



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.sch.3464.2013>

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM ASSOCIATED WITH GREEN GROWTH THROUGH AGRICULTURAL LIVELIHOOD KNOWLEDGE ECOSYSTEMS IN VINH LONG

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Article history

Received: 28/5/2026; Received in revised form: 12/7/2026; Accepted: 20/8/2026

Abstract

This study examines how livelihood knowledge is transformed into learning experiences in the development of educational tourism associated with green growth at agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long Province, using a knowledge ecosystem approach. Ecological knowledge, farming experience, collective memory, and local ways of interacting with nature are incorporated into educational experiences through storytelling, field-based interpretation, and community engagement. The study employs a qualitative approach that combines field surveys, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis conducted at Con Chim, Con Ho, and Nhi Hoa from 2023 to 2026. The findings indicate that “knowledge mapping” plays a central role in transforming lived knowledge into meaningful learning experiences for visitors, thereby contributing to a gradual shift from landscape-based tourism toward knowledge-oriented tourism. In this process, local communities emerge as key actors in shaping learning experiences and transmitting ecological knowledge. Accordingly, the destination value is no longer determined primarily by tangible resources but increasingly by their capacity to foster reflective understanding, facilitate community learning, and cultivate local green learning ecosystems.

Keywords: *Agricultural livelihoods, educational tourism, green growth, knowledge ecosystems, knowledge mapping, Vinh Long Province.*

Cite: Ta, D. L., & Duong, D. M. (2026). Educational tourism associated with green growth through agricultural livelihood knowledge ecosystems in Vinh Long. *Dong Thap University Journal of Science*, 15(7), 95-113. <https://doi.org/10.52714/dthu.sch.3464.2013>

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DU LỊCH GIÁO DỤC GẮN VỚI TĂNG TRƯỞNG XANH TỪ CÁC HỆ TRI THỨC SINH KẾ NÔNG NGHIỆP Ở VĨNH LONG

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Lịch sử bài báo

Ngày nhận: 28/5/2026; Ngày nhận chỉnh sửa: 12/7/2026; Ngày duyệt đăng: 20/8/2026

Tóm tắt

Bài viết phân tích quá trình chuyển hóa tri thức sinh kế thành trải nghiệm học tập trong phát triển du lịch giáo dục gắn với tăng trưởng xanh tại các điểm đến thực hành sinh kế nông nghiệp ở tỉnh Vĩnh Long thông qua tiếp cận hệ sinh thái tri thức. Các tri thức môi trường, kinh nghiệm canh tác, kỷ ức cộng đồng và văn hóa ứng xử với tự nhiên được chuyển hóa thành trải nghiệm nhận thức thông qua kể chuyện, hướng dẫn thực địa và tương tác cộng đồng. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định tính thông qua khảo sát thực địa, quan sát tham dự, phỏng vấn sâu và phân tích chủ đề tại các điểm đến Cồn Chim, Cồn Hô và Nhị Hoà trong giai đoạn 2023-2026. Cơ chế “ánh xạ tri thức” giữ vai trò trung tâm trong việc chuyển hóa tri thức sống thành trải nghiệm học tập cho du khách, góp phần hình thành xu hướng chuyển dịch từ “du lịch tiêu dùng cảnh quan” sang “du lịch tiêu dùng tri thức”. Trong quá trình này, cộng đồng địa phương trở thành chủ thể kiến tạo trải nghiệm học tập và lan tỏa tri thức môi trường. Giá trị điểm đến không còn phụ thuộc chủ yếu vào tài nguyên hữu hình mà chuyển sang khả năng tạo chiều sâu nhận thức, thúc đẩy học tập cộng đồng và hình thành các hệ sinh thái học tập xanh tại địa phương.

Từ khoá: *Ánh xạ tri thức, du lịch giáo dục, hệ sinh thái tri thức, sinh kế nông nghiệp, tăng trưởng xanh, Vĩnh Long.*

1. Introduction

For many decades, agriculture has primarily been understood in terms of food production and livelihood maintenance. However, as development paradigms have evolved, agricultural spaces have increasingly come to be viewed as multidimensional value systems in which ecological systems, cultural practices, indigenous knowledge, collective memory, and social adaptability are deeply intertwined. This transformation reflects a broader shift in the understanding of sustainable development, moving beyond the pursuit of economic growth toward a long-term balance among people, natural resources, and quality of life. Agricultural livelihood practices, therefore, are no longer regarded solely as forms of productive labor but also as repositories of environmental knowledge, farming culture, ecological memory, and adaptive experience accumulated over generations within local communities. Such characteristics are particularly evident in the riverine agricultural regions of the Mekong Delta, where community life has long been shaped by seasonal water flows, cultivation cycles, and continuous adaptation to environmental change.

These transformations in development thinking have also reshaped approaches to tourism. Whereas destination competitiveness was once largely determined by natural resources and infrastructure investment, contemporary tourism increasingly places a greater value on experiential depth and meaningful engagement (Butler, 1999; Saarinen, 2006). Within this context, educational tourism has emerged as an approach that emphasizes learning through lived experience, in which visitors do not merely travel for sightseeing or leisure but also participate in processes of observation, reflection, and deeper understanding of living environments. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory suggests that knowledge is generated through the transformation of experience, while Ballantyne et al. (2011) demonstrate that environmentally oriented experiences can have long-term effects on environmental awareness and sustainability-related behavior. From this perspective, agricultural spaces are not only sites of production but also potential settings for social learning when local knowledge is appropriately organized, interpreted, and communicated. Tourism experiences, therefore, extend beyond "seeing" to encompass processes of understanding, experiencing, and reflecting on nature, labor, and community livelihoods.

