourist volumes.

Of particular concern were two indicators reflecting strong resident dissatisfaction with current tourism governance: “construction expansion altering the natural landscape” ($M = 3.20$ in Ly Son; $M = 3.10$ in Sa Huynh) and “excessive tourist numbers placing pressure on the environment and living spaces” ($M = 3.85$ in Ly Son; $M = 3.70$ in Sa Huynh). These findings suggest a growing perception that tourism growth is unregulated and spatially intrusive, leading to landscape degradation, environmental imbalances, and stress on local ecosystems and residential spaces.

In summary, the data highlight an emerging consensus within both communities about the environmental limits of current tourism development. Residents express a clear need for stronger environmental safeguards, including regulatory frameworks that restrict overdevelopment, capacity-based tourism planning to manage visitor flows, and inclusive governance structures that incorporate community feedback into environmental management.

These insights emphasize the importance of integrating environmental considerations into destination management. Proactive planning—grounded in ecological carrying capacities and informed by grassroots perspectives—is essential for mitigating long-term environmental risks and ensuring the sustainability of tourism in both Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area.

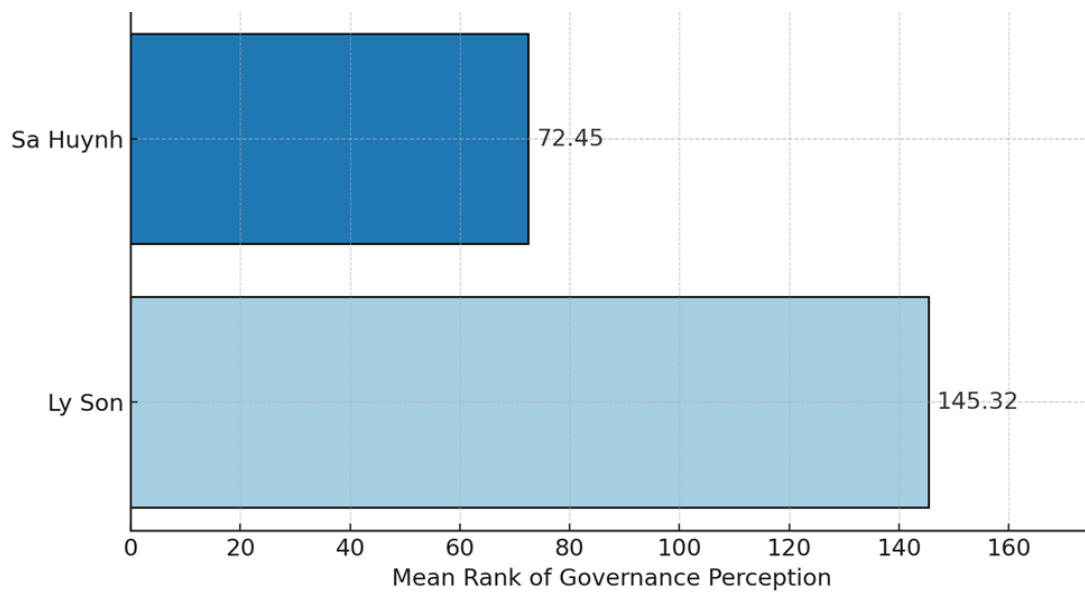
Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

To assess whether statistically significant differences exist in residents’ perceptions of tourism’s positive impacts between Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted. This non-parametric method was selected due to the ordinal nature of the survey data derived from a four-point Likert scale and the observed non-normal distribution of responses.

The Kruskal Wallis test offers a robust analytical framework for comparing independent samples without assuming homogeneity of variance or normality conditions often violated in community perception studies. Its application in this context enhances the statistical rigor of the analysis and strengthens the validity of cross-site comparisons.

Preliminary results indicate that the test successfully identified statistically significant perceptual differences across several key indicators of tourism’s economic, social, and environmental impacts. These differences suggest that residents in Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area evaluate the outcomes of tourism development through distinct experiential lenses shaped by local conditions, exposure levels, and governance structures.

The insights generated from the Kruskal Wallis analysis provide empirical grounding for the recognition of place-based variation in community sentiment. Such differentiation is critical for informing context-sensitive tourism governance, enabling policymakers to tailor strategies that address the unique aspirations, concerns, and environmental constraints of each destination. Ultimately, this statistical approach supports the formulation of more equitable and responsive tourism development frameworks that are aligned with localized community realities:



Kruskal-Wallis H = 88.765, p = 0.003 (statistically significant)

Figure 1. Kruskal-Wallis H test of perceived positive tourism impacts in Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area.

The Kruskal Wallis H test revealed a statistically significant difference in residents' perceptions of tourism impacts between Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area ($\chi^2 = 88.765$, $p = 0.003$). Respondents from Ly Son Island demonstrated a higher mean rank (145.32) compared to those from Sa Huynh (72.45), indicating greater perceptual sensitivity to both the positive and negative dimensions of tourism development.

