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Stakeholder Involvement and the Attainment of SDGs at Local Tourism Destinations: A Case Study in Vietnam

Abstract

This paper explores how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved at local tourism destinations through the collective efforts of stakeholders. A multiple-case study is conducted at Da Nang and Hue in Vietnam. These destinations experience a controversial concern between tourism development and natural/cultural preservation. A thematic analysis of qualitative data reveals the cooperation of various stakeholders to prevent the encroachment of tourism development in the natural environment in Da Nang or balance heritage preservation and tourism development in Hue. These collective efforts facilitate the achievement of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goal to attain various SDGs in each case. This research contributes to sustainability research by revealing the contribution and effects of collective actions in achieving the common goals related to the sustainable development of local destinations.

Keywords: SDGs, stakeholder involvement, tourism destinations, case study, Vietnam

1. Introduction

In 2025, the United Nations (UN) released the 2030 Agenda, including seventeen SDGs and 169 associated targets, intending to lead all global sectors toward sustainable development (UN, 2022). The Agenda sheds light on five key themes: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, in which tourism can contribute most to prosperity and the planet (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] & United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2017). Tourism is included directly in goals 8, 12 and 14, but tourism can contribute to all these goals (UNWTO, 2016a). If managed sustainably, tourism can stimulate environmental preservation and promote cultural differences and understanding among people and nations (UNWTO, 2016b). The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) designates tourism as a driver of the achievement of the SDGs; as being a primary sector of the world economy, tourism generates significant effects on economies, environments, societies and cultures around the globe (Bramwell & Lane, 2014; Pan et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic challenges the success of the Agenda by 2030, but it also is a unique opportunity for tourism to transform into sustainable development (Ćorak et al., 2020; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020) and the SDGs (Gössling et al., 2020). Tourism organisations and destinations can support the achievement of all SDGs, although their contribution is difficult to measure and control due to the complexity and immenseness of tourism value chains (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017).

The UNWTO states a need for an implementation framework to align tourism with these goals, empowering a broad range of stakeholders. The involvement of multiple stakeholders is needed to achieve the SDGs (Nguyen et al., 2019b), which is also central to SDG 17 (Scheyvens & Cheer, 2021). While multiple stakeholders are needed to achieve the SDGs, the literature predominantly examines the private sector's contribution. There

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needs to be more research on the role of various stakeholders, stakeholder involvement and collaboration in collective actions aiming at the SDGs. Furthermore, further research should be focused on transferring these global and universal goals to the local and other levels, attaching them to the specific context of localities (Raub & Martin-Rios, 2019). Given these critiques, this research adopts a case study to explore how SDGs are facilitated at local destinations through the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders. The following section will explain sustainable development goals and the tourism literature concerning SDGs.

2. Literature review

The formation of the SDGs is a following step of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ending in 2015. Still, the SDGs are broader than the MDGs regarding purpose, conception, and political process (Fukuda-Parr, 2016). While the MDGs commit to reducing poverty and target poor and developing countries, the SDGs aim to eradicate poverty and to provide a standard set of indicators for sustainable development in all nations, including both developing and developed (Bramwell et al., 2017; Ruhanen et al., 2019). In addition, the SDGs aim to balance environmental, social and economic pillars (Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Ruhanen et al., 2019). Pan et al. (2018) divide the SDGs into five groups to better understand the focus of these goals, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Sustainable development goals (Pan et al., 2018)

SDG1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 10	• Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction
SDG8, 9, 10 and 17	• Inclusive partnership and sustainable economic growth
SDG6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	• Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change
SDG8, 11, 12	• Cultural values, diversity and heritage
SDG16	• Mutual understanding, peace and security

The goals cover a wide range of development issues for all people from all countries, such as poverty reduction, healthy lives and well-being, quality education, gender equality, sustainable management of water, sustainable and modern energy, inclusive economic growth, employment, decent work, innovation, climate change, natural and cultural resource conservation, mutual understanding, peace and partnerships. With the comprehensive coverage, synergies and trade-offs exist between and within the goals (Cook et al., 2019) and challenge the implementation of the SDGs.

