UNDERSTANDING TOURISTS' DECISIONS FOR ECO-TOURISM IN VIETNAM

BY

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AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM IN GLOBAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT (INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM) FACULTY OF COMMERCE AND ACCOUNTANCY THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2023

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ABSTRACT

Along with the fast growth of tourism, the concept "sustainable tourism" has been born with the purposes of balancing among the demands of tourists, the benefits of the industry and the impacts on local communities or environment. From that point of view, ecotourism has become the trend over the world. With the large numbers of natural areas and the diversity of ecosystem, Vietnam has high potential for ecotourism development. However, many studies in the past until now have been raising the question of what should be focused to improve the ecotourism destinations and services. Thus, this quantitative research tried to pointed out the factors that affects tourists' decision of choosing ecotourism destination. A sample group of 142 people who are interested in Vietnam traveling in general and in ecotourism specifically had been tested. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis were used to measure the degree of correlation and level of impact between the 05 personal concerns and commitment, as well as the 03 demographic characteristics of tourists and their decisions of choosing ecotourism destinations. The research results showed that tourists' concerns about the authenticity of ecotourism destination and tourists' environmental commitment are the 02 factors that affect their decisions to choose ecotourism destination the most. Based on that, recommendations were given to ecotourism service providers in Vietnam.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Tourists' concerns, Environmental commitment, Tourists' decision.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research problem

Ecotourism is a travel type in which tourists can enjoy and discover the beauty of nature or cultures. It's considered sustainable tourism type for the positive impacts on promoting natural conservation and improving the life of local community. Nowadays, ecotourism has become the trend over the world and Vietnam is not an exception. With the coastal, river, forest, and limestone ecosystems, the cultural diversity of 54 ethnic groups, Vietnam has high potential of ecotourism development. Understanding tourists' decision of choosing ecotourism destination will help service providers in Vietnam add more values to enhance customer experience while still ensuring natural and cultural conservation. These are also the main purposes of this research.

1.2 Importance of the research problem

Thanks to the economic development and globalization, people have more chances to travel and explore different areas in the world. However, along with the growth of tourism industry, overcrowding in travel destinations as well as the large number of tourism services, accommodations, or entertainment constructions which were set up without the long-term strategies have been leading to many environmental problems and also raising the concerns of protecting the authenticity of cultures, especially the ethnic minorities' cultures. According to Cheia (2013), nowadays, tourism should include not only tourists' demand of relaxing and entertaining, but also natural and cultural preservations. To add on, Hetzer (1965) gave the definition of "sustainable tourism" which combines lowering the negative effects on environment, respecting the traditions of host community, providing benefits to local resident and increasing tourists' experiences. Therefore, the concept of "ecotourism" was born as a "responsible travel" to "natural areas untouched and uncontaminated by human factor"

to enjoy the landscapes, explore the ecosystem and local cultures in these places (Ceballos-Lascurain, H., 1987). We might say, ecotourism plays a very important role in the sustainable development of tourism industry.

To keep up with the trend of ecotourism over the world, Vietnamese Government has been identified ecotourism as one of the key pillars for the industry to achieve environmental education, empower women, and reduce poverty for local communities (Dolezal, C., Trupp, A., & Bui, H. T. (Eds.), 2020). Since the renovation period ("Doi moi") in 1986, Vietnam national Parks had been suggested to be flexible in finding other financial sources instead of relying on the budget of Government (Ly, T. P., & Xiao, H., 2016), which can be considered the encouragement for starting tourism activities in the national conservation areas. The "Vietnam's first forestry development strategy 2006 -2020" also pointed out that ecotourism and recreation activities should be implemented in the forests with appropriate scales and plans (Van Hung, T., & Thuy, P. T). In fact, Vietnam has very high potential of developing ecotourism. There are 54 ethnic groups across the whole country, from the North to South, from the mountains to the river deltas with different traditions and living habits. Vietnam has 34 national parks with some famous names such as Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Phong Nha – Ke Bang, Cat Tien, Phu Quoc national parks etc. along with 3.260 km coastline. In 2022, Vietnam took the 16th place in the worldwide list of the countries having richest biodiversity, with 11.000 species living in 20 typical ecosystem types (Vietnamplus, 2022).

Moreover, understanding tourists' decision of choosing ecotourism destination brings both short-term & long-term advantages for service providers. Ecotourism destinations can only attract tourists if they provide the appropriate ecotourism activities that satisfy the expectation of travelers. There are many ecotourism activities. For example, to discover the nature, tourists can participate in the trekking and hiking tours; for entertainment, tourists can choose camping or water sports etc. On the other hand, community-based tourism aims at learning the customs of local resident or experiencing the traditional foods and products. Thus, the questions are, which activities should be organized for each type of ecotourism destinations to

meet the demand of different tourist groups and to take advantage of the natural and human resources in the most effective way? Besides, identifying traveler's requirements and concerns will help service providers know what values need to be added to increase their customer experience. By this way, ecotourism destinations in Vietnam can avoid the circumstance of having increased number of activities, services, and tours with low quality, only focus on short-term profit while being wasted in using resources and destroying environmental and cultural environment.

1.3 Objective of the research

The objective of the research is to figure out tourists' demographic characteristics, personal concerns and commitment that affect their final decisions when choosing ecotourism destinations.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Reviewing the related research or studies in the past

Nowadays, ecotourism tourists not only care about the sustainability aspects such as environment protection or social improvement, but they have also been paying attention to traveling experience more and more (Lee, T. H., & Jan, F. H., 2018). Both tourists' requirements for ecotourism destination's authenticity and demand for the variety of ecotourism activities have been increased. Besides, the motivations for tourists' final choices can come from many other aspects, such as the popularity of the ecotourism sites, the sufficiency of destinations or services information, the availability of services and activities in ecotourism sites. On the other hand, green consumption and ecosystem preservation have been always the significant concerns of tourists when engaging in ecotourism activities.

The relationships of tourists' perceived authenticity, perceived values, revisit intentions and environmentally responsible behaviors had been analyzed by a survey using structural equation modeling technique in the journal "The Impacts of Ecotourists' Perceived Authenticity and Perceived Values on Their Behaviors: Evidence from Huangshan World Natural and Cultural Heritage Site" (Yang, L.et al, 2023). The concept "authenticity" in ecotourism can be defined as the pureness and originality of the destination. Thus, tourists' perceived authenticity reflects their expectation of experiencing the real life of local communities, or the unspoiled nature and cultures without artificial factors. The study pointed out that the satisfaction levels of tourists' perceived authenticity have positive impacts on tourists' awareness of protecting the environment and treasuring the local cultures. In other way to say, tourists tend to behave more responsible once they recognize and are impressed with the authenticity of the destinations. In term of "perceived value", travelers often consider if what they get from ecotourism services or destinations deserve what they spend for, such as their time and money. Therefore, adding and providing economic,

social, and personal values to the ecotourism services and activities will help increase the competitive advantages of ecotourism service providers. It means that good traveling experience can lead to the “revisit, repurchase, and recommend intentions” of tourists.