As green growth becomes an increasingly important development orientation, the need to restructure the relationship between resource use and value creation has become more evident. Vietnam's National Green Growth Strategy for 2021-2030, with a vision toward 2050, emphasizes the greening of economic sectors, sustainable consumption, and efficient resource use (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2021). In tourism, this orientation concerns not only visitor growth and revenue generation but also the conservation of natural resources, the promotion of environmental awareness, the strengthening of community values, and the enhancement of local adaptive capacity in response to socio-ecological change. Consequently, recent studies on sustainable tourism have shifted attention from the exploitation of tangible resources toward the development of value ecosystems grounded in knowledge, experience, and community participation. Research on sustainable livelihoods by Chambers and Conway (1992) and Scoones (1998) similarly emphasizes that livelihoods involve not only income generation but also the capacity to sustain resources and adapt over time. From this perspective, agricultural livelihood practices embody multiple layers of value that extend beyond purely economic dimensions, including farming experience, labor skills, water-use practices, environmental adaptation, and community customs. These values can become important resources for experiential learning and sustainability awareness when transformed into learning content within tourism activities.

Within this context, Vinh Long Province remains one of the localities where river-based livelihoods and orchard agriculture continue to exhibit strong ecological and cultural characteristics. Fruit orchards, riverside farming systems, traditional craft villages, and the everyday lives of communities in southern Vietnam not only shape local identity but also embody forms of practical knowledge that can be transformed into educational experiences. However, in current practice, most forms of agricultural tourism remain focused on landscape appreciation, local food tasting, and short-term experiential activities, while the educational potential embedded in local livelihood practices has not been fully recognized as a resource for tourism development. Although previous studies on sustainable livelihoods, agritourism, and educational tourism have highlighted the importance of community participation, experiential learning, and sustainable development, relatively little attention has been paid to how livelihood knowledge can be transformed into learning experiences for visitors and to the role of local communities as knowledge creators and interpreters in educational tourism. This research gap calls for a reconsideration of agricultural destinations not merely as tourism spaces but as living knowledge systems capable of conveying ecological knowledge, livelihood culture, and values of sustainable development through direct engagement.

Based on this perspective, the present study approaches agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long as spaces capable of generating learning experiences connected to the environment, culture, and community life. Rather than focusing on expanding tourism consumption, the study seeks to identify the educational dimensions embedded within livelihood practices and to examine how agricultural resources and local knowledge are transformed into meaningful learning experiences through the mechanism of knowledge mapping. On that basis, the study analyzes the emergence of educational tourism associated with green growth at agricultural livelihood destinations while explaining the transition from landscape-based tourism to knowledge-oriented tourism in the context of contemporary rural development.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Educational Tourism Associated with Livelihoods and Green Growth

Foundational studies on sustainable livelihoods suggest that livelihoods involve not only income-generating activities but also the capacity of communities to adapt to change, maintain resources, and recover from socio-environmental disruptions. Chambers and Conway (1992) conceptualized sustainable livelihoods in terms of the ability to sustain livelihoods without undermining the long-term resource base, while Scoones (1998) further developed the livelihood framework by examining the interactions among assets, institutions, adaptive strategies, and development outcomes. From this perspective, agricultural livelihood practices encompass not merely productive activities but also environmental knowledge, farming experience, community customs, and forms of knowledge accumulated across generations within local communities. Alongside livelihood studies, research on experiential learning and social learning has laid important foundations for understanding tourism as a process of knowledge formation through experience. Kolb (1984) argued that knowledge develops through cycles of experience, reflection, and application, whereas Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized the role of communities of practice, in which learning occurs through participation in everyday life and practical activities. Similarly, Brown and Duguid (1991) argued that knowledge cannot be separated from practice but emerges through the interrelationship among work, learning, and social interaction. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) subsequently developed the concept of tacit knowledge, highlighting the importance of experience, practice, and social interaction in processes of knowledge creation.

From the late 1990s onward, studies of sustainable tourism gradually shifted from

resource-centered approaches toward greater attention to experience and social value. Butler (1999) and Saarinen (2006) argued that destination competitiveness depends not only on natural resources and infrastructure investment but also on the capacity of destinations to provide meaningful and interactive experiences for visitors. Within this line of inquiry, Philip et al. (2010) conceptualized agritourism in terms of the integration of tourism activities with agricultural production and rural life. Ballantyne et al. (2011) further demonstrated that environmentally oriented experiences can have long-term effects on tourists' environmental awareness and sustainable behavior. Berkes (2012) broadened the understanding of traditional ecological knowledge as a system of knowledge, practices, beliefs, and adaptive experiences accumulated within local communities.

Subsequent studies on agricultural and rural tourism have increasingly emphasized the roles of community participation and sustainability in shaping tourism experiences. Barbieri (2013) argued that agritourism can contribute to livelihood diversification and enhance sustainability within rural communities. Lane and Kastenholz (2015) identified a gradual transition in rural tourism from landscape consumption toward experiences associated with local culture and community engagement. Ohe (2020) introduced the dimension of local entrepreneurship, arguing that the value of tourism does not inherently reside in resources themselves but is created through the organizational, interpretive, and interactive capacities of local residents. More recently, research on sustainable tourism has increasingly moved toward regenerative approaches, emphasizing community knowledge, social learning, and the resilience of local ecosystems. Dredge (2022) conceptualized regenerative tourism as a transformation in development thinking and systems rather than merely as a tool for sustainable management. Bellato et al. (2022) approached regenerative tourism from the perspective of living systems, in which local communities and Indigenous knowledge play central roles in restoring socio-ecological systems. Bellato and Pollock (2023) further noted that although research on regenerative tourism has expanded rapidly, empirical studies situated within specific local livelihood contexts remain limited. During the same period, studies of agritourism and environmental experiential learning also highlighted the potential of ecological experiences to influence tourists' environmental awareness and sustainable behavior (Liu et al., 2023).