2.1. Tourism and SDGs

While recognising the SDGs and the contribution of tourism to the goals, tourism academics also criticise the goals. First, the SDGs are considered impossible to achieve, as the 17 SDGs, including 169 specific targets, are complex and ambitious. The triple win of the SDGs seems to be an unrealistic attempt (Scheyvens et al., 2016), which is daunting for organisations to involve in pursuing the goals (Grainger-Brown & Malekpour, 2019). Second, tourism scholars question the compatibility between sustainability in general and within the SDGs, as Higgins-Desbiolles (2018) theoretically argues that sustainability is incompatible with sustainable development goals. While the sustainability of the SDGs focuses on development and growth, Bramwell et al. (2017, p. 6) suppose that “sustainability is best achieved by pursuing a non-development path”. Hall (2019, p. 1052) also criticises that the UNWTO’s focus on tourism growth is “insufficient to achieve many of the SDGs; instead, attention needs to be paid to the social, economic and political process behind development”.

Tourism growth contributes to environmental change, such as climate change, and results in over-tourism and uneven development (Hall, 2019). The UNWTO's attention to tourist growth was further criticised as outdated when tourism growth dropped significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2020). Thus, trade-offs between and within the SDGs are unavoidable when aligning tourism with the goals (Cook et al., 2019; Gössling & Hall, 2019).

Despite these critiques, tourism scholars are finding ways to make tourism a driver of achieving the SDGs by 2030. However, the tourism papers working with the SDGs account for a small part compared with over 5000 documents in sustainable tourism literature (Sharpley, 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). The broad range of the SDGs leads to various approaches in tourism research concerning the SDGs, including critical frameworks (Boluk et al., 2019), inclusive tourism (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018), inclusive growth (Bianchi & de Man, 2020), responsible tourism (Burrai et al., 2019), triple bottom line (Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019), political ecology (Kato, 2019), sharing economy (Gössling & Hall, 2019), feminist perspective (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), indigenous approach (Smith & Spencer, 2020; Stumpf & Cheshire, 2019), geographical perspective (Scheyvens, 2018), corporation social responsibility (Hall, 2019), pro-poor tourism (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019), community participation (Carius & Job, 2019), network theory (Nguyen et al., 2019b), dignity (Winchenbach et al., 2019), precariat (Robinson et al., 2019), heterogeneous constructionism (Hall, 2019) and sustainable human resource management (Robinson et al., 2019).

Tourism scholars link tourism mostly with SDG8 (inclusive economic growth, productive employment and decent work), SDG12 (sustainable consumption and production), SDG14 (conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources) and least SDG7 (affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy) and SDG6 (sustainable management of water and sanitation). In addition, tourism is also a significant contributor to SDG1 (poverty reduction), SDG5 (gender equality), SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG13 (climate change). Furthermore, as Scheyvens and Hughes (2019, p. 1069) claim, "none of the global goals exists in isolation". The researchers provide evidence of the interconnections between the SDGs such as the SDGs 5, 6 and 8 (Alarcón & Cole, 2019), 4, 8 and 15 (Lyon & Hunter-Jones, 2019), 1, 5, 8 and 10 (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019), and 8 and 11 (Xiao et al., 2018). However, there is no universal way for all tourism sectors and destinations to pursue the SDGs; instead, a dual consideration of nature within relevant socio-economic processes is needed when studying the SDGs in tourism (Hall, 2019). Thus, these global and universal goals must be applied to the local level, attaching to the specific context of each destination (Raub & Martin-Rios, 2019).

2.2. Stakeholder involvement and the achievement of SDGs in tourism

Sustainable development research asserts the fundamental importance of multiple stakeholders in the success of sustainable tourism development (Lopes et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019b). The success of the SDGs involves the effort of both state and non-state actors (Grainger-Brown & Malekpour, 2019). Governments are claimed to have the role of creating an environment for private sectors to pursue sustainability goals (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019). The task of international organisations like UNWTO is undoubtedly expressed through its attempt to build guidelines, coordinate public and private sectors, and lead global tourism toward attaining the SDGs (Perdomo, 2016; UNWTO & UNDP, 2017). Although the attention of the UNWTO to development and growth is critiqued by academics, the UNWTO and its members commit to promoting tourism as a driver for economic growth, inclusive development and environmental preservation.

Some SDG studies are concerned with the involvement of broad stakeholders in realising the SDGs in tourism through inclusive tourism (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018), strategic framework (Kimbu & Tichaawa, 2018), planning framework (Lopes et al., 2020) and networking (Nguyen et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2019a). Indeed, a range of research provides evidence of the contribution of tourism to advocating inclusive partnerships and collaborations (SDG17) between stakeholders to achieve all the SDGs (Ferrer-Roca et al., 2020;

Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe, 2019; Smith & Spencer, 2020). However, the processes of converging stakeholders in partnerships and collaborations toward the goals are absent in these studies. Furthermore, despite a significant concern about the private sector's contribution, the tourism research relating to the SDGs has little attention on other stakeholders. However, inclusiveness is central and promoted in all SDGs (Kato, 2019). Some attempts consider the role of the local community (Carius & Job, 2019) and marginalised people (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). However, these stakeholders are regarded as benefit recipients of the SDG achievement instead of how they can contribute to the SDGs.