To add on the aspect of customer perceived value, the journal “Factors Affecting Tourists' Perceived Value of Ecotourism in Vietnam” stated that, the personal value of tourists is the combination of their assessment of services and destinations’ reputation, quality, price, as well as the time consumption and effort to reach the services, and the feelings tourists get after using the services (Duc Duong, N. et al, 2023). Among all of these mentioned factors, the feelings tourists get after using the services is the most important thing that affects the attraction and revenue of ecotourism services or destinations. That result implied the connection with the finding from the journal “The Impacts of Ecotourists’ Perceived Authenticity and Perceived Values on Their Behaviors: Evidence from Huangshan World Natural and Cultural Heritage Site” about the fact that tourists will reuse or recommend the services or destinations if they have good customer experience. On the other hand, the reputation plays the 2nd significant role in increasing the profit for ecotourism sites, which raising the suggestion to service providers about enhancing the brand management or marketing activities.

In the journal “Tourist’s engagement in eco-tourism: A review and research agenda”, content analysis was applied through many articles in the last 30 years to discuss more about the 06 themes of tourists’ engagement in ecotourism (Paul, I. & G. Roy, 2023):

- Destination engagement, which is relevant to the experiential activities and natural values or cultural authenticity of the destinations to enhance the destination-related experience and encourage travelers to revisit.
- Brand engagement, which is relevant to the brand awareness of tourists through online and offline marketing and advertising campaigns.

- Social Media engagement, which is relevant to tourists' sharing on their ecotourism experience via digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter etc.
- OTAs engagement, which is relevant to the roles of online travel agencies in connecting tourists with the service providers.
- Environmental conservation engagement, which is relevant to the motivations of tourists' responsible behaviors toward sustainability.
- Tourist-local community engagement, which is relevant to tourists' participation in local cultural activities and contribution to the benefits of local residents.

The research pointed out that, though destination engagement was the engagement trend for the period 1993 to 2010 and environmental conservation engagement was the engagement trend for the period 2011 to 2015, from 2016 until now, brand engagement, social media engagement, and tourist-OTA engagement have been the most important engagement themes. From this research's results, we can say that the development of technology has led to the increase in tourists' demand of getting more information about ecotourism destinations and services before making choices, as well as the demand of available ecotourism services with convenient booking and payment methods.

Meanwhile, the research article "Mores of the customer base for ecotourism industry: Development and validation of a new measurement scale" helped service providers understand more about the 04 dimensions of the motivations for tourists' actions toward nature and eco-friendly goods or services (Bashir, S., Khwaja, M. G., & Mahmood, A., 2021):

- Sense of obligation to care for the natural environment.
- Sense of obligation to practice eco-friendly activities.
- Sense of obligation to purchase eco-friendly products.
- Sense of obligation to support eco-friendly inventions.

According to the author, travelers' awareness of nature protection, including the guilty feeling for environmental pollution or the desire to contribute more to the society, has been growing lately. Therefore, there's a need of adding "green

factors" to ecotourism businesses such as foods and beverages, accommodations, recreational activities, and transportation if service providers want to enhance their corporate social responsibility and gain more market share. Nowadays, there are many transportation service providers that have been using electric vehicles as their competitive advantage. The items that are reusable or made from eco-friendly materials have also become more popular in the hotels or restaurants.

Tourists' engagement in biodiversity protection is also emphasized in the study "Tourists' Preferences toward Ecotourism Development and Sustainable Biodiversity Conservation in Protected Areas of Vietnam - The Case of Phu My Protected Area" (Tran, D. T. T., Nomura, H., & Yabe, M., 2015). Conditional Logit Model were built from the hypotheses relevant to the 5 attributes of potential ecotourism activities and services in Phu My Protected Area, which are: "crane-watching, craft-market visiting, fishing service, donation for environment conservation, and price of ecotourism tour". The results showed that though price was an important factor when tourists considered the tours, they were willing to contribute to biodiversity conservation donation, for example, for each paid 2.93 thousand VND in the tour fee, there would be 1 thousand VND donated. Among the limited range of biodiversity conservation donation from 0 to 15 thousand VND, the research pointed out that tourists even accepted higher financial contribution. On the other hand, according to the research's results, travelers agreed to spend more money in crane-watching, craft-market visiting and fishing activities. This finding matches with the conclusion of the journal "The Impacts of Ecotourists' Perceived Authenticity and Perceived Values on Their Behaviors: Evidence from Huangshan World Natural and Cultural Heritage Site", in which the importance of providing variety of ecotourism activities was emphasized to enhance "perceived value" and travelers' experience (Yang, L.et al, 2023).

2.2 Research Hypothesis and Conceptual Framework

The research hypothesis and conceptual framework give the overview of how different factors facilitate the research's problem together and what results to be expected (Pender, J., Ehui, S., & Place, F., 2006). Based on other studies in the past,

we can assume that tourists' personal concerns and commitment can affect their decision of choosing ecotourism destinations, especially the 05 concerns about the authenticity of ecotourism destination, the popularity of ecotourism destination, the availability of services and activities in ecotourism destination, the sufficiency of destinations or services information, and tourists' environmental commitment. Therefore, the research comes up with its hypothesis and conceptual framework as below:

Research Hypothesis:

H1: Concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H2: Concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H3: Concern about the availability of services and activities in ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H4: Concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destinations positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H5: Environmental commitment positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H6: Income positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

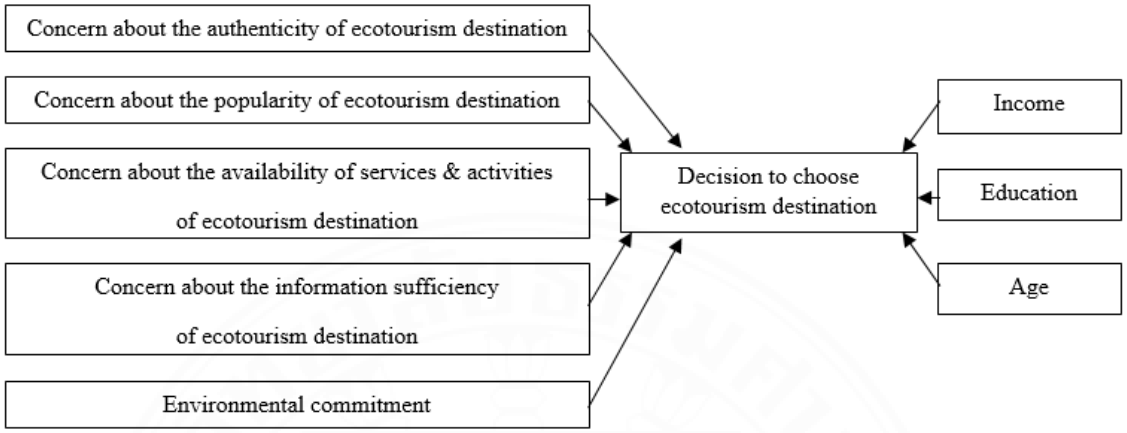
H7: Education positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

H8: Age positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

Conceptual Framework:

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Measurement of variables

The research will be a Quantitative research to analyze numerical data. Quantitative research is very useful in testing the relationships between different factors in wide populations (Sukamolson, S, 2007), which matches with the purpose of this research on understanding the tourists as population and what have the impacts on their decision of choosing ecoutourism destinations. Regarding 15 provided survey questions, the variables include:

- Variables 01 to 06, which are respondents' general demographic characteristics, will be applied nominal scale as variable measurement to classify respondents into groups. However, with V1, V5 and V6, the values from 01 to 05 imply the increase in the level of age, monthly income and education degree.

