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INTENTION TO PAY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM

Nam Danh Nguyen ^{1*}, Lan Ngoc Thi Uong ²

Thanh Dong University, Hai Phong City, Vietnam

E-mails: ^{1} namnd@thanhdong.edu.vn (Corresponding author), ² lanutn@thanhdong.edu.vn*

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Abstract. The study aims to analyze the factors influencing the intention of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta to pay for environmental services. The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the research hypotheses using data collected from 221 tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta. The analysis conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 reveals that factors such as attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, environmental concern, perceived green consumption, expectation of a good life, and government policies have a significant positive impact on the intention to pay for environmental services among tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta. Based on these findings, the study provides implications and recommendations to encourage the intention to pay for environmental services among tourism enterprises in emerging economies like Vietnam. This study provides valuable insights for emerging economies to promote sustainable tourism development through environmental services.

Keywords: intention; Mekong Delta; payment for environmental services; PLS-SEM; tourism enterprise

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JEL Classifications: C38, L83, Q56

1. Introduction

In recent decades, tourism has become a major industry worldwide, significantly impacting global economic growth. According to data from over 180 countries and territories collected by the International Labour Organization, tourism and travel contributed 10.9 trillion USD, representing 10 percent of global GDP, and generated 357 million jobs, or 10 percent of total global employment (UNWTO, 2024). Today, tourism remains one of the most dynamic and fastest-growing sectors of the economy. The tourism industry serves as a key driver for job creation and the development of local economies, cultures, and products, especially by directly and indirectly supporting employment for women and youth, and encouraging growth through micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. However, despite these benefits, tourism enterprises are among the leading contributors to environmental impact, as they influence the sustainability of destinations through the consumption of natural resources. Hundreds of environmental service payment programs have been implemented worldwide, with annual payments reaching up to 36 billion USD (Salzman et al., 2018). In many countries, the payment for ecosystem services is often introduced in the tourism sector by international organizations or voluntary enterprises. This payment generally depends on site-specific negotiations or entrance fees. Under the payment for ecosystem services framework, recipients such as households, communities, or landowners involved in tourism receive compensation for managing and protecting landscapes and natural resources that are highly valuable for tourism. In Vietnam, according to Article 61 of the Law on Forestry 2017,

one of the five environmental services subject to payment for forest environmental services is “Protection of natural landscape and conservation of biodiversity of ecosystems for tourism services.” Additionally, the law states that organizations and individuals involved in ecotourism, entertainment, and related enterprises must pay for services to protect and maintain the natural landscape's beauty and preserve the biodiversity of forest ecosystems. Furthermore, according to Article 59 of Decree 156, the payment level for forest environment services applicable to these parties is at least 1 percent of the total revenue collected during the period.

The Mekong Delta covers about 40,500 km² and is a key economic, ecological, and cultural region of Vietnam. It boasts a diverse ecosystem that includes mangroves, swamps, lowlands, intertwined rivers and canals, and extensive coastlines. Additionally, the Mekong Delta is a high-biodiversity area and is home to many communities with rich cultural identities, offering great potential for biotourism, community tourism, and experiential tourism. In recent years, many tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta have focused on harnessing local values to generate high revenue and profits. However, the payment for forest environment services in tourism in Vietnam overall, and in the Mekong Delta specifically, remains very limited. Due to the variety of stakeholders, types of operations, and the complex relationships between suppliers, brokers, and buyers, as well as revenue overlaps in the tourism sector.

Recently, research by Do et al. (2023) has combined research and quantitative methods through in-depth interviews, group discussions, and interviews with households that are forest owners to evaluate the implementation of the policy on payment for forest environmental services in Bac Yen district, Son La province. The study results show that the policy has significantly impacted local people's awareness and activities, improved the forest environment, and contributed to enhancing the village's public works in the study site. Lately, research by Nguyen et al. (2023) used the PLS-SEM model to analyze the willingness to pay for mangrove environmental services in Phu Long commune, Cat Ba district, Hai Phong City, influenced by factors such as subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and mangrove-related knowledge. Nevertheless, previous studies have examined the topic of environmental service payments in the Mekong Delta, a region with a diverse ecosystem and significant pressure from tourism development and climate change; however, they have not thoroughly studied tourism enterprises as direct beneficiaries of the environment. More importantly, this article provides the first empirical evidence on the intention of tourism enterprises to pay for environmental services, a key group of financial contributors to the environmental issues of destinations. Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap by examining the intention to pay for environmental services among tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta using a behavioral quantitative model.