Overall, existing studies have broadened tourism research from a focus on resource exploitation toward greater attention to experience, learning, and community participation. Nevertheless, most studies continue to approach agricultural destinations primarily from the perspectives of tourism products, livelihoods, or resource conservation, while the depth of knowledge embedded in livelihood practices and the mechanisms through which such knowledge is transformed into learning experiences remain insufficiently explored. Research on educational tourism has likewise focused mainly on learning activities at destinations without fully explaining how community knowledge is generated, preserved, and transmitted through experiential processes. This gap highlights the need to conceptualize agricultural livelihood destinations as living knowledge systems and to examine how livelihood knowledge can be transformed into meaningful learning experiences through knowledge mapping. Addressing this gap constitutes a central contribution of the present study.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts knowledge ecosystem theory as its central analytical framework to explain the emergence of educational tourism from agricultural livelihood practices in Vinh Long. This approach is grounded in the view that agricultural livelihood spaces are not merely sites of production or tourism services but also environments where layers of community knowledge are preserved, reproduced, and continuously renewed through long-term

interaction between humans and nature. In many cases, the core value of a destination does not lie solely in visible landscapes but in the depth of understanding embedded within everyday practices, including how residents interpret seasonal water flows, manage land, organize farming cycles, transfer occupational knowledge and adapt to environmental change. These accumulated forms of understanding enable livelihood spaces to become environments for social learning, where tourism extends beyond landscape consumption toward processes of environmental awareness, community engagement and sustainability learning.

From an intellectual perspective, Bateson (1972) laid the foundation for the “ecology of mind” by arguing that knowledge, behavior, environment, and social relations are interconnected within a living system. According to Bateson, knowledge cannot be understood independently from the ecological context and interaction networks that shape social life. This perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary tourism studies because it encourages destinations to be understood not merely as physical spaces or consumable products but as living structures in which understanding is generated through interactions between humans, communities and the environment. Extending this systems perspective, Capra (2002) argued that sustainable societies must learn from the logic of living networks, where connectivity, adaptation and regeneration are central principles. For Capra, knowledge is not a static entity existing independently from society but is continuously produced through interactions among socio-ecological components. This perspective resonates strongly with the Mekong Delta context, where community life constantly evolves alongside seasonal water flows, sedimentation, cultivation cycles and environmental changes. From this viewpoint, tourism destinations can be approached not merely as “landscape consumption spaces” but as “socio-ecological learning environments” through which people learn to understand nature via lived community experience.

Building upon systems thinking, this study approaches knowledge as a form of living knowledge produced and maintained through everyday practices. Brown and Duguid (1991) argued that knowledge does not exist independently within formal documents or theoretical systems but is generated through working, learning, and social interaction. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) further developed the concept of tacit knowledge, emphasizing that much human understanding is accumulated through experience, practice and community interaction rather than codified forms of knowledge. This perspective is especially important for agricultural livelihood practices, since many forms of environmental understanding regarding water, seasons, soil, crop varieties, cultivation techniques and ecological adaptation are not formally documented but transmitted through labor and everyday life. In the field of traditional ecological knowledge, Berkes (2012) expanded the concept of local knowledge as a system of understandings, practices, beliefs and adaptive mechanisms formed through long-term coexistence between communities and natural environments. Traditional ecological knowledge therefore encompasses not only “knowledge about nature” but also ways of organizing social life, managing resources, responding to environmental risks and sustaining adaptive capacity across generations. From this perspective, livelihood practices in Vinh Long can be viewed as dynamic knowledge structures reflecting the relationship between people and riverine ecosystems, where environmental understanding is accumulated not through abstract discourse but through lived interaction with nature itself.

In addition to knowledge and systems theory, this study also draws upon experiential learning theory to explain the formation of understanding in educational tourism activities. Kolb (1984) argued that knowledge develops through cycles of concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and practical application. Lave and Wenger (1991) further developed the theory of situated learning, emphasizing that learning occurs through participation in communities of practice, where learners access knowledge from within social

life rather than through one-way information transfer. This suggests that the value of experience lies not simply in “seeing” but in participating within the social contexts where knowledge is actively practiced. Activities such as caring for orchards, rowing boats, preparing traditional cakes, or managing irrigation systems therefore represent not merely recreational tourism experiences but also potential learning processes when participants understand the environmental, cultural, and livelihood meanings embedded within such practices. Recent studies on regenerative tourism and environmental learning further reinforce this perspective. Bellato et al. (2022) argued that regenerative tourism should be understood as a community-based learning ecosystem grounded in local resilience. Dredge (2022) emphasized that sustainable tourism development involves not only impact management but also transformations in human-environment relationships and social consciousness. Similarly, Liu et al. (2023) demonstrated that ecological experiences can influence tourists’ environmental awareness and sustainable behavior through emotional engagement, interaction, and connection with nature. Together, these studies suggest that the value of educational tourism lies not in simply transmitting information but in creating experiential environments capable of shaping understanding and influencing social behavior.

Based on these theoretical foundations, this study conceptualizes knowledge ecosystems as interactive structures that connect knowledge, practice, the environment, and community in processes of knowledge generation, preservation, and reproduction. From this perspective, knowledge is not treated as pre-existing content to be transmitted to tourists but as an outcome of interactions among people, living environments, and community practices. This approach is particularly relevant to agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long, where knowledge related to water systems, farming seasons, cultivation practices, traditional occupations, and environmental adaptation remains embedded in everyday community life. On this basis, the study employs the concept of “knowledge mapping” to explain how lived knowledge can be transformed into learning experiences through tourism activities. In this study, knowledge mapping is not understood in the technical sense of data management but rather as a process of identifying, organizing, and interpreting layers of community knowledge through field-based experiences, storytelling, shared labor, social interaction, and environmental observation. Through this process, everyday practices such as orchard management, water use, food preparation, seasonal adaptation, and community organization are transformed into educational content that can foster environmental awareness and social understanding among visitors.