This perceptual divergence aligns closely with the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model (Butler, 1980), which posits that resident attitudes evolve in relation to the stage of tourism development. Ly Son, having experienced rapid tourism expansion, is characterized by visible changes in land use, infrastructure, and community livelihood patterns. Household participation in tourism-related activities such as homestays, cultural festivals, and experiential tours has increased significantly. Consequently, residents exhibit heightened awareness not only of the sector's economic benefits (e.g., employment, income diversification, and infrastructure improvement) but also of its adverse effects, including environmental degradation, traffic congestion, and pressure on public services.

In contrast, the Sa Huynh Beach Area remains in the early stages of tourism development, with comparatively limited infrastructure and lower tourist volumes. Residents report more neutral or cautiously optimistic perceptions, reflecting limited direct engagement with tourism and minimal exposure to its externalities. These findings support prior research by Hall and Gössling (2016), who emphasized the influence of destination maturity on community response mechanisms.

From a governance perspective, this disparity underscores the need for differentiated policy approaches. In more mature destinations like Ly Son, where awareness and impact are pronounced, governance efforts should prioritize the institutionalization of participatory mechanisms. These may include structured community forums, feedback loops, and co-created tourism policies aligned with

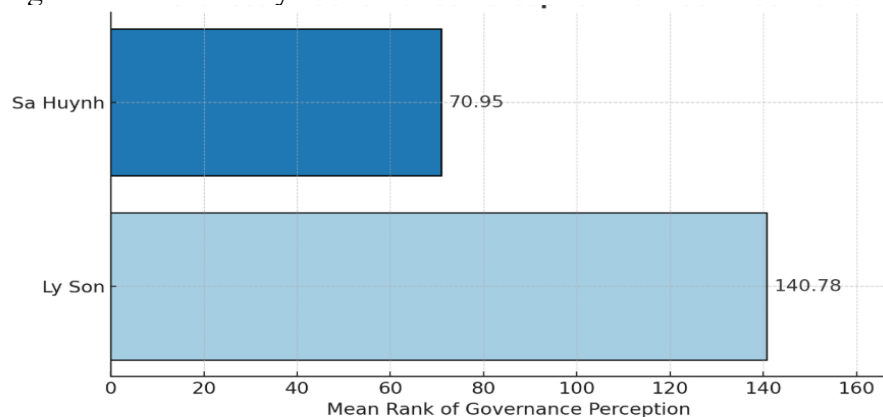
the island’s social carrying capacity and sustainability goals. Regular monitoring of social impacts and stakeholder sentiments can further enhance adaptive governance.

Conversely, in less-developed destinations such as Sa Huynh, emphasis should be placed on capacity building and stakeholder preparedness. This includes awareness-raising, sustainable tourism education, and the gradual implementation of community-based tourism models to support informed participation as tourism intensifies.

Importantly, the study highlights that residents’ perceptions are not merely reactive, but serve as proactive indicators of tourism’s developmental trajectory and governance efficacy. Their insights are critical inputs for planning, policy prioritization, and the design of interventions tailored to specific stages of tourism evolution.

Concerns related to public safety, privacy, and social disruption during peak visitation periods, particularly in Ly Son, further illustrate the complex social pressures associated with tourism. These highlight the duality of tourism as both a driver of local development and a potential source of socio-environmental strain.

Conversely, tourism policy must be strategically calibrated to achieve a delicate balance: fostering economic growth while safeguarding the environmental and cultural values of host communities. Failure to address community concerns risks undermining local support and, ultimately, the long-term sustainability and resilience of both destinations.



Kruskal–Wallis H = 95.432, p = 0.001 (statistically significant)

Figure 2. Kruskal–Wallis Test of Perceived Negative Tourism Impacts in Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area.

The results of the Kruskal Wallis H test revealed a statistically significant difference in residents’ perceptions of tourism’s negative impacts between Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area ($\chi^2 = 95.432, p = 0.001$). Residents of Ly Son exhibited a considerably higher level of concern, with a mean rank of 140.78, compared to 70.95 in Sa Huynh. This outcome reflects a pronounced sensitivity to tourism-induced challenges among Ly Son residents, shaped by their direct and sustained exposure to the socio-environmental consequences of accelerated tourism development.

Ly Son Island’s elevated awareness is attributable to its ongoing transition into a mass tourism phase, during which the rapid increase in tourist arrivals has outstripped infrastructure capacity and overwhelmed local governance systems. Residents have reported multiple adverse effects, including waste accumulation, untreated wastewater discharge, air and noise pollution, traffic congestion, and overcrowding of communal and cultural spaces. These developments represent the tangible costs of

poorly regulated tourism growth, manifesting not only in environmental degradation but also in disruptions to daily life and social cohesion.