3. Methodology

This research aims to explore how the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders can contribute to the achievement of SDGs at the local level within a specific context. This research conducts a case study methodology based on two local destinations in Vietnam. A case study involves an empirical inquiry usually conducted in the field and engagement with diverse methods, sources of information, and analysis techniques (Sarantakos, 2013; Yin, 2014). This kind of methodology is suitable for investigating the “how” research question (Yin, 2014) and enables a deep understanding of stakeholder involvement and interactions (Woodside, 2010). Specifically, the research adopted a multiple-case study approach as the evidence extracted from multiple-case studies is more robust and reliable than a single case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, the research revealed comparable and contrasting results related to the achievement of SDGs in two different contexts (Yin, 2014).

3.1. Case context

Vietnam is a socialist country in the eastern Indochinese Peninsula in Southeast Asia. The country has become a popular destination for international tourists since the 1990s after the Vietnam government initiated a fundamental Renovation named “Đổi Mới” in 1986. As a result, tourism has been designated a critical economic sector that stimulates other economic sectors. Between 2005-2019, the average growth rate of tourists was approximately 14% per year (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism [VNAT], 2019). Like other countries, Vietnam's tourism was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it has been recovering significantly. The most significant problems of Vietnam tourism are environmental pollution, poor infrastructure, and low product quality (Nguyen, 2021). Tourism development focuses mainly on promoting cultural and natural resources and constructing facilities to obtain economic benefits, which causes a range of environmental problems (Truong, 2013).

Within this context of Vietnam, this research selects Da Nang and Hue for the specific analysis cases. These provincial destinations are located in the central region marketed as ‘the Essence of Vietnam’ (Thanh Tâm, 2017), attracting many domestic and international tourists. However, tourism in Da Nang has led to social and environmental concerns, while tourism in Hue has led to cultural heritage and economic challenges.

The unit of analysis is a fundamental component of case study research, as it relates to the research questions and objectives and defines the focus of research within particular contexts and/or locations (Yin, 2014). In this research, the unit of analysis is stakeholder collective actions relating to a specific practical tourism development at the Son Tra Peninsula of Da Nang city and the Complex of Hue Monuments of Hue province. Son Tra is a well-known natural attraction known for the uniqueness of biodiversity within Da Nang and Vietnam. The Complex of Hue Monuments is a UNESCO World Heritage site, the primary tourist attraction for the Hue province and the central region of Vietnam.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

One of the hallmarks of case study research is engagement with multiple data sources to explore a phenomenon in its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This research engages various data sources through document analysis, in-depth interviews and observation to discover interactions, patterns,

and themes and access a deeper understanding of collective efforts at the two destinations. These methods are processed separately in Da Nang and Hue to reflect Yin's (2014) recommendation on replication in a multiple-case study. The data were collected from June to October 2018. Then, in April 2022, a follow-up interview with the same participants was conducted to explore whether the outcomes of collective actions had been prolonged. Indeed, they have remained until the time of writing this manuscript.

Document analysis is one avenue for collecting evidence for a case study, as documents provide valuable background material (Yin, 2014). The data collected for this study include government and tourism industry meeting documents, administrative reports, annual reports, existing research studies related to each case study, and media articles published in local, national, and international outlets. Media articles are gathered through online (e.g. news reports) and offline (e.g. newspaper) platforms. Approximately 600 documents are collected, including over 320 written documents and videos relating to tourism development in Da Nang and over 250 in Hue. The intensive document analysis complements the interviews and observations to explain the research phenomenon more accurately in specific case contexts.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews explore the lived experience of individuals involved in tourism and gain an in-depth understanding of stakeholder actions in collective actions (Hillman & Radel, 2018) related to the implementation of goals for sustainability at Son Tra and the Complex of Hue Monuments. Snowball sampling is employed to identify informants representing their organisation and knowledgeable of tourism in the area. This non-probability sampling is commonly used in qualitative research, particularly in case studies with a small sample size (Durbary & Durbary, 2018). Interviews are conducted with 16 managers from various stakeholders from two studied destinations, as illustrated in Table 1. Participants have at least a bachelor's degree and have worked in the tourism sector at the destinations for over five years.