V1 = AGE

V2 = NATIONALITY

V3 = GENDER

V4 = OCCUPATION

V5 = INCOME

V6 = EDUCATION

- Variables 07 to 16 will be applied the interval scale as variable measurement via rating questions. With rating scales, the research can achieve a measurement of both categorization and ordering, given that the distances between the single values are equal (Ferrante, M., Ferro, N., & Losiouk, E., 2020). The rating score from 01 to 05 with 05 as highest level will show the respondents' self-assessment toward their choice of visiting ecotourism destination when traveling, how much they concern about the authenticity, the popularity, the availability of services/activities and the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination, as well as their environmental commitment.

V7 =DECISION = Decision to choose ecotourism destination when traveling

V8 = AUTHENTICITY = Caring about the authenticity (of ecotourism destination)

V9 = POPULARITY = Caring about the popularity (of ecotourism destination)

V10 = SERVICES = Caring about the availability of services/activities (of ecotourism destination)

V11 = INFORMATION = Caring about the sufficiency of ecotourism destinations' information

V12 = PRICE = Caring about the price (of services/activities in ecotourism destination)

V13 = DONATION = Willingness to donate to environmental conservation (when visiting ecotourism destination)

V14 = ECOFRIENDLY = Willingness to use eco-friendly products/services (when visiting ecotourism destination)

V15 = ENVIEDU = Caring about environmental education

V16 = ENVICOMMIT = Environmental commitment (of tourists)

3.2 Duration/Area/Population of study

The questionnaire was delivered within 02 weeks from 23rd October to 06th November 2023 via online channels.

The link to research survey was sent via 04 Facebook's groups relevant to Vietnam traveling and tourism, including "Vietnam is Awesome" group, "Vietnam Travel Review A to Z" group, "Vietnam Travelers" group, and "Vietnam Travelers Group" group. By collecting the survey's responses via social media, the scope of the survey can be expanded to the respondents from not only Vietnam, but also many different countries. Besides the variety of demographic representation, conducting the survey through social media also brings other benefits such as cost-effectiveness and

environment protection by avoiding survey printed version (Schober, M. F., Pasek, J., Guggenheim, L., Lampe, C., & Conrad, F. G., 2016).

The survey link was also shared via emails to the students in Tourism and Hospitality Management classes of RMIT's Bachelor and Master programs. The scope of this channel is within Hanoi city.

Research population is a large collection of people or objects which the research wants to focus to analyze and find conclusions about (Moffitt, R.,2005). From this point of view, the research population was identified as people with various demographic traits such as age, gender, nationality, income, occupation, educational background, who are interested in tourism and traveling in Vietnam. Population of research is N = 221.

3.3 Identify the relevant sample and how to access the respondents

The research aimed at approaching the respondents via online channels. The survey links had been created based on Google form with 15 questions and the note to give an overview of the research' objectives in both English and Vietnamese so that respondents can choose the version they feel comfortable the most. Since the duration of collecting data is limited within 14 days, delivering survey link in Facebook groups were chosen as the easiest and fastest method. A list of 10 Facebook's private groups relevant to Vietnam tourism had been selected. Compared to Facebook public groups, private groups have more privacy and content control. They require member registration and the posts must be approved by the Admin teams. Therefore, choosing Facebook private groups to deliver the survey link will help the research focus on the target population – the ones who care about traveling in Vietnam. However, among 10 selected Facebook private groups, there were only 04 groups where the posts about the research survey were accepted, which were: "Vietnam is Awesome", "Vietnam Travel Review A to Z", "Vietnam Travelers", and "Vietnam Travelers Group". The members of these 04 Facebooks groups include both international and domestic tourists.

To reach more respondents, the survey link was also sent through emails to 12 RMIT Tourism and Hospitality Management students in Hanoi campus, thanks to the support of Dr. Justin Matthew Pang – the lecturer of RMIT Tourism and Hospitality Management program.

At the end of 06th November 2023, 142 survey responses had been collected in total for both English and Vietnamese surveys. According to Yamane's formula, the required sample size can be calculated as below (Chaokromthong, K., & Sintao, N., 2021):

Figure 3.1

Yamane's formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

- N: population size
- E: acceptable margin of error 0.05
- n: sample size

Applied to the research's population, the required sample size will be n = 142,35. On the other hand, expected number of respondents is 100 as an acceptable sample size in statistical analysis (Hair, et al., 2006). Thus, the survey responses (sample size n = 142) can be considered meeting both requirements.

3.4 Data processing

The research data was analyzed by IBM SPSS Statistics software.

The attributes of 142 respondents are presented as below:

Table 3.1

Respondents' attributes

Age	**Number**	**%**
Under 18	0	0.00%
From 18 to 25	41	28.87%
From 25 to 35	58	40.85%
From 35 to 50	31	21.83%
Above 50	12	8.45%
Nationality	**Number**	**%**
Vietnam	112	78.87%
Asian countries	14	9.86%
Western countries	14	9.86%
Others	2	1.41%
Gender	**Number**	**%**
Male	54	38.03%
Female	88	61.97%
Others	0	0.00%
Occupation	**Number**	**%**
Full-time	108	76.06%
Part-time	11	7.75%
Retired	4	2.82%
Self employed/Freelance	14	9.86%
Unemployed	5	3.52%
Income	**Number**	**%**
Under 330 USD	21	14.79%
From 330 USD to 650 USD	47	33.10%
From 650 USD to 830 USD	24	16.90%

From 830 USD to 1250 USD	19	13.38%
Above 1250 USD	31	21.83%

Education	**Number**	**%**
Primary/middle school degree	2	1.41%
High school degree & don't attend Bachelor program	5	3.52%
High school degree & attending Bachelor program	9	6.34%
Bachelor degree	86	60.56%
Master degree & higher	40	28.17%

Based on the research hypothesis, the statistical analysis focused mainly on 11 variables below:

V1= AGE: The score is based on respondent's age.