The article is organized into six sections. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 covers the literature review, analytical framework, and research hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methods. Section 4 presents research results. Section 5 discusses the findings and implications. Finally, Section 6 provides the conclusion and notes some limitations of the study.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Related concepts

Appearing in the 1990s, paying for environmental services has brought many economic benefits to humanity but also caused direct negative impacts on the environment. According to Harper et al. (2025), environmental service payment is any compensation for services, efforts, or any maintenance and improvement of environmental services. Such compensation can be in the form of direct cash or in-kind payments. It includes five main aspects: voluntary transactions, a well-defined environmental service, at least one buyer of the service, at least one seller of the service, and it must be conditional (the buyer only pays when the provider guarantees that the service will be continuously delivered). This view divides payment for environmental services into four types:

- Payment for carbon sequestration and storage services associated with buying and selling carbon credits;
- Paying for biodiversity conservation services, such as conservation donors paying local people to request the cancellation or restoration of an area to create a natural biodiversity corridor;

- Payment for watershed forest protection services, for example, downstream water users pay upstream farmers through land use activities that reduce deforestation, land erosion, and flood risks, and so on;
- Paying for services that preserve scenic beauty, like a tour operator compensating local communities not to hunt in a forest used for wildlife tourism.

Payment for environmental services is an economic tool used by beneficiaries of ecosystem services to compensate those who participate in maintaining, protecting, and developing the functions of that ecosystem (Chehabeddine et al., 2023; Moba & Piluso, 2024, Le et al., 2024). This perspective is similar to Wunder (2005) and Hamarneh et al. (2024), which considers it an economic mechanism that encourages and benefits communities providing environmental services to promote sustainable financial resources for resource conservation and biodiversity. According to Nguyen et al. (2023), payment for environmental services is a commitment to participate in a contract voluntarily and with legal binding. With this contract, one or more buyers pay for the specified ecosystem services by providing cash or other support to one or more sellers. The seller is responsible for maintaining a certain type of land use for a designated period to produce the agreed-upon ecosystem services. In summary, payment for environmental services is compensation for providing ecological goods and benefits. It can take many forms, such as cash, in-kind support, tax exemption, or the right to use specific resources. A seller is someone willing or compelled to produce environmental goods and services, while a buyer is someone willing or obligated to pay for the benefits they receive from these goods and services.

2.2. Analytical framework

This study investigates the willingness to pay for environmental services and the behavioral intentions of tourism business owners in the Mekong Delta. Therefore, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) model is used to develop the analytical framework. According to TPB, an individual's intention is the basis for performing the actual action. Intention consists of three factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Currently, most studies tend to expand the TPB model by proposing additional factors and further examining the relationships between them and human behavioral intentions toward environmental products or services (Huang & Ge, 2019; Yue et al., 2020). For this study, we adopted four factors: environmental concerns, perceived green consumption, expectation of the good life, and government policies. The analysis framework is shown in Figure 1 below.