Table 1
Interview participants

Stakeholders	Quantity
Government body	03
Local destination management organisation (DMO)	02
Tourism business association	02
Non-profit organisation (NPO)	02
University researcher	02
Environmental conservation non-government organisation (NGO)	01
Tour operator	03
Hotel	01
Total	16

Observations are made by taking detailed field notes on individuals' behaviour and activities in the socio-cultural context of each destination (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The observation activities involve travelling around the localities, observing tourism-related activities, participating in meetings, taking photographs, and having informal conversations with tourists, local people, taxi drivers, cyclists, and vendors. Marked demographic notes on people and activities are recorded. Reflexive notes of the researcher's thoughts, feelings, ideas, and impressions are also diarised (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis involves thematic analysis that identifies, analyses and reports patterns (themes) within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding begins with a deductive approach and then inductively adds new codes as they emerge in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The deductive approach involves pre-determined codes relating to sustainable development, stakeholder involvement, collective actions, the natural environment, and cultural heritage. The inductive approach explores other codes relating to outcomes and effects of collaborative activities, such as universal access, stakeholders involved, partnerships, and the formation of cooperative networks. The resulting texts are compared with the

UNWTO's recommendations on how tourism can contribute to implementing UNSDGs in each case. Then a cross-case synthesis identifies similarities and differences between the two cases and practices generalisation of findings applicable to both issues (Burns, 2012).

4. Findings

Sustainable tourism development is a particular concern in both studied destinations. While the Da Nang case is characterised by a controversial relationship between tourism development and natural environment preservation, the Hue case is featured by the relationships between tourism development and cultural heritage preservation. These cases provide examples of the imbalance between development and conservation. While in Da Nang, development overwhelms protection; preservation is a barrier to development in Hue. These differences explain the difference between the two cases regarding the SDGs facilitated.

4.1. Da Nang: The imbalance between tourism development and natural environment conservation

As the leading economic sector of Da Nang, tourism provides employment opportunities, increases income and living standards for local people, and generates tax revenues for the government. The contribution of tourism in Da Nang involves improving the local economy through direct and indirect subsidies that have significant flow-on effects on other economic sectors. In the five years between 2014 and 2019, tourism generated over 22% of the GRDP (gross regional domestic product) of Da Nang. Tourism development in Da Nang is concentrated on economic growth by constructing tourism accommodations and entertainment sites. For example, the number of hotels in Da Nang increased by 250%, from 260 hotels in 2011 to 693 in 2017. The rapid development of tourism in Da Nang caused environmental pollution and ecological degradation (e.g. sewage management, waste, water shortage, and beach environmental pollution). These issues frequently appeared in public and media reports (newspapers, online social networking sites, and broadcasts) and Da Nang government annual reports. Social and cultural impacts also existed, such as conflicts between tourists and residents and between residents and tourism businesses. Social problems, such as noise, crowding, rise in living costs, and traffic congestion, regularly affected resident amenities. Residential areas were proximate to beaches and were redeveloped to construct entertainment facilities and tourist accommodations, resulting in the relocation of residents and the appearance of resident exclusion zones.

Within this context, a socio-political movement led by the local community has appeared publicly in the mass media since 2017. Residents fiercely opposed a newly approved tourism development plan for the Son Tra Peninsula of Da Nang. Community objection to this plan involved stopping further tourism development from protecting biodiversity and maintaining public access to the peninsula. Before this community-led movement, Da Nang residents opposed the construction of some tourism projects. However, only their opposition to this tourism development plan at Son Tra received significant public attention. The following section will provide further information on the significance of the peninsula and the newly approved tourism plan to explain why the community-led opposition movement develops and succeeds in protecting the natural environment of Son Tra.

4.1.1. *Collective action to challenge tourism development and protect the natural environment*

The Son Tra Peninsula is about 10 kilometres from Da Nang City centre to the Northeast. Most of the peninsula is conserved as the Son Tra Nature Reserve, a protected national park. The Reserve has approximately 300 plant species and several hundred kinds of fauna, including rare animals, such as melogale personal, felis bengalensis, rhesus macaque, and phoenix butterflies. Son Tra's underwater biodiversity includes coral, sea grass, seaweed, molluscs, Echinodermata, and plankton species. Specifically, Son Tra is popularly known as Monkey Mountain because it is home to the red-shanked douc langur, an Oldworld Monkey species,

identified as a critically endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and appears on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. They are only found in the natural habitat of central Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