V5 = INCOME: The score is based on respondent's monthly income.

V6 = EDUCATION: The score is based on respondent's educational degree.

(Answers for all of these variables range from 1 - 5 in which 1 is the lowest level of age, monthly income and educational degree; 5 is the highest level of age, monthly income and educational degree.)

V7 = DECISION: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much possible they choose to visit ecotourism destinations when traveling in Vietnam.

V8 = AUTHENTICITY: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much they care about the authenticity of ecotourism destination.

V9 = POPULARITY: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much they care about the popularity of ecotourism destination.

V10 = SERVICES: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much they care about the availability of services/activities in ecotourism destination.

V11 = INFORMATION: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much they care about the sufficiency of ecotourism destinations' information.

V13 = DONATION: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much willing they are to donate to environmental conservation when visiting ecotourism destination.

V14 = ECOFRIENDLY: The score is based on respondent's self-assessment of how much willing they are to donate to purchase/use eco-friendly products/services when visiting ecotourism destination.

(Answers for all of these variables range from 1 - 5 in which:

- 5 is the highest level of concern/commitment, equal to "Extremely care"/" Extremely high possible"

- 4 is the 2nd highest level of concern/commitment, equal to "Care much"/"High possible"

- 3 is the medium level of concern/commitment, equal to "Care"/"Possible"

- 2 is the 2nd lowest level of concern/commitment, equal to "Don't care much"/"Not much possible"

- 1 is the lowest level of concern/commitment, equal to "Not at all")

The variable *V16 (ENVICOMMIT)* is combined by the 02 variables *V13 (DONATION)* and *V14 (ECOFRIENDLY).* Merging many variables to create a new variable can be done if the merged variables are the independent variables and belong to the same category or reflect the same aspect (Fan, G., Müller, M., & Holte, R., 2014). Applied to the research, the 02 variables *V13 (DONATION)* and *V14 (ECOFRIENDLY)* are both relevant to tourists' actions to contribute to environment protection when visiting ecotourism destination. In addition, V13 and V14 score both range from 1 – 5, in which 5 = " Extremely high possible"; 4 = "High possible"; 3 = "Possible"; 2 = "Not much possible"; 1 = "Not at all". Therefore, they can be combined into the variable *V16 (ENVICOMMIT).* The score of variable *V16 (ENVICOMMIT),* ranked from 1 to 10 with 10 as highest level, can be considered showing survey respondent's self-assessment of how much their environmental commitment are when visiting ecotourism destinations:

- 9 - 10 is the highest level of commitment, equal to "Extremely high commit"

- 7 - 8 is the 2nd highest level of commitment, equal to “High Commit”
- 5 - 6 is the medium level of commitment, equal to “Commit”
- 3 -4 is the 2nd lowest level of commitment, equal to “Less Commit”
- 1 - 2 is the lowest level of commitment, equal to “Not commit at all”

To check if variables *V7 to V16* measures the same characteristic, Cronbach’s alpha will be implemented. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is a method to test the assessing reliability and consistency of a question group (Christmann, A., & Van Aelst, S., 2006). Cronbach's alpha value from 0.6 to 0.8 is acceptable (Hajjar, S. T., 2018).

Since Alpha = 0.758, we can conclude that all these variables from V7 to V16 have high internal consistency.

Figure 3.2

Reliability Statistics

V7 to V16

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
DECISION	3.70	1.136	142
AUTHENTICITY	4.11	.965	142
POPULARITY	3.48	1.043	142
SERVICES	4.12	.964	142
INFORMATION	4.49	.814	142
PRICE	4.15	.867	142
DONATION	3.96	.999	142
ECOFRIENDLY	3.95	.963	142
ENVIEDU	4.66	.618	142
ENVICOMMIT	7.92	1.716	142

RELIABILITY STATISTICS

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.758	.748	10

3.5 Data analysis tools

Firstly, the research used descriptive statistics to facilitate data visualization. Descriptive statistics is very helpful in analyzing the variables to find out and display their frequency distribution, mean, median, mode, range, standard deviation, and variance (Mishra, P., Pandey, C. M., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A., 2019).

After that, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis were conducted to analyze the impacts of tourists' personal concerns, commitment and demographic characteristics on their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation helps measure the degree of correlation between two variables (Puth, M. T., Neuhäuser, M., & Ruxton, G. D., 2014). It will point out whether a linear or straight-line relationship exists between 02 pairs Dependent Variable and Independent Variables.

- Dependent Variable: V7 = DECISION = Decision to choose ecotourism destination when traveling

H1: Concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V8 = AUTHENTICITY = Caring about the authenticity (of ecotourism destination)

H2: Concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V9 = POPULARITY = Caring about the popularity (of ecotourism destination)

H3: Concern about the availability of services and activities in ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V10 = SERVICES = Caring about the availability of services/activities (of ecotourism destination)

H4: Concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V11 = INFORMATION = Caring about the sufficiency of ecotourism destinations' information

H5: Environmental commitment positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V16 = ENVICOMMIT = Environmental commitment (of tourists)

H6: Income positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V5 = INCOME = Monthly Income (of tourists)

H7: Education positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V6 = EDUCATION = Educational background (of tourists)

H8: Age positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination.

- Independent Variable: V1 = AGE = Age (of tourists)

After using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to figure out the correlation between Dependent variable and each Independent variable, Regression analysis would be done to take deeper insight of how all chosen Independent variables affect 01 Dependent variable (Draper, N. R., & Smith, H., 1998).

Figure 3.3

Regression formula

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ ... + \beta_i X_i$$

Y : Dependent variable
β_0 : Intercept
β_i : Slope for X_i
X = Independent variable

- The 1st Regression test is used to test relationship between Y (V7 = DECISION) and the group of variables relevant to tourists' personal concerns and commitment including: X1 = V8 = AUTHENTICITY, X2 = V9 = POPULARITY, X3 = V10 = SERVICES, X4 = V11 = INFORMATION, X5 = V16 = ENVICOMMIT.

- The 2nd Regression test is used to test relationship between Y (V7 = DECISION) and the group of variables relevant to tourists' demographic traits including: X1 = V5 = INCOME, X2 = V6 = EDUCATION, X3 = V1 = AGE.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive statistics

4.1.1 Decision to choose ecotourism destination when traveling

Figure 4.1

Descriptive statistics – DECISION

DECISION

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		3.70
Std. Error of Mean		.095
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.136
Variance		1.291

DECISION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	8	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Not much possible	13	9.2	9.2	14.8
	Possible	32	22.5	22.5	37.3
	High possible	50	35.2	35.2	72.5
	Extremely high possible	39	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents has high possibility to choose ecotourism destination when traveling (50/142 responses, 35.2%).