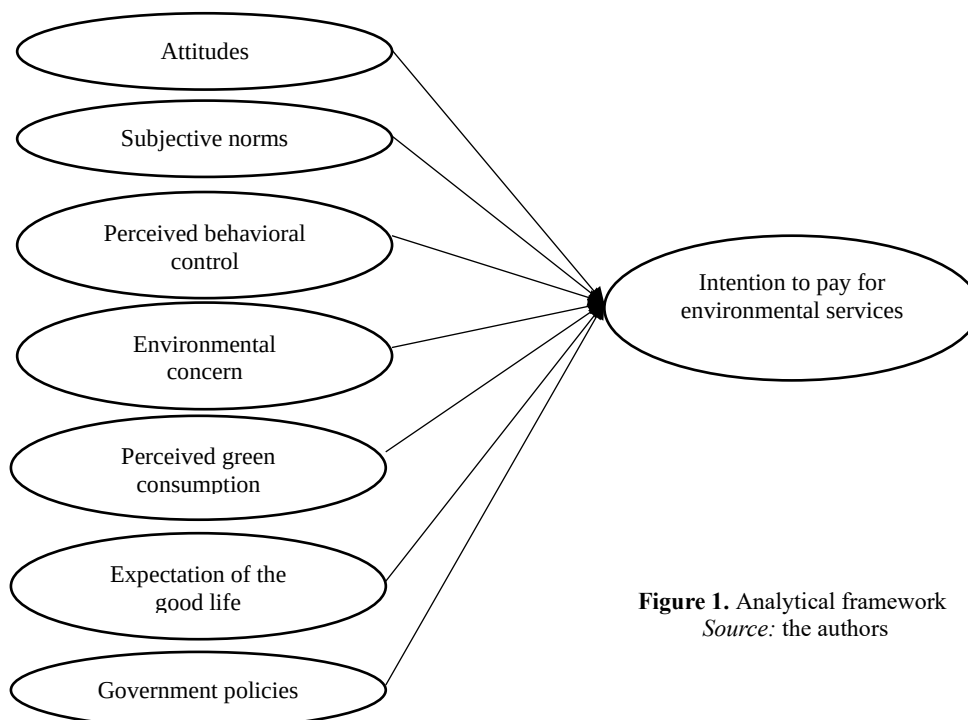


Figure 1. Analytical framework
Source: the authors

2.3. Research hypotheses

Attitude refers to the degree of positive or negative evaluation an individual has toward performing a behavior. It is formed from the person's beliefs about the consequences of performing a specific behavior or the outcomes of that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to Nguyen and Uong (2024), attitude is the action of what consumers like and dislike, whereby an individual's concern for the environment comes from their perceptions and the level of awareness that they are an essential part of the natural environment. Therefore, the intention of the tourism enterprise to pay for environmental services depends on the attitude of the manager or business owner. Based on the above arguments, the proposed research hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Attitudes positively influence the intentions to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

Subjective norms relate to social pressure that motivates individuals to perform behaviors. They originate from the expectations of family, friends, and colleagues that the individual will comply with certain requirements or align with the wishes of those around them during the behavior process (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the willingness to pay for environmental services offered by tourism enterprises depends on people and the surrounding factors. Based on these arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Subjective norms positively influence the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

Perceived behavioral control refers to an individual's subjective or objective assessment of their ability to perform a specific behavior, which depends on the resources and opportunities available to them (Ajzen, 1991). The studies by Chen and Chang (2012), Nguyen and Uong (2025), also argue that people who care about the environment only display environmentally friendly behavior if they believe that a single person's actions can help solve common environmental issues. Based on these arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively influences the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

Environmental concern, as a psychological state, exists within each individual who is emotionally connected to their current environment (Chan et al., 2014; Khumalo et al., 2025). It establishes a strong connection between customers' concern for the environment, their intention to purchase green and organic products, goods, or services, and their efforts to reduce emissions that harm the natural environment, thereby protecting their health and promoting sustainable economic development (Zhao et al., 2014). Research by Wei et al. (2018) and Yue et al. (2020) highlighted that environmental concern is a key factor in encouraging the selection of products, goods, or services that meet environmental protection standards. This view is also supported by various studies conducted by Joshi and Rahman (2015), and Do et al. (2023). Based on these arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Environmental concern positively influences the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

Perceived green consumption refers to individuals' awareness of their responsibility toward the community and the environment, aiming to maintain the integrity of the natural ecosystem through their behaviors, especially when consuming or purchasing environmentally friendly products, goods, or services (Xie et al., 2022; Baláková et al., 2024).