In 2013, the Vietnamese government intended to develop Son Tra as a national tour. The Prime Minister assigned various government bodies to write the Son Tra Tourism Development Master Plan (TDMP). All contributors to making this plan were from local, provincial, and national government bodies. Other key stakeholders, such as tourism businesses, associations, research institutes, and residents across Da Nang, were not involved or consulted in developing this plan. In November 2016, the Central Government approved the TDMP. The program included 23 proposed tourism projects on Son Tra (including 18 resorts offering 1600 hotel rooms), an infrastructure system to serve tourists, and a red-shanked douc feeding area. The construction of these projects could destroy approximately 70% of the existing feeding areas of the douc and result in a significant loss of ecological habitat for the endangered doucs (Lippold et al., 2018).

After the TDMP was announced, public opinion was raised to oppose the TDMP as the expansion of tourism development was claimed as an unacceptable impact on the natural environment that would disrupt the natural biodiversity of Son Tra. Public opposition to Son Tra's tourism development widened throughout 2017 and 2018. The "Save Son Tra" campaign was initiated to raise public awareness of the potentially detrimental effects of tourism development at Son Tra and to object to the plan's implementation. This opposition resulted in stakeholder contestation of the TDMP and a significant increase in public concern about the proposed development.

A public action network was informally formed with tourism associations, government staff, tourism businesses, NGOs, residents, tourists, and experts. Multiple stakeholders expressed public concern in press interviews, media reports, and workshops. They signed a petition to the central government, asking for reconsideration of the TDMP and keeping Son Tra as a nationally protected area with no more tourism facilities to be built on the peninsula. In response to this heightened public concern, the Central Government ceased implementing this plan to reassess the environmental impacts and conduct community consultation with residents and industry professionals. The implementation of this plan has remained ceased until now. More importantly, as an effect of this collective action, the community voice toward other tourism development aspects had been considered in the government decision- and policy-making. Thus, the formation of this network and its collective actions allowed the community's voice to be heard and included in government decision-making and protected the natural biodiversity of the Son Tra peninsula.

4.1.2. The achievement of SDGs

Tourism development encroaching on the natural environment has been a common problem in many destinations and is challenging to handle. In this case, the formation and operation of the public action network contribute to dealing with this issue in Da Nang. The cooperative effort through collective actions informs the attainment of SDG17 in Da Nang city for sustainable development in the Son Tra peninsula. The goal expresses the need for an inclusive partnership to achieve all SDGs (Nguyen et al., 2019b). This network involves various stakeholders, facilitates cooperation, and aims at natural environment protection, which is the focus of SDG 17. Natural resources, technology, place, and other materials are involved in the process of collective actions, which motivates, connects, and convinces tourism businesses, residents, environmental organisations, tourists, and government bodies to prevent the encroachment of tourism development on the marine and terrestrial biodiversity (Nguyen, 2021). The stakeholders are located at Son Tra, across and outside Da Nang. The varying locations of actors suggest that achieving sustainability goals at Son Tra (a local tourist site) is a collective effort of diverse actors, surpassing the territorial borders of actors and the destination. Therefore, various stakeholders' collaborative efforts facilitate attaining more SDGs.

The collective actions contribute directly to conserving and preserving fragile marine ecosystems at Son Tra, the heart of SDG14. These actions also facilitate the processing of SDG15, which aims to “conserve and preserve biodiversity, generate revenue as an alternative livelihood to local communities” (UNWTO, 2016b). In addition, preserving wildlife, ecosystems, and landscape, particularly at Son Tra, could minimise the effects of climate change in the coastal area. Climate change has significantly affected the coastal regions of Vietnam, resulting in erosion and water shortage (Tran et al., 2014). SDG13 expresses the action to combat climate change and, in this case, is indicated by ensuring the protection of the natural environment and reducing hard surfacing through development. First, the public action network involves local people and various communities in challenging tourism development to preserve biodiversity. The participation of communities in tourism development assists in the implementation of SDG10, which focuses on community development and reducing inequalities (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017).

Two other outcomes of the network and collective actions are related to SDG11. First, this goal indicates inclusive, safe and sustainable cities for citizens and tourists. After public protestation, some resident exclusion zones in Da Nang were eliminated, and universal accessibility at Son Tra was maintained for residents and tourists. Stopping the TDMP ensures that the natural assets are preserved, and the douc habitat is protected in tourism development. According to UNWTO (2016b), these positive outcomes are the contribution tourism stakeholders can make to attaining SDG11.