4.1.2 Concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination

Figure 4.2

Descriptive statistics – AUTHENTICITY

AUTHENTICITY

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		4.11
Std. Error of Mean		.081
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.965
Variance		.932

AUTHENTICITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Don’t care much	8	5.6	5.6	7.0
	Care	23	16.2	16.2	23.2
	Care much	49	34.5	34.5	57.7
	Extremely care	60	42.3	42.3	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents extremely care about the authenticity of ecotourism destination (60/142 responses, 42.3%).

4.1.3 Concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination

Figure 4.3

Descriptive statistics – POPULARITY

POPULARITY

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		3.48
Std. Error of Mean		.088
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.043
Variance		1.088

POPULARITY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	7	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Don’t care much	16	11.3	11.3	16.2
	Care	43	30.3	30.3	46.5
	Care much	54	38.0	38.0	84.5
	Extremely care	22	15.5	15.5	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents extremely care about the popularity of ecotourism destination (54/142 responses, 38%).

4.1.4 Concern about the availability of services/activities of ecotourism destination

Figure 4.4

Descriptive statistics – SERVICES

SERVICES

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		4.12
Std. Error of Mean		.081
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.964
Variance		.929

SERVICES

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Don’t care much	6	4.2	4.2	5.6
	Care	28	19.7	19.7	25.4
	Care much	43	30.3	30.3	55.6
	Extremely care	63	44.4	44.4	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents extremely care about the availability of services/activities of ecotourism destination (63/142 responses, 44.4%).

4.1.5 Concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination

Figure 4.5

Descriptive statistics – INFORMATION

INFORMATION

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		4.49
Std. Error of Mean		.068
Median		5.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.814
Variance		.663

INFORMATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	1	.7	.7	.7
	Don’t care much	2	1.4	1.4	2.1
	Care	17	12.0	12.0	14.1
	Care much	28	19.7	19.7	33.8
	Extremely care	94	66.2	66.2	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents extremely care about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination (94/142 responses, 66.2%).

4.1.6 Willingness to donate to environmental conservation when visiting ecotourism destination

Figure 4.6

Descriptive statistics – DONATION

DONATION

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		3.96
Std. Error of Mean		.084
Median		4.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		.999
Variance		.999

DONATION

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	5	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Not much possible	6	4.2	4.2	7.7
	Possible	25	17.6	17.6	25.4
	High possible	59	41.5	41.5	66.9
	Extremely high possible	47	33.1	33.1	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents has high possibility to donate to environmental conservation when visiting ecotourism destination (59/142 responses, 41.5%).

4.1.7 Willingness to use eco-friendly products/services when visiting ecotourism destination

Figure 4.7

Descriptive statistics – ECOFRIENDLY

ECOFRIENDLY

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		3.95
Std. Error of Mean		.081
Median		4.00
Mode		5
Std. Deviation		.963
Variance		.927

ECOFRIENDLY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not at all	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Not much possible	7	4.9	4.9	6.3
	Possible	36	25.4	25.4	31.7
	High possible	48	33.8	33.8	65.5
	Extremely high possible	49	34.5	34.5	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

The research result shows that most of respondents has extremely high possibility to use eco-friendly products/services when visiting ecotourism destination (49/142 responses, 34.5%).

4.1.8 Environmental commitment of tourists

Figure 4.8

Descriptive statistics – ENVICOMMIT

ENVICOMMIT

N	Valid	142
	Missing	0
Mean		7.92
Std. Error of Mean		.144
Median		8.00
Mode		8
Std. Deviation		1.716
Variance		2.943

ENVICOMMIT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	4	3	2.1	2.1	3.5
	5	7	4.9	4.9	8.5
	6	15	10.6	10.6	19.0
	7	24	16.9	16.9	35.9
	8	35	24.6	24.6	60.6
	9	25	17.6	17.6	78.2
	10	31	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	142	100.0	100.0	

Applied the range of score as below:

- 9 - 10 is the highest level of commitment, equal to “Extremely high commit”

- 7 - 8 is the 2nd highest level of commitment, equal to “High Commit”

- 5 - 6 is the medium level of commitment, equal to “Commit”

- 3 -4 is the 2nd lowest level of commitment, equal to “Less Commit”

- 1 - 2 is the lowest level of commitment, equal to “Not commit at all”

Figure 4.9

Descriptive statistics – ENVICOMMIT range

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Not commit at all	2	1.4
	Less commit	3	2.1
	Commit	22	15.5
	High commit	59	41.5
	Extremely high commit	56	39.4
	Total	142	100.0

The research result shows that most of respondents has high environmental commitment (59/142 responses, 41.5%).

4.2 Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Dependent Variable: V7 = DECISION

Correlation coefficient can range anywhere from -1 to 1 in which a negative value reflects a negative correlation, a positive value reflects a positive correlation. The value 0 can be considered no correlation. The closer the value to 1 or -1, the more correlation strength is (Schober, P., Boer, C., & Schwarte, L. A., 2018).

4.2.1 H1: Concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V8 = AUTHENTICITY

Figure 4.10

Correlations – AUTHENTICITY

Correlations

		DECISION	AUTHENTICITY
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	142	142
AUTHENTICITY	Pearson Correlation	.333**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.333 indicates *the weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) < 0.001 means < 0.05 => Reject H0, accept H1. We can conclude V7 = DECISION and V8 = AUTHENTICITY are *also correlated in research population.*

4.2.2 H2: Concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V9 = POPULARITY

Figure 4.11

Correlations – POPULARITY

Correlations

		DECISION	POPULARITY
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042
	N	142	142
POPULARITY	Pearson Correlation	.171*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	
	N	142	142

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.171 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.042 < 0.05 => Reject H0, accept H1. We can conclude V7 = DECISION and V9 = POPULARITY are *also correlated in research population.*

4.2.3 H3: Concern about the availability of services and activities in ecotourism destination positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V10 = SERVICES

Figure 4.12

Correlations – SERVICES

Correlations

		DECISION	SERVICES
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.352
	N	142	142
SERVICES	Pearson Correlation	.079	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.352	
	N	142	142

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.079 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the availability of services/activities in ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.352 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is *no conclusion for the correlation* of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V10 = SERVICES in research population.

4.2.4 H4: Concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destinations positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V11 = INFORMATION

Figure 4.13

Correlations – INFORMATION

Correlations

		DECISION	INFORMATION
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.842
	N	142	142
INFORMATION	Pearson Correlation	.017	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.842	
	N	142	142

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.017 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.842 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V11 = INFORMATION in research population.

4.2.5 H5: Environmental commitment positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V16 = ENVICOMMIT

Figure 4.14

Correlations – ENVICOMMIT

Correlations

		DECISION	ENVICOMMIT
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.271**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	142	142
ENVICOMMIT	Pearson Correlation	.271**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.271 indicates *the weak positive correlation* between tourists' environmental commitment and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.001 < 0.05 => Reject H0, accept H1. We can conclude V7 = DECISION and V16 = ENVICOMMIT are also correlated in research population.