Conversely, the Sa Huynh Beach Area, where tourism is still in an early stage of development, shows significantly lower levels of perceived negative impact. This likely reflects the community's limited direct exposure to intensive tourism and a prevailing sense of economic optimism. However, the divergence in perceptions between the two destinations serves as a critical early warning: without anticipatory governance, Sa Huynh may follow Ly Son's trajectory, eventually confronting similar environmental pressures and social strain.

These findings reinforce the necessity of adopting context-sensitive and phase-appropriate governance models. In destinations like Ly Son Island where signs of overtourism are already evident growth management strategies are urgently needed. These should include: Carrying capacity assessments and thresholds; Investments in environmental infrastructure and waste management; Designation of eco-cultural buffer zones to protect sensitive ecosystems and heritage assets

Moreover, institutionalizing community engagement mechanisms, such as routine social impact assessments and structured dialogue platforms, can facilitate adaptive governance and strengthen resilience.

In emerging destinations like the Sa Huynh Beach Area, the current low-impact context presents an opportunity for preventive governance. Strategic tools such as community-based planning, tourism education, and environmental monitoring can help build local capacity and support measured development. Early integration of these mechanisms ensures that tourism evolves in a manner that is economically beneficial, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable.

Ultimately, the study's findings affirm that resident perceptions function not merely as passive reflections, but as active indicators of tourism sustainability and governance effectiveness. Their inclusion in policy formulation and destination planning is essential for anticipating challenges, mitigating risks, and fostering long-term destination resilience.

Conclusion

Overview of Community Perceptions

The empirical findings of this study provide valuable insights into how residents of Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area perceive tourism's multifaceted impacts. Overall, residents in both locations recognize tourism as a catalyst for economic development, social revitalization, and infrastructure improvement. However, these perceived benefits are tempered by mounting concerns over environmental degradation, social disruption, and governance deficits particularly in the more mature tourism setting of Ly Son Island.

These patterns confirm the non-linear and contextual nature of community perceptions, aligning with previous literature that emphasizes the dynamic relationship between tourism development and resident attitudes (Gursoy et al., 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). They also validate the relevance of the TALC model (Butler, 1980), which suggests that community support tends to shift from enthusiasm to skepticism as tourism intensifies.

Economic Perceptions and Development Expectations

The data indicate a strong level of agreement among residents regarding the economic benefits of tourism—particularly in job creation and investment attraction. This aligns with global research recognizing tourism as a driver of economic diversification and rural revitalization (Sharpley, 2002). However, concerns around seasonal employment instability and inflationary pressures point to the

fragility of tourism-reliant economies, especially in island and coastal contexts. These findings underscore the need for inclusive economic strategies that not only maximize benefits but also mitigate vulnerability through employment protection, diversification, and equitable distribution of tourism revenues.

Social Perceptions and Community Well-being

Tourism is widely perceived as a source of cultural pride and social cohesion, with many residents acknowledging its role in revitalizing festivals, traditional crafts, and culinary heritage. Notably, Sa Huynh residents rated these impacts more positively, reflecting stronger alignment with structured CBT initiatives.

However, significant concerns emerged around public security, loss of privacy, and overcrowding, particularly in Ly Son. These perceptions highlight the social costs of overtourism, which can undermine residents' quality of life and erode social support for tourism development. They also indicate that social carrying capacity must be a core component of tourism planning, especially in destinations experiencing rapid growth.

Environmental Concerns and Governance Implications

Environmental concerns were especially acute in Ly Son Island, where residents cited issues such as waste accumulation, noise pollution, and infrastructure strain. The high scores for negative indicators such as “construction expansion” and “tourist overcrowding” signal a loss of ecological balance and dissatisfaction with unregulated development. In Sa Huynh, while environmental awareness was present, the impacts were perceived to be less severe, suggesting a window of opportunity for preventive governance.

These findings reinforce the notion that communities are informal yet effective monitors of environmental change. Their feedback should be institutionalized into adaptive governance frameworks, including environmental impact assessments, zoning regulations, and sustainable infrastructure planning.

Significance of Kruskal–Wallis Results

The Kruskal–Wallis test confirmed significant perceptual differences between the two sites, with Ly Son residents demonstrating greater awareness of both the benefits and drawbacks of tourism. This statistical evidence substantiates the stage-sensitive nature of community attitudes, emphasizing that tourism maturity shapes not only perceptions but also expectations, tolerance levels, and governance needs.