Within this study, educational tourism is conceptualized as a form of tourism experience that can foster awareness, reflection, and social learning through direct interaction with local environments and communities. Accordingly, the educational value of destinations lies not merely in transmitting information or organizing sightseeing activities but in enabling participants to develop an understanding of environmental systems, livelihoods, and social relationships through practical engagement. From this perspective, agricultural livelihood destinations are understood as social learning spaces grounded in local knowledge and long-standing experiences of living in close interaction with nature. Orchards, waterways, traditional occupations, and local cuisine therefore carry not only scenic and service value but also provide access to layers of ecological knowledge, collective memory, and adaptive practices accumulated over generations. Educational tourism, in this sense, extends beyond the expansion of tourism products toward the development of green learning ecosystems grounded in community knowledge, local adaptive capacity, and sustainable interactions between people and their living environments. This theoretical perspective provides the analytical foundation for examining how livelihood knowledge is transformed into educational experiences through knowledge mapping at agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach to examine how livelihood knowledge is transformed into learning experiences in the development of educational tourism associated with green growth at agricultural destinations in Vinh Long Province. Rather than focusing on economic efficiency or tourist numbers, the analysis examines how local communities preserve, practice, and interpret ecological knowledge within livelihood spaces and how these processes shape learning experiences for visitors. The unit of analysis is the process through which livelihood knowledge is transformed into educational experiences within community-based tourism settings.

Research data were collected from December 2023 to March 2026 from multiple sources to facilitate data triangulation. Background materials included relevant scholarly literature and policy documents concerning sustainable livelihoods, educational tourism, and rural development in the Mekong Delta. Primary data, however, were derived from fieldwork conducted at agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long Province, with a focus on orchard landscapes, river islets, traditional craft villages, farming activities, and interactions between local residents and visitors. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore community knowledge, environmental experiences, and interpretations of livelihood values within educational tourism activities.

Participants were selected through a combination of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Research sites were chosen based on field accessibility, the continuity of community tourism activities, and the extent to which agricultural livelihoods were integrated into tourism experiences at Con Ho, Con Chim, and Nhi Hoa. Interview participants included local households engaged in tourism activities (15), tour guides (05), travel businesses (05), tourism management officials (03), researchers (02), tourists (10) and local journalists (02). Whenever possible, interviews were conducted within participants' everyday working environments to capture knowledge as it was embedded in routine livelihood practices. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, that is, when no substantially new themes emerged from successive interviews in relation to the research objectives.

Data analysis combined document analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and thematic analysis. Field observations were undertaken to record labor activities, experiential practices, and community interactions occurring at the destinations. Interview content focused on ecological experience, labor memory, local interpretations of farming seasons, ecological adaptation, and the capacity to transform these practices into educational experiences for visitors. Following data collection, the materials were coded into thematic groups, including ecological knowledge, farming experience, collective memory, adaptive practices, interpretive capacity, and the formation of learning spaces at the destinations. Analytical themes were generated through continuous comparison among field observations, interview data, and the theoretical framework of knowledge ecosystems, allowing the iterative refinement of themes until coherent patterns related to the transformation of livelihood knowledge into educational experiences were identified. Building upon this framework, the study developed an analytical model focusing on the transformation of knowledge at destinations, from agricultural livelihood knowledge systems and knowledge mapping mechanisms to the emergence of green learning ecosystems in educational tourism. Figure 1 presents the analytical framework of the study, which also guided the coding of qualitative data, the development of thematic categories, and the interpretation of the relationships among the study variables. This analytical procedure was designed to ensure that the interpretation of findings remained grounded in the empirical data while being systematically informed by the study's theoretical framework.

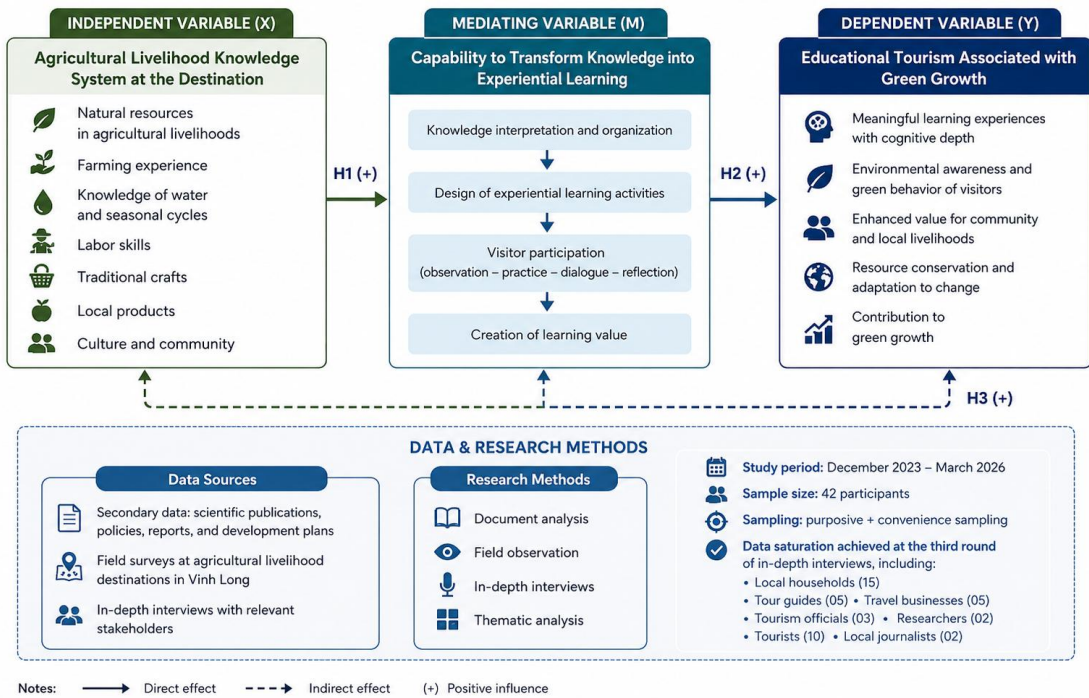


Figure 1. Research framework

Source: Ta Duy Linh & Duong Duc Minh (2026).