4.2.6 H6: Income positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V5 = INCOME

Figure 4.15

Correlations – INCOME

Correlations

		DECISION	INCOME
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.158
	N	142	142
INCOME	Pearson Correlation	.119	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.158	
	N	142	142

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.119 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' income and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.158 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is *no conclusion for the correlation* of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V5 = INCOME in research population.

4.2.7 H7: Education positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V6 = EDUCATION

Figure 4.16

Correlations – EDUCATION

Correlations

		DECISION	EDUCATION
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.884
	N	142	142
EDUCATION	Pearson Correlation	.012	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.884	
	N	142	142

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.012 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' education and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.884 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is *no conclusion for the correlation* of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V6 = EDUCATION in research population.

4.2.8 H8: Age positively influences tourists' decision to choose ecotourism destination

Independent Variable: V1 = AGE

Figure 4.17

Correlations – AGE

Correlations

		DECISION	AGE
DECISION	Pearson Correlation	1	.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.366
	N	142	142
AGE	Pearson Correlation	.076	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.366	
	N	142	142

Sample correlation coefficient r = 0.076 indicates *the very weak positive correlation* between tourists' age and their decision to choose ecotourism destination.

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.366 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is *no conclusion for the correlation* of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V1 = AGE in research population.

4.3 Regression analysis

4.3.1 Tourists' personal concerns and commitment

Y = DECISION

X1 = AUTHENTICITY

X2 = POPULARITY

X3 = SERVICES

X4 = INFORMATION

X5 = ENVICOMMIT

Figure 4.18

Regression – CONCERNS AND COMMITMENT

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.396[a]	.157	.126	1.062

Predictors: (Constant), ENVICOMMIT, POPULARITY, INFORMATION, AUTHENTICITY, SERVICES

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.559	5	5.712	5.063	<.001[b]
	Residual	153.420	136	1.128		
	Total	181.979	141			

a. Dependent Variable: DECISION

b. Predictors: (Constant), ENVICOMMIT, POPULARITY, INFORMATION, AUTHENTICITY, SERVICES

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.374	.681		2.016	.046
	AUTHENTICITY	.317	.098	.269	3.245	.001
	POPULARITY	.117	.091	.108	1.283	.202
	SERVICES	.011	.108	.009	.103	.918
	INFORMATION	-.085	.125	-.061	-.677	.500
	ENVICOMMIT	.120	.059	.181	2.043	.043

Dependent Variable: DECISION

DECISION = 1.374 + 0.317 * AUTHENTICITY + 0.117 * POPULARITY + 0.011 * SERVICE – 0.085 * INFORMATION + 0.120 * ENVICOMMIT + Error term

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) of AUTHENTICITY = 0.001 < 0.05 => Reject H0, accept H1. We can conclude *V7 = DECISION and V8 = AUTHENTICITY are also correlated in research population.*

Sig.(2-tailed) of POPULARITY = 0.202 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V9 = POPULARITY in research population.

Sig.(2-tailed) of SERVICE = 0.918 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V10 = SERVICE in research population.

Sig.(2-tailed) of INFORMATION = 0.500 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V11 = INFORMATION in research population.

Sig.(2-tailed) of ENVICOMMIT = 0.043 < 0.05 => Reject H0, accept H1. We can conclude *V7 = DECISION and V16 = ENVICOMMIT are also correlated in research population.*

4.3.2 Tourists' demographic traits

Y = DECISION

X1 = INCOME

X2 = EDUCATION

X3 = AGE

Figure 4.19

Regression – DEMOGRAPHIC TRAITS

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.127[a]	.016	-.005	1.139

a. Predictors: (Constant), EDUCATION, AGE, INCOME

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.920	3	.973	.750	.524[b]
	Residual	179.059	138	1.298		
	Total	181.979	141			

a. Dependent Variable: DECISION

b. Predictors: (Constant), EDUCATION, AGE, INCOME

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.491	.608		5.740	<.001
	AGE	.037	.115	.030	.322	.748
	INCOME	.097	.081	.119	1.191	.236
	EDUCATION	-.047	.133	-.032	-.355	.723

Dependent Variable: DECISION

DECISION = 3.491 + 0.97 * INCOME – 0.047 * EDUCATION + 0.037 * AGE + Error term

To test the population correlation coefficient ρ:

H0: ρ = 0 => Uncorrelated

H1: ρ # 0 => Correlated

Sig.(2-tailed) of AGE = 0.758 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V1 = AGE in research population.

Sig.(2-tailed) of INCOME = 0.236 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V5 = INCOME in research population.

Sig.(2-tailed) of EDUCATION = 0.723 > 0.05 => Cannot reject H0. There is no conclusion for the correlation of 02 variables V7 = DECISION and V6 = EDUCATION in research population.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Descriptive statistics results

- For the Decision to choose ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents has *high possibility* to choose ecotourism destination when traveling (35.2%). Only 14.8% of the respondents have less possibility or are not interested.

- For the concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents *extremely care* about the authenticity (42.3%). Only 7% of the respondents don't care much or don't care at all.

- For the concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents *care much* about the popularity (38%). Only 16.2% of the respondents don't care much or don't care at all.

- For the concern about the availability of services/activities of ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents *extremely care* about the availability of services/activities (44.4%). Only 5.6% of the respondents don't care much or don't care at all.

- For the concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents *extremely care* about the information sufficiency (66.2%). Only 2.1% of the respondents don't care much or don't care at all.

- For the willingness to donate to environmental conservation when visiting ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents has *high possibility* to donate (41.5%). Only 7.7% of the respondents have less possibility or are not willing.

- For the willingness to use eco-friendly products/services when visiting ecotourism destination, the descriptive statistics results show that most of

respondents has *extremely high possibility* to experience eco-friendly things (34.5%). Only 6.3% of the respondents have less possibility or are not willing.

- For tourists' environmental commitment, the descriptive statistics results show that most of respondents has *high environmental commitment* (41.5%). Only 3.5% of the respondents have less commitment or are not commit at all.

The descriptive statistics results imply that, it's necessary to focus on maintaining the authenticity of ecotourism destination to attract tourists. Furthermore, natural conservation donation, along with the eco-friendly products and services have high potential to be implemented in ecotourism destinations to meet the demand of tourists in their environmental commitment. In addition, service providers should improve the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination when doing marketing activities.

5.1.2 Pearson Product Moment Correlation results

To figure out what tourists' personal concerns, commitment and demographic traits that mainly affect their final decisions when choosing ecotourism destinations are, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation results show that:

- There's a *weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the authenticity of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.333). These 02 factors are also *correlated in research population*.

- There's a *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the popularity of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.171). These 02 factors are also *correlated in research population*.

- There's a *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the availability of services in ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.079). There is *no conclusion* for the correlation of these 02 factors in research population.