Sun et al. (2019) and Masárová and Kordoš (2025) suggest that highly educated and knowledgeable individuals are more likely to act in an environmentally friendly way or be willing to pay higher prices for green products, goods, or services. It indicates that consumers with deep environmental awareness tend to shift from traditional consumption habits to green consumption to reduce their negative impact on the environment and act more responsibly during the purchase of products, goods, or services (Testa et al., 2021; Łęgowik-Małolepsza et al., 2024). Perceived green consumption is also influenced by customers' accumulated experience and knowledge gained from using green products, goods, or services, making them aware of the safety for their own health and society, especially in promoting environmental protection or changing consumption habits that cause pollution (Ho et al., 2019). Based on these arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H5: Perceived green consumption positively influences the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

The study by Cai et al. (2020) shows that the expectation of a good life is a key desire for customers when choosing products, goods, or services that are safe, easy to recycle, and minimize environmental pollution. This desire stems from the desire to protect future generations who will enjoy a green, healthy environment and a better quality of life. Customers' intentions for green consumption depend on their thoughts about the future. Currently, they tend to choose green products, goods, or services and adopt eco-friendly lifestyles to ensure a better future for the next generation. Additionally, the expectation of a good life positively influences the intention to use green products or services. Based on these points, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H6: Expectation of a good life positively influence the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

According to Prime Minister's Decision No. 1393/QD-TTg dated September 25, 2012, which approves the Green Growth Strategy for the 2011-2020 period and the vision to 2050, the strategic task for implementing the Green Growth Strategy is: "Greening production and greening lifestyles and promoting sustainable consumption." Greening production involves implementing a clean industrialization strategy through reviewing and adjusting existing sectoral planning, using resources in an economical and efficient manner, encouraging the development of green technology, and fostering green agriculture with environmentally friendly structures and technologies. Additionally, greening lifestyles and promoting sustainable consumption means encouraging individuals, enterprises, and organizations to use environmentally friendly products. Thus, the policy to promote the green development of enterprises and organizations is a set of measures, regulations, and supports from the government designed to encourage them to adopt environmentally friendly production and business models, advancing sustainable development. Promoting policies include financial and tax support, technology assistance, support for recycling and reusing raw materials, environmental regulations, and the expansion of green markets, which help enterprises minimize their environmental impact and enhance competitiveness. Monetary and non-monetary policies influence individuals' intentions to purchase environmentally friendly green products, goods, or services (Börner et al., 2017; Huang & Ge, 2019). Based on these arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H7: Government policies positively influence the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement scales

The overall results of domestic and international studies serve as a foundation for developing a preliminary scale. The authors held a group discussion with managers or owners of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta and conducted in-depth interviews with several tourism experts to evaluate the scale's content, adjust the number of observed variables, and refine the wording to ensure that the preliminary scale aligns with the research objectives, survey participants, and the research environment. Each interview lasts approximately 15 minutes, conducted by phone with the respondents. The interviews took place in mid-November 2024. After this process, the study achieved the highest consensus among participants for the final scale, which includes seven independent factors and a dependent factor comprising 36 observed variables. The study utilized a five-level Likert scale, ranging from Level 1 – Strongly disagree to Level 5 – Strongly agree. Furthermore, the authors conducted a test scale using Cronbach's Alpha analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with SPSS 26 software to ensure integrity before performing formal data analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results of preliminary scale test

Scales	No.	Cronbach's Alpha	Smallest factor loading	Adopted
Attitudes	5	0.825	0.784	Ajzen (1991), Do et al. (2023), the authors
Subjective norms	5	0.817	0.773	
Perceived behavioral control	5	0.829	0.782	
Environmental concern	5	0.803	0.765	Chan et al. (2014), Yue et al. (2020), Ha et al. (2022), the authors
Perceived green consumption	5	0.811	0.759	Cherian and Jacob (2012), the authors
Expectation of the good life	5	0.819	0.768	Cai et al. (2020)