This analytical framework allows agricultural livelihood destinations to be approached not merely as tourism spaces but as living knowledge systems capable of transforming ecological experience and community practices into learning experiences associated with green growth. From this perspective, destination value is not understood as an inherent attribute of tourism resources but as something continuously produced through the ways communities preserve, interpret and disseminate knowledge within experiential spaces.

4. Findings and Discussion

Before moving into the detailed analysis, it is important to note that Con Chim, Con Ho, and Nhi Hoa are all agricultural livelihood destinations situated within the characteristic riverine landscape of the Mekong Delta. Tourism development in these localities largely emerged following the implementation of the National Target Program on New Rural Development and the restructuring of local agricultural livelihoods, when communities began seeking supplementary livelihood strategies in response to increasingly visible challenges such as climate change, saline intrusion and fluctuations in agricultural markets. However, rather than pursuing mass tourism or large-scale investment models, these destinations gradually adopted approaches grounded in community-based experiences, local labor and forms of knowledge accumulated through everyday livelihood practices. This process created the conditions through which agricultural spaces began to shift from purely productive environments toward experiential and educational spaces associated with green growth.

4.1. From Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa to the Formation of “Green Identities” at Destinations

Fieldwork findings indicate that Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa have not developed tourism through large-scale competition or intensive commercialization but instead through

the gradual formation of distinctive “green identities” grounded in the interconnection between agricultural livelihoods, community knowledge and environmental adaptation. What distinguishes these destinations is not infrastructure or service commercialization but the depth of knowledge accumulated through generations of coexistence with rivers, seasonal cycles and ecological change. Within this context, agriculture no longer functions merely as a productive activity or a source of livelihood but it increasingly serves as a “living knowledge system” through which ecological experience, labor memory, community customs and adaptive capacities are preserved within everyday life.

At Con Chim, the philosophy of “living in harmony with nature” extends far beyond a tourism slogan and has become a fundamental logic guiding livelihoods and environmental practices within the local community. Rather than exploiting natural resources intensively, residents organize production activities according to the ecological rhythms of the estuarine environment. The restriction of fishing activities during spawning seasons from the second to the sixth lunar months clearly reflects a form of “ecological memory” developed through long-term observation of water flows, seasonal cycles and the regenerative capacity of aquatic ecosystems. One local resident explained: *“Each season has its own cycle. During breeding periods we reduce fishing. If we catch everything now, there will be nothing left in the future. People here live with the water, so we have to protect it”* (Interviewing with a local resident, Con Chim, June 2025). Importantly, these forms of understanding do not exist as formal scientific knowledge but are preserved through lived experience, labor practices and intergenerational transmission within the community. Consequently, when visitors participate in ecological shrimp and crab farming, natural rice cultivation, or conversations about water cycles with local residents, they are not simply consuming tourism experiences but engaging with a system of knowledge concerning how communities survive and adapt within estuarine environments.

If Con Chim reflects a “green identity” associated with ecological balance and harmonious adaptation to nature, Con Ho illustrates a different dimension: resilience and livelihood reorganization in response to environmental instability. During several periods, saline intrusion significantly affected pomelo-growing areas, forcing local communities to alter production practices and diversify income sources. Within this context, tourism emerged as a supplementary livelihood strategy, not replacing agriculture but helping to relieve economic pressure during difficult periods. Yet, the distinctiveness of Con Ho lies not merely in the addition of tourism services but in the community’s capacity to transform labor memory and adaptive experience into experiential value. The recurring image of the “kerosene lamp” often mentioned by residents, functions not simply as an old household object but as a symbol of hardship, reflecting frugality, self-reliance and resilience in the face of socio-environmental change. A resident at Con Ho shared: *“Life was very difficult before, so we used kerosene lamps every day. Now visitors are more interested in hearing those stories than simply looking at the scenery. They want to know how we lived and how we endured the saline intrusion”* (Interviewing with a local resident, Con Ho, August 2025). In this way, the value of tourism increasingly depends not solely on tangible resources but on the community’s ability to preserve and share layers of socio-ecological memory embedded within local life.

Meanwhile, Nhi Hoa reflects the capacity of communities to preserve and sustain vernacular knowledge within everyday livelihood spaces. Knowledge associated with betel and areca preparation, local practices for distinguishing male and female coconut trees, daily customs and collective memories linked to coconut cultivation are not separated into staged tourism performances but continue to exist organically within community life. This reflects a form of “responsible sharing tourism” in which communities do not merely provide experiential services but also share forms of understanding connected to their living

environment and livelihood culture. Destination value therefore lies not in isolated physical resources but in the capacity to sustain everyday layers of knowledge as part of the local social structure. In-depth interviews further reveal that these destinations increasingly attract visitors seeking learning-oriented and knowledge-based experiences, particularly university students, graduate students, lecturers, researchers and tourists interested in sustainable development. Unlike mass tourists, who often prioritize short-term entertainment, these visitors spend more time observing, engaging in dialogue and participating in practical activities alongside local communities. One graduate student participating in fieldwork at Con Chim stated: *"Before coming here, I thought agricultural tourism was mainly about visiting orchards but here I learned how local people preserve water systems, protect seasonal cycles and live with the environment. It feels like learning directly from life itself rather than simply traveling"* (Interviewing with a visitor, March 2026). These findings suggest the emergence of a form of "knowledge-oriented consumption" in which experiential value is determined less by entertainment or service scale than by the ability to deepen visitors' understanding of environment, labor, livelihoods and community life.