- There's *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' concern about the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.017). There is *no conclusion* for the correlation of these 02 factors in research population.

- There's a *weak positive correlation* between tourists' environmental commitment and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.271). These 02 factors are also *correlated in research population*.

- There's *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' income and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.119). There is *no conclusion* for the correlation of these 02 factors in research population.

- There's *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' education and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.012). There is *no conclusion* for the correlation of these 02 factors in research population.

- There's *very weak positive correlation* between tourists' age and their decision to choose ecotourism destination (r = 0.076). There is *no conclusion* for the correlation of these 02 factors in research population.

5.1.3 Regression analysis results

- DECISION = 1.374 + 0.317 * AUTHENTICITY + 0.117 * POPULARITY + 0.011 * SERVICE – 0.085 * INFORMATION + 0.120 * ENVICOMMIT + Error term. These 02 factors *tourists' concern about the authenticity* of ecotourism destination and *tourists' environmental commitment* are *also correlated with their decision to choose ecotourism destination in research population.*

- DECISION = 3.491 + 0.97 * INCOME – 0.047 * EDUCATION + 0.037 * AGE + Error term. There is no conclusion for the correlation of tourists' age, income, education and their decision to choose ecotourism destination in research population.

5.1.4 Conclusions

To conclude, we can say that *tourists' concerns about the authenticity of ecotourism destination and tourists' environmental commitment* are the 02 factors that affect their decisions to choose ecotourism destination the most. The more tourists' concerns about the authenticity of ecotourism destination and environmental commitment, the higher their possibility of choosing ecotourism destination is. However, these positive correlation are not extremely strong.

5.2 Recommendation for service providers

Based on the research results, service providers in Vietnam are highly recommended to maintain the authenticity of ecotourism destination, be aware of tourists' environmental commitment and try to engage it in the ecotourism activities.

The authenticity of ecotourism destination includes the authenticity of both natural and cultural values. At present, Vietnam Administration of Forestry has allowed 61 national nature reserves to implement ecotourism among 165 conservation areas and protection zones in total (Vietnam News, 2018). However, according to the National Association for Nature Reserves of Vietnam, many tourism services in nature reserves were mass tourism, and most of the tourists just want to find other spaces to escape from city life, instead of exploring the biodiversity, which might lead to some consumption and entertainment activities which are harmful to the environment (Lipscombe, N., & Thwaites, R. I. K.,2003). Ecotourism in Sapa is a typical case in which the nature of beauty has been being sold instead of preserved at present. Sa Pa is known as a famous ecotourism destination in the Northwest Vietnam thanks to the landscape and biodiversity of Hoang Lien Son mountain. However, due to its fast tourism growth, especially after the Hanoi-Lao Cai Highway was completed in 2014, many mass tourism projects such as hotels and restaurants have been built up without long-term and sustainable strategies (Cahill, A.,2018). The constructions have not only destroyed the peaceful views, but also caused the environmental pollution and affected the ecosystem. Artificial factors have been also added into natural scenes to serve tourists' purpose of photography such as the flower gardens and photography studios in Cat Cat village. From that point of view, to maintain the authenticity of nature, service provider must firstly recognize the importance of tourists' perceived authenticity. As mentioned above in the research on Huangshan World Natural and Cultural Heritage Site (Yang, L.et al, 2023), the authenticity of ecotourism destination helps increase tourists' perceived values, therefore, also increases their revisit intentions and environmentally responsible behaviors. Thus, secondly, it would be very helpful to enhance tourists' environmental commitment, or in other way to say, to take advantage of tourists' willingness to take part in nature reservation. For example, the

environmental conservation contribution can be included in the ecotourism sites' entrance fees, services/activities fees, or tour fees etc (Long, P. H., & Bui, H. T., 2020). Thirdly, service providers should also increase the environment educational values in tourists' traveling experience since "knowledge-seeking and self-development" are considered the 02 most significant ecotourism intentions (Chi, N. T. K., & Pham, H., 2022). To protect the authenticity of nature, tourists need to be provided the environmental protection instructions before they start entering the ecotourism sites along with the short introductions about the ecosystem and biodiversity in each ecotourism site. Natural authenticity and environment educational values play the vital roles in ecotourism services' positioning and are also the factors that make ecotourism different from other tourism types.

To connect between maintaining the authenticity of ecotourism destination and tourists' environmental commitment, services providers are also recommended to increase the eco-friendly products and services to at least 30% of the total in ecotourism destinations. Most of the tourists who choose ecotourism over other tourism types often care more about nature and environment protection. Therefore, replacing plastic things by stuffs that are made from eco-friendly materials easily found in Vietnam such as rice, coconut, bamboo, or using energy-saving equipment will be highly supported by ecotourism tourists. Green practice, which is defined as the internal efforts and actions of service providers to achieve the goal of becoming green business, can be also considered an competitive advantage when the customers' environmental commitment has kept growing up (Can, A. S., Turker, N., Ozturk, S., & Alaeddinoglu, F., 2014). However, according to the result of the research "What Drives the Eco-Friendly Tourist Destination Choice? The Indian Perspective", though tourists express the willingness to purchase sustainable products or services, they are not ready to spend more for it (Nowacki, M., Chawla, Y., & Kowalczyk-Anioł, J., 2021). Thus, it's important for service providers to identify their group of customers that have high potential of paying higher price for eco-friendly products or services. On the other hand, in the article "An Exploratory Examination of Service Quality Attributes in the Ecotourism Industry', the authors had pointed out that eco-friendly practices contribute strongly to ecotourism tourists' impression of services' quality (Ban, J., & Ramsaran, R. R., 2017). From that

point of view, ecotourism service providers are suggested to spend an appropriate portion of their products and services for the groups of travelers who have high income and require high products and services' quality. These target customers for eco-friendly products and services can be international tourists or domestic tourists from age 30 to 50 with stable financial conditions and specially care about environment. Marketing strategies should also be built based on the dimensions of tourists' motivations toward eco-friendly goods or services, encouraging their Sense of obligation to purchase eco-friendly products and Sense of obligation to support eco-friendly inventions (Bashir, S., Khwaja, M. G., & Mahmood, A., 2021).