In mature destinations like Ly Son, policy responses must shift from promotion to impact management, prioritizing tools such as participatory planning, real-time monitoring, and benefit-sharing mechanisms. In contrast, Sa Huynh, as an emerging destination, should focus on capacity building, environmental education, and early-stage CBT frameworks to foster community resilience and long-term sustainability.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it deepens our understanding of how governance, tourism intensity, and cultural context interact to shape resident attitudes, contributing to the growing body of work on community-based and sustainable tourism governance. Practically, it offers evidence-based recommendations for tailoring destination management strategies to site-specific realities—rejecting one-size-fits-all models in favor of differentiated, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches.

Recommendation

Policy Implications for Context-Sensitive Destination Governance

The findings of this study reveal critical policy implications for destination governance in emerging tourism regions such as Ly Son Island and the Sa Huynh Beach Area. The significant divergence in community perceptions between these two sites underscores the limitations of applying uniform or top-down governance models. Instead, destination management strategies must be differentiated and context-responsive, taking into account each locality's tourism development stage, socio-cultural landscape, and institutional capacity.

In Ly Son Island, where tourism has expanded rapidly and residents exhibit high levels of awareness regarding its impacts, governance priorities should center on the institutionalization of participatory mechanisms. These may include the formalization of two-way communication channels, establishment of community advisory councils, and implementation of co-design processes through which residents actively contribute to tourism planning and monitoring. Enhancing governance transparency, expanding access to information, and embedding community voices in benefit-sharing frameworks are essential to strengthen both legitimacy and equity. Concurrently, the introduction of regulatory instruments that define and enforce environmental and social carrying capacities is necessary to mitigate risks associated with overtourism, cultural commodification, and infrastructure overuse.

Conversely, in the Sa Huynh Beach Area where tourism is in its early stages and community engagement remains limited governance interventions should prioritize early-stage capacity building and social sensitization. Public awareness campaigns, tourism education programs, and vocational training oriented toward CBT can serve as foundational steps toward cultivating informed participation. Supporting the growth of small and medium-sized local tourism enterprises that emphasize sustainability, cultural authenticity, and endogenous value chains such as traditional seafood processing, handicrafts, and immersive heritage experiences can contribute to both economic development and cultural revitalization.

At a broader level, the study advocates for a paradigm shift from centralized, hierarchical governance to inclusive co-governance models, where local communities are positioned as strategic partners rather than passive beneficiaries. The creation of institutionalized platforms for stakeholder dialogue, the promotion of equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, and the development of trust-based, long-term relationships between state and non-state actors are essential to achieving destination governance that is not only adaptive and resilient, but also socially just and sustainable

Strategic Policy Recommendations for Managing Tourism Impacts

The results of this study indicate that in destinations experiencing rapid tourism expansion—such as Ly Son Island residents report significantly heightened concerns over tourism's negative impacts. These concerns reflect intensifying socio-environmental pressures associated with unregulated tourism, including the degradation of ecosystems, the erosion of cultural identity, and the decline of residents' quality of life. Addressing these challenges requires a shift toward systemic, preventive, and adaptive governance mechanisms capable of balancing development objectives with the long-term well-being of host communities and environments.

First, destination managers must define and enforce social and environmental carrying capacity thresholds to regulate tourism intensity. Quantifiable indicators such as visitor density, infrastructure absorption capacity, and ecological stress levels should be developed and continuously monitored. In this context, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Social Impact Assessments (SIA) must

be mandated for all new tourism-related investments to ensure that development aligns with principles of sustainability and risk mitigation.

Second, local governments should prioritize investment in environmental and public service infrastructure, particularly in waste management, wastewater treatment, traffic regulation, and public amenities. These investments are critical during peak tourist seasons when demand places disproportionate pressure on local systems. Rather than adopting reactive solutions, governance approaches should transition toward anticipatory, risk-informed planning, incorporating early-warning systems underpinned by real-time data analytics and continuous community input.

Third, the designation of eco-cultural buffer zones around environmentally and culturally sensitive areas such as heritage sites, traditional villages, and coastal ecosystems—is essential to mitigate risks of spatial encroachment, land-use conflict, and cultural commodification. These zones should be co-managed with local stakeholders through participatory governance models and guided by site-specific zoning regulations, behavioral codes of conduct, and village-level institutional frameworks.

Fourth, the institutionalization of community-based monitoring systems and participatory policy forums is crucial to strengthening governance responsiveness and accountability. Mechanisms such as resident satisfaction surveys, social stress indicators, and digital feedback platforms can empower communities to raise concerns, evaluate ongoing policies, and participate in iterative decision-making processes. Embedding these tools within the governance framework enhances policy legitimacy and fosters trust between residents and authorities.

Ultimately, mitigating the adverse impacts of tourism is critical not only for safeguarding the ecological and cultural integrity of destinations, but also for preserving their long-term competitiveness, social resilience, and appeal. Sustainable tourism governance must therefore be inclusive, data-informed, and contextually grounded, enabling destinations to reconcile growth with environmental stewardship and social justice.

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