Scales	No.	Cronbach's Alpha	Smallest factor loading	Adopted
Government policies	5	0.808	0.761	Huang and Ge (2019), Dang and Hoang (2019), Nguyen et al. (2023), the authors
KMO = 0.723, Sig. = 0.000 Eigenvalue = 1.683, % of Variance = 72.839%				
Intention to pay for environmental services	1	0.834	0.798	The authors
KMO = 0.705, Sig. = 0.000 Eigenvalue = 2.134, % of Variance = 74.172%				

Source: Analysis results from SPSS 26

The results in Table 1 show that both independent and dependent factors have a Cronbach's Alpha above 0.8 and a Corrected Item-Total Correlation greater than 0.4. This indicates that no observed variables were removed from the scale and that it meets the criteria for reliability, internal consistency of each scale, and observed variables explaining significant factors in the scale. Additionally, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results reveal that the observed variables have factor loadings greater than 0.7, demonstrating the sound quality (see Appendix). Additionally, the KMO coefficient is 0.7, which is considered significant, and the Sig coefficient of the Bartlett test is less than 0.001. At an Eigenvalue cutoff of greater than 1.0, seven independent factors are extracted, accounting for a total variance of 72.839%, consistent with the original predicted groups. For the dependent factor, there is a single observed variable, and the Eigenvalue exceeds 2, explaining a total variance of 74.172% allocated to one factor. Therefore, the scale meets the requirements for conducting a formal survey.

3.2. Data collection

The survey is created on Google Doc to ensure the participants' identities remain secure, allowing online surveys to be conducted through chat applications and email. The participants are managers or owners of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta region, selected using a convenient non-probability sampling method to gather as many responses as possible in the shortest time from December 2024 to February 2025. The collected data was analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software to test the hypotheses in the proposed research model and the path coefficients. The PLS-SEM technique has the advantage of performing analyses with small sample sizes in the range of 100 to 300 samples (Hoyle, 1995), so it is suitable for this study. The authors distributed 260 questionnaires and recovered 211 usable ones after removing invalid responses, yielding a response rate of 81.1 percent. Out of the 221 respondents, 74.3 percent were male, 25.7 percent female, and all were between 40 and 50 years old with a university degree or higher. Tourism enterprises operating for less than 5 years with revenues over 500 million VND made up 62 percent, while those operating for more than 5 years with revenues over 1 billion VND accounted for 28 percent. More than 89.7 percent of tourism enterprises are aware of how to pay for environmental services, but only 41.2 percent offer green tourism products. Tourism enterprises attract 61.6 percent of international visitors to Vietnam and have a demand for green tourism products.

4. Research results

4.1. Measurement model analysis

The analysis results in Table 2 show that the scale demonstrates intrinsic consistency reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and composite reliability of factors exceeding 0.8. Additionally, an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5 indicates the scale has convergent validity. Furthermore, the lowest outer loading coefficient of the observed variables, which is above 0.7, confirms that they are of good quality and appropriate for further analysis.

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity

Measurement scales	Reliability		Convergent	Smallest outer loading
	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	
Attitudes	0.828	0.897	0.715	0.786
Subjective norms	0.821	0.893	0.712	0.780
Perceived behavioral control	0.832	0.908	0.721	0.792
Environmental concern	0.805	0.877	0.684	0.754
Perceived green consumption	0.814	0.885	0.702	0.773
Expectation of the good life	0.816	0.889	0.709	0.767
Government policies	0.810	0.881	0.695	0.789
Intention to pay for environmental services	-	-	-	1.000

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

The analysis results in Table 3 show that the scale achieves discriminant validity because the correlation coefficient of each factor is in the range of 0.827 to 0.854 (with a statistical significance level of less than 0.01). Additionally, the crossroad coefficients are the second root of the AVE coefficient of each factor and are greater than the correlation coefficients of each other factor pair. Besides, the correlation coefficient between the pairs of factors is less than the aggregate reliability, which supports the judgment that the scale achieves its discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell – Larcker)