To maintain the authenticity of cultures, it's significant for service providers to engage local communities. Local residents can participate in many types of ecotourism services such as accommodations, foods & beverages, entertainment etc. In fact, ecotourism services had better emphasize the local values instead of trying to bring general experiences that are already familiar with all of the travelers. For example, come back to the case of ecotourism situation in Sapa, Vietnam, offering tourists the chances to stay in the local villages of ethnic minorities to explore their customs is the more attractive choice rather than setting up the hotels and restaurants with Western styles and popular international tastes since ecotourism is about discovering the new cultures instead of relaxing purposes. Thus, service providers should consider local residents as their main human resource to take advantages of their cultural knowledge and also help to improve their living condition. In the article "Community-based ecotourism: a collaborative partnerships perspective", the author points out that ecotourism brings mixed advantages on "biodiversity conservation and community livelihoods" thanks to the engagement of many stakeholders in doing ecotourism projects (Stone, M. T.,2015). Nowadays in Vietnam, many trekking and hiking tours to explore the forests or mountain areas have recruited local people as tour guides. Thanks to the cultural diversity of ethnic minorities, Vietnam has a huge potential for combining community-based tourism with ecotourism. Local communities can provide the homestay and meals for tourists so that they can enjoy the traditional living styles. Local residents can also contribute in cultural activities such as handcraft workshops, handcraft markets, music festival, gardening activities etc. However, it's not only the

authenticity of cultures, but also the good interaction between local community and tourists, and the good traveling experience that can lead to tourists' revisit intentions (Duong, T. H., & Pham, H. T., 2022). Therefore, service providers must prepare the trainings on working skills for local people to ensure the quality of services and activities in ecotourism destinations.

As an additional recommendation, to build up the image of ecotourism destinations, improving the information sufficiency of ecotourism destination is necessary. Service providers had better increase the marketing activities via social media, such as building Facebook pages, Youtube channels, Instagram accounts etc. In 2011, 65% of active Facebook accounts follow the brands (Martín Fuentes, E., & Daries Ramón, N., 2014) while YouTube has 2.70 billion active accounts in 2023 (Global Media Insight, 2023), which means social media has become a very useful channel for service providers to reach their customers. Chapter 2 of this research had emphasized the findings in "Tourist's engagement in eco-tourism: A review and research agenda" journal, in which brand engagement and social media engagement had been pointed out as the most outstanding themes of tourists' engagement in ecotourism (Paul, I. & G. Roy, 2023) from 2016 until now. In fact, with the development of technology and the globalization, nowadays, tourists can approach the information to find out about ecotourism destinations and relevant services/activities, or to book the accommodations and tours by themselves more easily. Thus, promoting via social media with visual affects can help ecotourism destinations introduce their natural and cultural beauty directly, while shared posts or videos of real experience can help build trust and incentive to tourists.

5.3 Limitation

When applying the research findings, there are some limitations of the research that should be noticed.

- Research population is limited in small scale of N = 221 while in fact, in 2022, more than 3.66 million international visitors had come to Vietnam (Tourism

Information Technology Center, 2023). Therefore, the research results might not reflect the concerns of the whole Vietnam travelers, both domestic and international ones.

- Only 08 independent variables and 01 dependent variable were analyzed. The research problem only focus on the decision of tourists when choosing ecotourism destination, their 05 specific concerns and commitment while in fact, there are many other factors that should be taken into account when tourists make their decisions. About demographic traits, there were 03 characteristics being tested (age, income, education).

- The research perspective is only limited in the aspect of tourists and recommendations are given specifically to service providers instead of other ecotourism stakeholders such as the government, the local communities etc.

- The independent variable "Environment commitment" is only combined by the other 02 variables - willingness to donate to nature conservation and willingness to purchase eco-friendly products/services, while there are many other activities of tourists that can contribute to their environmental commitment.

5.4 Future research

The future studies are highly recommended to analyze about the other demographic characteristics or other tourists' personal concerns that can affect tourists' decisions of choosing ecotourism destinations. For demographic characteristics, nationality should be considered for being tested. According to the journal "The relationship between tourist nationality, cultural orientation and nature-based tourism experiences", people from different countries or areas can have different perception of nature-based tourism and different motivations for visiting ecotourism sites (Vespestad, M. K., & Mehmetoglu, M., 2010). For tourists' personal concerns, the concerns about prices can be taken into account regarding the research "Evaluation of individuals' intention to pay a premium price for ecotourism: An exploratory study", in which its conclusions stated that tourists who have high interest in ecotourism would like to pay more for better traveling experience (Meleddu, M., & Pulina, M., 2016).

The sample population should also be widen to match with the numbers of tourists traveling in Vietnam. Besides online method, research surveys had better

be done via offline channels too, especially in tourism attractions to gain more opinions from target population – traveling lovers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Notes:

Hi everyone, my name is Ly Vu.

I create this survey as a part of my Final Research to graduate from MBA in Global Business Management program in Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

The objective of the survey is to understand better your concerns and point of view when making decision to choose an eco-tourism destination in Vietnam. Your answer will be kept confidential and will be used as statistical data for educational purpose only.

The survey includes 15 multiple choice questions and only takes 5 minutes of your time to complete. You can tick in the box to choose the answer that suits you best for each question.

Please don't hesitate to contact me via the email address ly-phu65@tbs.tu.ac.th if you have any inquiries about completing this survey, I will be more than happy to assist you.

It would be great if you could submit the answers for all the questions before 07/11/2023. Your kindness and support to me will be highly appreciated.

1. What is your age?
- Under 18
- From 18 to 25
- From 25 to 35
- From 35 to 50
- Above 50
2. Where are you from?
- Vietnam
- Asian countries
- Western countries

- Others

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Others

4. What is your occupational status?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Retired
- Self employed/Freelance
- Unemployed

5. What is your average monthly income?

- Under 8,000,000 VND (330 USD)
- From 8,000,000 VND to 15,000,000 VND (330 USD to 650 USD)
- From 15,000,000 VND to 20,000,000 VND (650 USD to 830 USD)
- From 20,000,000 VND to 30,000,000 VND (830 USD to 1250 USD)
- From 30,000,000 VND (1250 USD) and above

6. What is your educational background?

- Graduated from primary/middle school
- Graduated from high school and don't attend Bachelor program
- Graduated from high school and are attending Bachelor program
- Graduated from Bachelor program
- Graduated from Master program and higher

7. How likely are you to decide to choose an ecotourism destination when traveling? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Not much possible
- 3 = Possible
- 4 = High possible
- 5 = Extremely high possible

8. How much do you concern about the authenticity of nature/cultures when choosing an ecotourism destination to visit? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don't care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

9. How much do you concern about the popularity of the ecotourism destination when choosing an ecotourism destination to visit? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don't care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

10. How much do you concern about the availability of services and activities when choosing an ecotourism destination to visit? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don't care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

11. How much do you concern about the sufficiency of destinations or services information when choosing an ecotourism destination to visit? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don't care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

12. How much do you concern about the prices of the services or activities when choosing an ecotourism destination to visit? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don’t care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

13. How willing are you to donate to environmental conservation in ecotourism destinations? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Not much possible
- 3 = Possible
- 4 = High possible
- 5 = Extremely high possible

14. How interested are you in purchasing or using eco-friendly products and services in ecotourism destinations? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Not much possible
- 3 = Possible
- 4 = High possible
- 5 = Extremely high possible

15. How much do you concern about environmental education, in general? (please rate from 1 to 5 with 5 as the highest level)

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Don’t care much
- 3 = Care
- 4 = Care much
- 5 = Extremely care

BIOGRAPHY

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