4.2. Hue: The imbalance between tourism development and cultural heritage preservation

Tourism development in Hue province predominantly depends on cultural heritage. Cultural heritage, on the one hand, is essential for tourism development in Hue; on the other hand, it obstructs tourism development due to the strict preservation of the Complex of Hue Monuments. Although Hue Province possesses various natural and human-made tourism resources, tourism is primarily based on cultural heritage, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Hue’s essential cultural heritage attractions are the Complex of Hue monuments and the Vietnamese Court Music. Tourist activities are mainly concentrated at the Complex of Hue Monuments located in Hue City. The Complex is located along the Perfume River (Huong River) in Hue City and several adjacent areas in Hue Province. It is a royal architectural complex that includes the Citadel, the palace, the mausoleum, the temple, the pagoda, the town, and the garden. The Complex of Hue Monuments reflects the overall appearance of Hue as an eastern capital that developed during the feudal era of the Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century. Administrative and military functions of the Empire were concentrated at the Citadel involving the Imperial Residence, the Hoang Thanh (Imperial City), the Tu Cam Thanh (Forbidden Purple City) and related royal palaces.

Since 1993, when the Complex of Hue Monuments was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Hue Government and many international organisations have been involved in restoring the physical and cultural heritage of the Monuments. In 1995 when Hue tourism was still small-scale, UNESCO, the Vietnamese government, and the Hue Provincial government established an early effort and cooperation to balance tourism development with preserving the ecological, social and cultural environment (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1995). Hue province's tangible and intangible culture has been well-preserved in tourism development because of UNESCO-accredited World Heritage status.

After experiencing slow but steady growth in tourist arrivals until 2015, numbers began to decline in 2015 and continued to drop through 2016. The predominant focus on cultural heritage tourism with little innovation in tourism products is claimed to be the reason for this decline. However, this decline in tourist growth leads to the Hue government prioritising the development of new tourism product offerings in Hue Province to rejuvenate the tourism industry. Thus, the number of tourist arrivals to Hue Province in 2018 and 2019 increased by approximately 14% and 11.5%, respectively.

The Hue government policies to sustain tourism growth in the Hue Province focus on tourism development within Hue City, particularly within the heritage sites. In the General Plan for Tourism Development of the Province from 2013 to 2030, the Hue government positions cultural tourism as the core product based on tangible and intangible cultural heritage. There exists controversy among many historical and cultural experts and the Hue Monuments Conservation Centre, which raises issues related to improvements of infrastructure and tourism services in the Monument areas. Improvements are an effort to increase tourist arrivals. However, according to various historical and cultural experts in Hue, improvements would infringe on the Monuments, potentially damage the site and infringe on heritage conservation legislation. Because operating more tourism services is mainly for tourist demands, more tourists would visit the Monuments, posing a threat of exceeding the site's carrying capacity. Tensions exist between the need to preserve the heritage of Hue Province while growing and developing tourism. Specifically, tourism planning tends to primarily concentrate on increasing visitation to the Complex of Hue Monuments. As a heritage site, visitation beyond carrying capacity can cause irreversible damage to the Monuments (du Cros & McKercher, 2014).

4.2.1. Cooperative networks to expand tourism while protecting cultural heritage

The Hue government is primarily responsible for coordinating multiple stakeholders to deal with these problems, particularly the Hue Department of Tourism, the Hue Monuments Conservation Centre and the Hue Tourism Association (Nguyen, 2020). This coordination aims to grow tourist numbers and extend their stay in Hue without or with minimal effects on the monuments. The data reveal that these organisations collaborate with stakeholders and identify four directions to achieve this overall goal. The intention is to simultaneously implement these four directions to facilitate the co-achievement of heritage conservation and tourism development. Heritage conservation involves (1) preserving tangible cultural heritage by decentralising tourism from the Monument areas and (2) restoring intangible cultural heritage by embedding traditional art performances in tourism services. Tourism development involves (1) increasing tourist growth and length of stay by diversifying tourism products and (2) increasing tourist experience.

In implementing these directions, the Hue government bodies converge stakeholders into three networks. Each network operates for specific purposes, confined to a geographical area and involving actors from various locales. The first network focuses on preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage at the Complex of Hue Monuments with the involvement of conservation organisations, government bodies responsible for culture and tourism management, tourism associations, and experts. The second network involves mainly tourism stakeholders of Hue city, where the Complex is located, including tourism associations, the city government bodies, hospitality businesses, tour operators, and residents. This network aims to diversify tourism products and maintain a green, clean and safe environment in Hue city to increase the tourist experience. The third network aims to develop remote tourist sites outside Hue city to deconcentrate tourists at the heritage site and improve the tourist experience. This study involves destination management organisations, tourism associations, tour operators, and the local community to achieve this goal.