From the perspective of knowledge ecosystems, the most significant transformation occurring at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa does not lie in the simple addition of tourism products but in a fundamental shift in the nature of agricultural tourism value itself. Whereas conventional tourism models largely rely on landscape consumption, value at these destinations is increasingly generated through the capacity to help visitors understand how communities coexist with nature, adapt to environmental change and accumulate knowledge through everyday labor practices. This transformation provides the foundation through which agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long are gradually shifting from resource-based advantages toward knowledge-based advantages and from short-term attraction toward long-term educational value within the development of educational tourism associated with green growth.

The formation of these green identities does not simply reflect tourism development strategies but emerges from local communities' efforts to sustain their livelihoods amid ecological change while transforming adaptive experience into values that can be shared with visitors. Rather than being predetermined tourism assets, green identities emerge through continuous interaction between environmental conditions, livelihood practices and community knowledge. Destination green identity should therefore be understood as both an outcome of livelihood adaptation and an expression of the community's capacity to interpret, preserve and communicate local knowledge through tourism experiences.

4.2. Knowledge Mapping Mechanisms in Educational Tourism

The findings indicate that livelihood knowledge at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa does not exist as a standardized or formally codified body of knowledge but rather as a form of practical knowledge embedded in labor, ecological memory and the adaptive experiences of local communities. Accumulated through long-term coexistence with specific ecological conditions, this knowledge remains largely tacit and inseparable from the living contexts in which it was formed. Local residents may possess sophisticated abilities in "reading" water flows, identifying spawning seasons of aquatic species, or adjusting cultivation practices according to changing weather conditions, yet they often find it difficult to translate such understandings into explicit concepts or formal procedures. Consequently, the central issue of educational tourism at these destinations does not lie simply in "having knowledge" but in the ability to make forms of understanding that exist only within community practice visible, audible and experientially accessible to outsiders. In this context, the mechanism of "knowledge mapping" can be understood as the process through which tacit knowledge is

transformed into forms that can be observed, participated in and reflected upon within tourism spaces. Unlike conventional tourism interpretation, knowledge mapping does not simply convert local knowledge into information for visitors; rather, it organizes knowledge as a process of participation, interaction and reflection. It therefore functions as an interpretive and mediating mechanism through which livelihood knowledge is transformed into educational value. Conceptually, this mechanism also serves as the analytical link connecting livelihood knowledge systems with the emergence of green learning ecosystems, thereby clarifying the theoretical contribution of the knowledge ecosystem perspective developed in this study. Importantly, this process does not operate according to the logic of one-way knowledge transmission characteristic of formal education systems. Knowledge is not “taught” as predefined lesson content but instead emerges from the contexts in which it is actively practiced. At Con Chim, for example, when local residents explain the restriction of fishing during breeding seasons or discuss their experiences observing water flows to regulate shrimp and crab farming activities, they are not merely providing environmental information; rather, they are interpreting a survival logic accumulated through generations of estuarine life. Such understandings only become meaningful when connected to the ecological risks and livelihood pressures that communities face in everyday life. A tour guide at Con Chim explained: *“Visitors now ask very deeply. They don’t just ask what people do but why they do it. Some stand listening to stories about water flows for a long time, then continue asking about fish seasons and resource conservation”* (Interviewing with a tour guide, September 2025). Through this dialogic process, ecological knowledge ceases to be abstract information and instead becomes a form of experiential understanding grounded in the concrete realities of community life.

At Con Ho, the mechanism of knowledge mapping operates more strongly through labor memory and livelihood resilience. Stories about saline intrusion, crop failures, or periods of living with kerosene lamps are not narrated merely as nostalgic recollections but as reflections of how communities interpret their own survival amid environmental and economic instability. In this case, storytelling functions not simply as a tourism interpretation technique but as a social mechanism through which community knowledge is shared and reproduced. One resident at Con Ho remarked: *“Many things feel normal to us because we have lived through them for so long but when visitors ask questions, we realize that our experiences are actually what they want to understand”* (Interviewing with a local resident, Con Ho, March 2026). Significantly, knowledge here cannot be separated from the individuals who embody it. Residents are not merely “providing information” but simultaneously interpreting their own experiences of existence within constantly changing living environments. What visitors encounter, therefore, is not simply data about a locality but the ways communities perceive and make sense of their own world. Field observations further reveal that knowledge mapping depends heavily on the “non-staged” character of experiences. At Nhi Hoa, practices such as preparing betel and areca, selecting coconuts, or cooking local dishes are not organized as performances detached from everyday life but occur naturally within ordinary community spaces. Residents work and converse simultaneously, explaining practices in spontaneous ways that allow visitors to feel as though they are entering authentic social life rather than attending a carefully scripted tourism program. One visitor participating in the field survey at Nhi Hoa commented: *“I felt that local people were not trying to perform for tourists. They worked while talking naturally, so it felt like stepping into their real lives rather than watching a tourism show”* (Interviewing with a visitor, August 2025). This sense of “real life” prevents community knowledge from being reduced to consumable cultural imagery. When knowledge remains connected to its original socio-ecological context, visitors’ learning experiences tend to generate deeper levels of reflection and understanding.

Another significant finding is that the process of knowledge mapping affects not only visitors but also local communities themselves. In many cases, the very act of explaining practices to outsiders encourages residents to reconsider and become more conscious of the value of experiences that had previously been regarded as ordinary aspects of daily life. This reflects a form of “community reflexivity” in which local knowledge is not only transmitted outward but is also re-recognized internally through processes of social interaction. Educational tourism therefore creates not only flows of knowledge from communities to visitors but also mechanisms through which communities reinterpret themselves. This differs substantially from tourism models focused merely on cultural display, where communities often function only as service providers or as performers reproducing cultural images for market consumption. At the same time, visitors’ educational experiences extend beyond the acquisition of new information and involve transformations in their perceptions of labor, environment and sustainability. A graduate student participating in fieldwork at Con Chim reflected: *“Previously, I thought environmental protection was mostly about slogans or policies. But when local people explained that if all fish are caught during breeding seasons there will be nothing left in a few years, I realized that the environment here is not an abstract concept but something directly tied to their survival”* (Interviewing with a visitor, July 2025). In this sense, the educational value of these experiences does not lie in the quantity of knowledge transmitted but in their capacity to generate shifts in perception through direct engagement with community life. When environmental issues are encountered through labor practices, livelihoods and the real risks faced by local people, sustainable development becomes concrete and acquires clear ethical dimensions for participants.