Scales	Att	SN	PBC	EC	PGC	Exp	GP	Int
Att	0.845***							
SN	0.605***	0.844***						
PBC	0.582***	0.675**	0.849***					
EC	0.371**	0.442***	0.492**	0.827***				
PGC	0.776**	0.532***	0.388***	0.704***	0.838***			
Exp	0.529**	0.509**	0.660**	0.348***	0.456**	0.842***		
GP	0.643***	0.622***	0.547***	0.463***	0.642**	0.586***	0.834***	
Int	0.724**	0.478**	0.451***	0.694***	0.354***	0.513***	0.455**	1.000

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$, ***significant at $p < 0.001$

Att = Attitudes, SN = Subjective norms, PBC = Perceived behavioral control, EC = Environmental concern, PGC = Perceived green consumption, Exp = Expectation of the good life, GP = Government policies, Int = Intention to pay for environmental services

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

The results in Table 4 further confirm the discriminant validity of the scales, as shown by the correlation coefficients between factor pairs being less than 0.8 with a significance level below 0.01 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 4. Discriminant validity (HTMT)

Scales	Att	SN	PBC	EC	PGC	Exp	GP	Int
Att								
SN	0.285***							
PBC	0.468***	0.573***						
EC	0.502***	0.287**	0.384**					
PGC	0.337**	0.374**	0.249***	0.679**				
Exp	0.485***	0.460***	0.471***	0.714**	0.392***			
GP	0.431**	0.562**	0.347**	0.576***	0.257***	0.685**		
Int	0.664**	0.608**	0.262**	0.523**	0.427**	0.736***	0.396***	

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$, ***significant at $p < 0.001$

Att = Attitudes, SN = Subjective norms, PBC = Perceived behavioral control, EC = Environmental concern, PGC = Perceived green consumption, Exp = Expectation of the good life, GP = Government policies, Int = Intention to pay for environmental services

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

4.2. Structural model analysis

The analysis results in Table 5 indicate that the hypotheses have a VIF coefficient of less than 4, suggesting that the multicollinearity phenomenon does not occur (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, f^2 greater than 0.2 supports

the hypothesis that independent factors have a positive and significant influence on the dependent factor (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 5. VIF and effect size

Hypothesis	VIF	f ²	Effect size
H1	1.583	0.412	Large
H2	1.165	0.395	Large
H3	1.984	0.406	Large
H4	3.244	0.284	Medium
H5	2.751	0.217	Medium
H6	3.672	0.364	Large
H7	3.835	0.378	Large

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

The analysis results in Table 6 show that the corrected R² reaches 0.798, indicating that independent factors significantly explain the variance in dependent factors. Additionally, the adjusted R² also reaches 0.798, close to 1, reflecting a strong explanatory power of the independent factors for the dependent ones. Conversely, values closer to 0 suggest a lower level of explanation (Hair et al., 2019). The Q² coefficient of 0.524 signifies a high level of accuracy in predicting dependent factors from the independent ones or in the overall structural model's predictive power (Hair et al., 2019). Simultaneously, the SRMR coefficient of less than 0.1 confirms the suitability of the structural model with data collected from enterprises in the tourism sector in the Mekong Delta (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 6. Saturated model results

Scale	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²
Intention to pay for environmental services	0.812	0.798	0.524
SRMR	0.068		

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

The study employed the bootstrapping method with a sample size repeated 2000 times to test the research hypothesis (see Table 7).

Table 7. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	β	SE	t	Conclusion
H1	0.317	0.037	3.462***	Supported
H2	0.302	0.042	3.054***	Supported
H3	0.314	0.036	3.241***	Supported
H4	0.189	0.051	4.553**	Supported
H5	0.218	0.046	3.956**	Supported
H6	0.283	0.040	2.758**	Supported
H7	0.346	0.041	4.113***	Supported

Note: **significant at $p < 0.01$, ***significant at $p < 0.001$

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

Figure 2 presents the structural model of the hypothesis research framework.