The government plays a leading role in these networks. It influences almost all tourism activities at the Monuments, and in Hue province, the local community and the Hue businesses are significantly involved in balancing conservation and development. Tourists are offered new opportunities to visit rural areas (craft villages and ancient houses), spiritual sites (pagodas, temples), lagoons, beaches, and mountain areas (eco-tourism, community-based tourism). Thus, by establishing these three networks, the Hue government attracts more tourists, encourages them to stay longer, maintains the preservation of the Monuments, revives the intangible cultural heritage, and develops tourism in less-developed areas.

4.2.2. *The achievement of SDGs*

Balancing the preservation and development of tourism destinations is a difficult task requiring the cooperation of various stakeholders (Timothy, 2011). In this case, the abovementioned networks are established and work to balance tourism development and heritage preservation in Hue Province. The establishment of the three networks aims to recover tourism while maintaining heritage preservation in Hue Province (Nguyen, 2020). These networks involve a wide range of stakeholders, particularly residents and local enterprises, promote local culture, and encourage the economic development of different areas in the province, not only in the Monument areas. As a result, pursuing the strategy advocated by the operation of the three networks enables Hue tourism to be developed sustainably in three dimensions: social, cultural and economic.

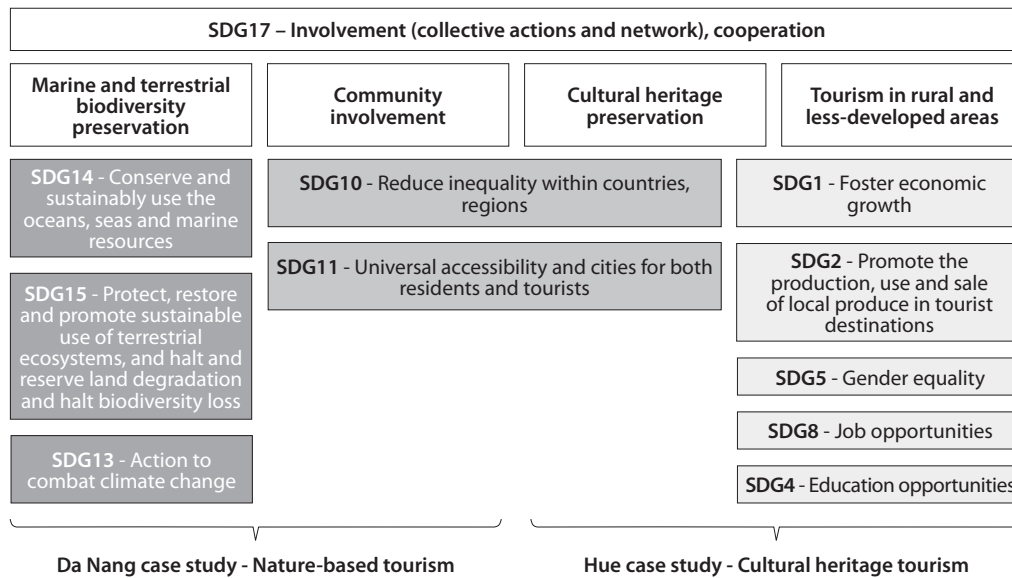
The cooperation of various stakeholders in the three networks supports the implementation of inclusive partnerships (SDG17) to achieve SDG1, SDG2, SDG4, SDG5, SDG8, SDG10, and SDG11. Establishing the three networks suggests a formal strategy that should be consciously and deliberately developed. In this strategy, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage is preserved, and an environmentally friendly city (Hue city) is promoted for both residents and tourists. These focuses are the centre of SDG11. This goal indicates that “a city that is not good for its citizens is not good for tourists”, and sustainable development in tourism has the potential to preserve cultural heritage and benefits the community. Furthermore, developing new tourist localities and products is expected to provide more job opportunities and improve local living standards around the Monuments and remote tourist sites. These results are the critical target of SDG1 (ending poverty in tourism development), SDG8 (creating job opportunities for women and youth) and SDG10 (reducing imbalances between urban and rural areas).