From the perspective of knowledge ecosystems, the mechanism of knowledge mapping at the surveyed destinations represents a process of restructuring the relationship between knowledge, space and social actors within tourism activities. In conventional tourism models, destination value is largely generated through landscapes or consumer services. At Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa, however, value increasingly depends on the capacity to preserve and interpret layers of livelihood knowledge associated with local living environments. This transformation also alters the role of communities within tourism value chains. Local residents are no longer merely service providers or “objects of experience” but become knowledge holders and interpreters of the destinations themselves. They determine which forms of knowledge are shared, which memories are retold and how visitors come to understand local environments and community life. Viewed more broadly, the mechanisms of knowledge mapping observed at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa demonstrate that educational tourism is not simply about adding “learning elements” to tourism experiences but reflects a deeper transformation in the value structure of agricultural destinations. Value no longer resides primarily in tangible resources or entertainment functions but increasingly in the capacity to create spaces where ecological knowledge and community experience can be shared, reflected upon and continuously reinterpreted through social interaction. This process is gradually transforming agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long from models based on landscape consumption toward models centered on learning from lived experience, where tourism simultaneously becomes a means of engaging more deeply with the relationships between humans, environment and livelihoods within the context of sustainable development. Nevertheless, the process of knowledge mapping also raises the risk of reducing community knowledge into forms of “performative content” if tourism experiences become excessively commercialized. Under such conditions, living knowledge may become detached from its original socio-ecological context and gradually lose its reflective depth. The key challenge for educational tourism, therefore, lies not in creating more experiential activities but in maintaining the authenticity of community-based learning spaces.

4.3. Green Learning Ecosystems and Restructuring Community Values

The findings indicate that the impacts of educational tourism associated with green growth at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa extend far beyond the expansion of tourism activities or the generation of additional income for local communities. More fundamentally, these processes are gradually transforming the value structures of the destinations themselves across multiple dimensions, ranging from the ways communities perceive resources and the environment, to the organization of livelihoods, the creation of economic value and the changing social roles of different community groups within tourism spaces. Significantly, these transformations do not emerge primarily through administrative pressure or externally imposed technical models but accumulate gradually through continuous interaction among local communities, visitors and the layers of livelihood knowledge activated at the destinations. In conventional development models, resources are generally approached as assets to be exploited for immediate economic output and the value of rivers, orchards, aquatic resources, or agricultural land is measured largely through their capacity to generate income and expand production. Fieldwork findings, however, reveal that communities at the surveyed destinations are increasingly operating according to a different logic in which resources are understood not only as economic assets but also as the foundation of “ecological credibility” and the long-term sustainability of local livelihoods. At Con Chim, for instance, the restriction of fishing during spawning seasons does not simply represent an act of resource conservation but reflects an awareness that ecological degradation would simultaneously undermine both local livelihoods and the identity of the destination itself. One resident explained: *“Visitors come here because they want to hear stories about protecting fish seasons and preserving the water environment. If we stop doing those things, there will be nothing left for people to learn from in the future”* (Interviewing with a local resident, Con Chim, June 2025). Such practices demonstrate that ecological knowledge no longer serves only productive purposes but has become part of the way communities maintain the ecological reputation and cultural identity of their destinations.

Alongside this “greening” of environmental consciousness is a transformation in how communities create economic value through tourism. Whereas conventional tourism models often generate value through intensified exploitation of material resources or expanded service consumption, at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa value increasingly emerges through the ability to “deepen the meaning” of experiences. This reflects the emergence of what may be described as a “knowledge-emotion economy” in which collective memory, livelihood experience and local knowledge become important resources for generating added value in educational tourism. At Con Chim, traditional folk games function not merely as recreational activities but also as means through which visitors gain insight into community spirit and local rhythms of life. At Con Ho, the image of the kerosene lamp has been transformed into an emotional experience connected to labor memory and the community’s resilience in the face of environmental instability. Meanwhile, at Nhi Hoa, vernacular knowledge associated with coconut cultivation, betel and areca preparation and everyday communal practices contributes to the depth and richness of visitor experiences. Importantly, this process of value creation does not require intensified exploitation of physical resources. A local dish may derive value not simply from ingredients or culinary techniques but from the stories of seasonal cycles, family memories and collective experiences embedded within it. Likewise, an experiential activity may become attractive not because of greater material investment but because it allows visitors to feel that they are participating in a meaningful living world. This shift means that tourism growth at the surveyed destinations does not necessarily correspond to increasing environmental pressure, as is often the case in mass tourism models but is instead linked to the preservation and circulation of community-based knowledge values.

Another notable finding concerns the role of educational tourism in restructuring the social position of women within local communities. Field surveys indicate that more than 80% of those participating in tourism-related service chains at the three destinations are women. Their roles extend beyond food preparation, hospitality, or organizing tourism activities to include storytelling, explaining local customs and sharing community knowledge with visitors. In many cases, women function as key connectors between collective memory, local livelihoods and visitors' learning experiences. One woman participating in tourism activities at Nhi Hoa explained: *"Before, I mostly stayed at home working in the orchard and rarely interacted with outsiders. Since visitors started coming, I have had to explain things and talk to people more, so I feel much more confident now"* (Interviewing with a local resident, Nhi Hoa, August 2025). Educational tourism therefore not only creates additional income opportunities but also reshapes women's social status and participation in community life. From the perspective of knowledge ecosystems, women at the surveyed destinations are gradually becoming important "knowledge intermediaries" within the structure of educational tourism. They not only preserve everyday experiences, culinary practices and community customs but also translate such forms of knowledge into experiences accessible to visitors. This intermediary role generates a form of "soft power" within the community, in which communication skills, storytelling abilities and the maintenance of local knowledge become significant social resources. Participation in tourism activities simultaneously encourages the formation of new collaborative networks among women through shared meal preparation, visitor reception, local product development and the collective organization of tourism experiences. These networks contribute to the creation of "community social capital" understood as the community's capacity for self-organization and development through internal cooperation.