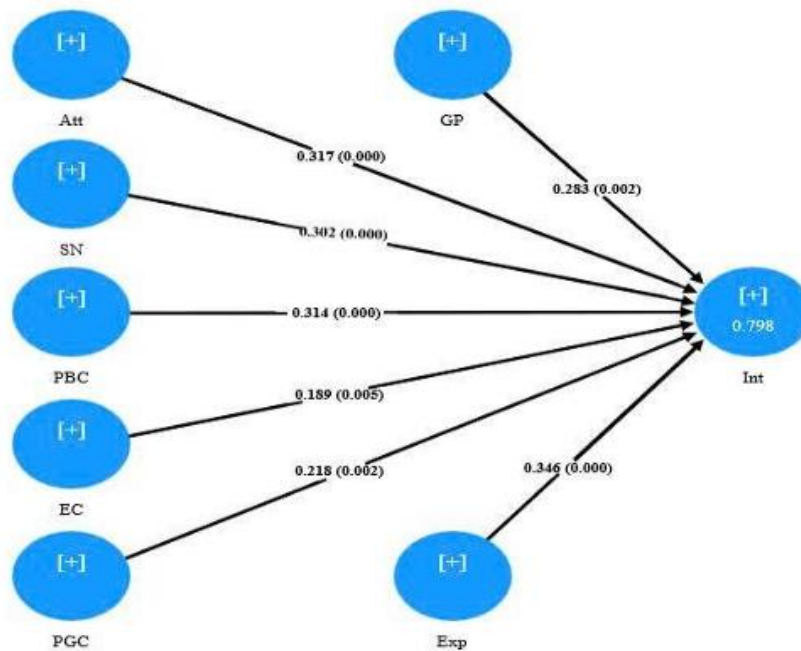


Figure 2. Structural model

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

The results of estimates from 2000 observations indicate that the original weights are meaningful to the mean weighting of bootstrapping, as they fall within the 95% confidence interval. ‘Attitudes’ ($\beta = 0.317$, $p < 0.001$), ‘Subjective norms’ ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.001$), ‘Perceived behavioral control’ ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.001$), ‘Environmental concern’ ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.01$), ‘Perceived green consumption’ ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.01$), ‘Expectation of the good life’ ($\beta = 0.283$, $p < 0.01$), and ‘Government policies’ ($\beta = 0.346$, $p < 0.001$) have a significant impact on the intention to pay for environmental services of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta.

5. Discussion and implications

The study has shown that attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, environmental concern, perceived green consumption, expectations of a good life, and government policies positively influence the intention to pay for environmental services in tourism enterprises. This result is consistent with Do et al. (2023), Nguyen and Nguyen (2024), Huang and Ge (2019).

Government policies have the most direct and strongest influence on the intention of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta to pay for environmental services. This aligns with the characteristics of the Mekong Delta, which is heavily affected by climate change, resource depletion, and environmental pollution. Therefore, the Vietnamese Government tends to prioritize policies that protect the environment and preserve the ecosystem more than in wealthier regions. It makes the intention to pay for environmental services by tourism enterprises here more directly influenced by government policies than in other regions. More importantly, most tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta are small and medium-sized, so their awareness of environmental responsibility is limited, and they mostly act based on policy pressure rather than voluntarily. Therefore, the government’s policies play a decisive role in their willingness to pay for environmental services. The government should develop policies tailored for small and medium-sized enterprises by establishing flexible contribution levels based on revenue size, helping enterprises avoid financial burdens when paying for environmental initiatives. Additionally, local governments should organize training programs and seminars to explain the benefits of environmental payment services for long-term business operations, sharing successful models and the economic benefits of participating in environmental service payments.

Next, the attitude was found to have a significant positive impact on the willingness to pay for environmental services among tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta. When enterprises have a positive attitude, they are more likely to be willing to pay for environmental services. Therefore, local authorities need to organize communication campaigns that emphasize the importance of paying for environmental services in protecting tourism resources, contributing to sustainable development and enhancing the image of "green" enterprises in the minds of customers. Additionally, it is important to enhance environmental awareness education and training by offering environmental knowledge and sustainable tourism courses for business owners and managers. Furthermore, the government should conduct regular surveys on enterprises' environmental attitudes and perceptions to identify trends and changes, develop policies, and craft effective communication messages to encourage business owners in the Mekong Delta to support paying for environmental services.