The operation of the third network aims to decentralise tourism to rural areas and craft villages while enhancing the tourist experience. These outcomes are facilitated by SDG2, emphasising sustainable agriculture's role. Moreover, this network involves residents and contributes to developing local agricultural and handicraft products, which would generate income for the local community. According to the Hue city government interviewee, women account for a significant part of labour in rural areas and most of Hue's craft villages. Tourism development in these areas would engage women in economic and social activities, which is at the heart of SDG5 (gender equality). All three networks offered free training courses to less advantaged individuals from the local community and cyclo-drivers, which provided educational opportunities for many people, which is central to SDG4.

5. Discussion

This research reveals how SDG17 could be achieved by focusing on the collective actions of multiple stakeholders. SDG17 expresses collaboration and inclusive partnerships between various actors and sectors for sustainable tourism. In this research, partnerships are established across the borders of each local destination to involve national and international actors in actions for sustainability goals. These actions initially transform tourism in the two studied destinations into a scenario advocating the SDGs. Different sets of goals are facilitated in each destination, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, indicating the interconnection between the objectives found in other SDG studies (Scheyvens & Hughes, 2019; Xiao et al., 2018). The achievement of the UNSDGs in each single-case study of this research emphasises the involvement of various tourism actors to preserve the natural biodiversity or cultural heritage and empower the local community. This finding suggests that if destinations pursue sustainable tourism from a broad view of sustainability, the destinations can contribute to implementing the SDGs, as found in this research.

Figure 2
Implementation of SDGs



Note: Dark grey color illustrate the SDGs facilitated in the Da Nang case study. The light grey boxes represent the SDGs promoted in the Hue case study. The medium grey boxes represent the SDGs enabled in both cases.

The potential attainment of the specific SDGs in each case provides evidence for the relationship between the destination's socio-cultural, economic and environmental context and the SDGs. The Da Nang case study considers social and ecological sustainability; thus, the facilitated SDGs are relevant to natural resource protection and community involvement. The relevance of SDG14 and SDG15 in the Da Nang case study particularly expresses the role of local community involvement in protecting natural resources. The Hue case study examines social, cultural, and economic sustainability; thus, the facilitated SDGs are relevant to heritage preservation, local community living, and new tourism development to improve the local economy in the Hue Province. The prioritisation of SDG1, SDG2, and SDG8 in the Hue case study likely indicates the focus of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda on development and growth.

The potential attainment of SDG10 and SDG11 in both cases indicates a specific benefit of aligning tourism with the SDGs by facilitating SDG17. The involvement of various stakeholders, including the local community (residents and SMEs), in cooperation and partnerships for sustainability can make tourism “a powerful tool for community development and reducing inequalities” (that is the heart of SDG10) (UNWTO, 2016b). By operationalising SDG17, the voices and interests of the community, government, and tourism businesses can be brought together and work to ensure universal accessibility of tourist areas and infrastructure for both tourists and local people. This outcome aligns with UNWTO’s suggestion that tourism can contribute to SDG11, a sustainable development goal implying that a tourism destination must be suitable for both citizens and tourists.

6. Conclusion

This research set out to examine how the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders can contribute to the attainment of SDGs at local destinations. Using a multiple-case study approach, this research focuses on facilitating SDG17, centring on inclusive partnerships and networking of various stakeholders. This research finds SDG17 essential to the operationalisation of the other SDGs. Specifically, this research argues that SDG10, SDG11, SDG13, SDG14, and SDG15 are facilitated in Da Nang, while SDG1, SDG2, SDG4,

SDG5, SDG8, SDG10, and SDG11 are enabled in Hue. The different set of SDGs facilitated in each case stems from their destination-specific social, cultural, and economic distinctions. The discussion also reveals the benefit of aligning tourism with the SDGs by facilitating SDG17 in both destinations. Facilitating SDG17 can directly achieve two critical outcomes in local destinations: local community involvement and universal accessibility of tourism infrastructure and facilities for both local people and tourists. These aspects are the centre of various SDGs, particularly SDG10 and SDG11.

With a focus on the achievement of SDGs, this research contributes to sustainability research by exploring the effects of collective actions in achieving common goals relating to sustainable development and in facilitating local community involvement at local destinations. The local community, the critical stakeholder essential for sustainable development (Eshun & Tichaawa, 2020; Giampiccoli et al., 2020), can be involved in sustainable development through involvement in collective action networks where they can act for the shared sustainability goals. These findings have critical practical contributions for DMOs to implement the SDGs by establishing cooperative networks and collective actions. Moreover, each case's different set of SDGs suggests the need to attach local conditions to practising sustainable development.

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