Finally, perceived behavioral control was found to have a significant positive effect on the intention of tourism enterprises in the Mekong Delta to pay for environmental services. When tourism enterprises feel they have the ability, resources, and conditions to pay for environmental services, their intention increases. Therefore, local authorities need to strengthen the capacity and knowledge of tourism enterprises by organizing training courses, in-depth seminars on environmental services, and providing simple, easy-to-apply practical manuals to help enterprises understand the process and reduce feelings of ambiguity and difficulty. Additionally, local authorities should simplify administrative procedures related to the registration and payment of environmental services and establish a one-stop mechanism for technical support and advice during the payment process. Moreover, designing financial support packages such as tax exemptions and reductions, along with green credit incentives for enterprises that pay for environmental services, is essential.

Conclusion

Research on the intention to pay for environmental services has become a topic that attracts many scholars' attention, but there is very little literature on the intention to pay for environmental services by enterprises in the tourism sector. Theoretically, the results from this study contribute to understanding the factors influencing willingness to pay for environmental services in the tourism sector by highlighting the impact of individual factors of business owners, including attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, environmental concern, perceived green consumption, and expectations of a good life. Therefore, the study applied the expanded TPB to explain the mechanism that leads to the formation of the intention to pay for environmental services of tourism enterprises and to empirically demonstrate that attitudes and perceptions of behavioral control positively influence the intention to pay for environmental services in the Mekong Delta. Consequently, promoting positive attitudes and awareness of behavioral control helps enhance the future willingness of tourism enterprises to pay for environmental services.

More importantly, the novelty of this study is in discovering that government policies play the most positive role in shaping the intentions of tourism enterprises to pay for environmental services in a socialist state governed by the rule of law, such as Vietnam, unlike in capitalist countries. This result confirms the central role of the state, with its policy considered a key lever to promote compliance and increase awareness of environmental responsibility among enterprises in Vietnamese conditions. In such a context, where the State has a strong influence on socio-economic regulation, administrative and legal tools continue to play a decisive role in shaping corporate behavior, especially regarding public interests like environmental protection.

Practically, the results of this study help local governments in the Mekong Delta understand the factors that influence tourism enterprises' willingness to pay for environmental services. Although the study presents interesting findings, it also has some limitations. First, data was collected from only one region of Vietnam, so the results cannot be generalized to other parts of the country. Second, because this study used cross-sectional data, there may be some bias in sampling. Therefore, future research should broaden the scope and include longitudinal data collection.

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Appendix. Outer loadings

Scales	Sign	Outer loadings
Attitudes	Att1	0.867
	Att2	0.786
	Att3	0.800
	Att4	0.845
	Att5	0.813
Subjective norms	SN1	0.780
	SN2	0.803
	SN3	0.816
	SN4	0.843
	SN5	0.819
Perceived behavioral control	PBC1	0.808
	PBC2	0.844
	PBC3	0.792
	PBC4	0.830
	PBC5	0.810
Environmental concern	EC1	0.788
	EC2	0.829
	EC3	0.790
	EC4	0.811
	EC5	0.754
Perceived green consumption	PGC1	0.799
	PGC2	0.773
	PGC3	0.821
	PGC4	0.837
	PGC5	0.793
Expectation of the good life	Exp1	0.809
	Exp2	0.849
	Exp3	0.824

Scales	Sign	Outer loadings
Government policies	Exp4	0.767
	Exp5	0.788
	GP1	0.835
	GP2	0.827
	GP3	0.789
	GP4	0.795
	GP5	0.806
Intention to pay for environmental services	Int	1.000

Source: Analysis results from SmartPLS 4.0

Data Availability Statement: More information and data can be found from the authors on a reasonable request.

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Nam Danh NGUYEN

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0744-4793>

Lan Ngoc Thi UONG

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8314-4074>

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