The findings indicate that green learning ecosystems do not operate through a simple linear relationship but generate a feedback cycle between local communities and visitors. As visitors become increasingly concerned with product origins, environmental responsibility and the authenticity of tourism experiences, communities tend to adjust their production methods and livelihood organization toward more sustainable practices in order to maintain the ecological credibility of their destinations. This process reflects a form of "negotiating trust," in which visitors' learning expectations create positive pressure for communities to preserve their green identities while simultaneously strengthening the roles of knowledge intermediaries, particularly local women, in storytelling, organizing experiences and connecting visitors with community life. Consequently, environmental knowledge and community culture are not depleted through tourism activities but are continually re-recognized, shared and enriched through social interaction.

Theoretically, these findings extend the knowledge ecosystem approach in three respects. First, livelihood knowledge generates educational value only when it is organized and interpreted by local communities through the mechanism of knowledge mapping. Second, learning experiences not only influence visitors' awareness but also stimulate community reflexivity and the internal re-recognition of local knowledge. Third, green learning ecosystems operate through a feedback mechanism in which visitors' demand for authenticity and environmental responsibility influences local livelihood organization and the social roles of community actors.

Viewed as an integrated process, the development of educational tourism associated with green growth at agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long does not represent merely an expansion of tourism activities but rather a process of value accumulation and transformation within local communities. Within this process, agricultural livelihood values function as foundational resources; knowledge mapping serves as the transformative

intermediary mechanism; green learning ecosystems become spaces for the circulation of experiential understanding; and sustainable environmental, social and community values gradually emerge as outcomes. These values subsequently generate feedback effects that reshape environmental awareness, livelihood structures and the social roles of local actors.

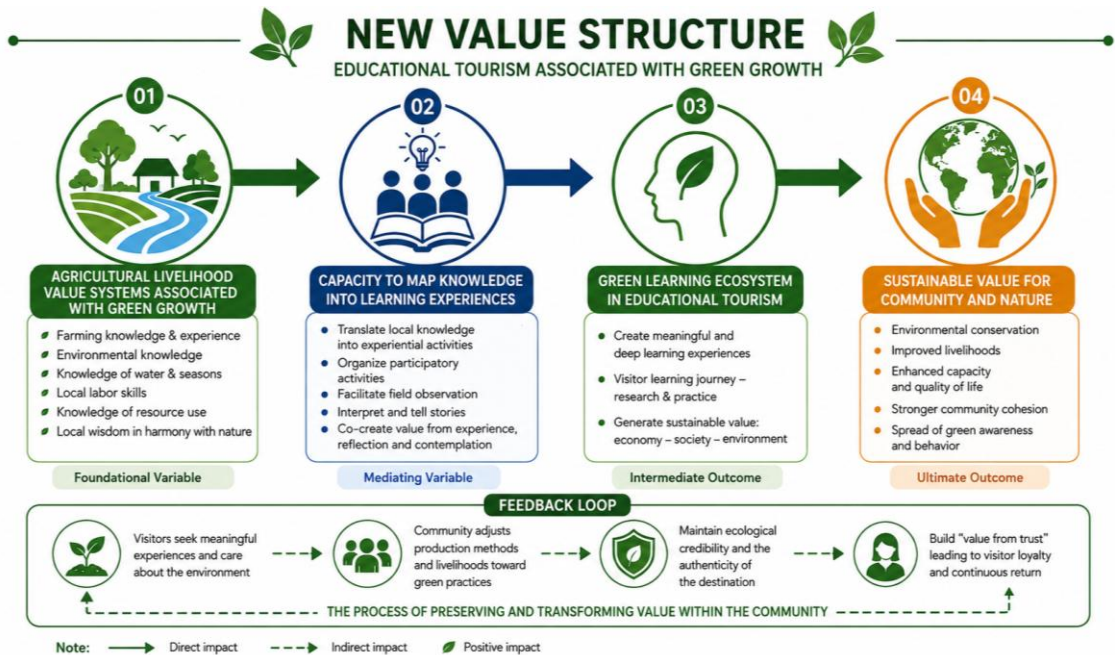


Figure 2. Value Transformation Cycle within Educational Tourism Ecosystems Associated with Green Growth

Source: Ta Duy Linh & Duong Duc Minh (2026).

Viewed through this structure, the value of educational tourism associated with green growth at the surveyed destinations is not generated through the linear exploitation of resources but through continuous processes of knowledge accumulation and transformation within communities. Each component of the structure does not operate independently but constantly interacts with and reinforces the others. Livelihood value systems provide the foundation for learning experiences; learning experiences contribute to the formation of environmental awareness and responsible consumption; and these changing demands in turn create pressures encouraging communities to maintain ecological values and destination authenticity. In this sense, green growth at Con Chim, Con Ho and Nhi Hoa reflects not merely a transformation in resource exploitation practices but a deeper restructuring of how communities create value and organize relationships with their living environments. Destination value no longer depends primarily on the scale of material resources or infrastructure investment but increasingly on the capacity to sustain living knowledge systems, interpret experiences and generate meaningful cognitive connections for visitors. This is precisely why the surveyed destinations are gradually shifting from models of “landscape consumption tourism” toward forms of “learning from lived experience” in which ecological knowledge and community experience become the foundation for the emergence of green learning ecosystems in contemporary rural tourism development.

5. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long, such as Con Chim, Con Ho, and Nhi

Hoa, are gradually moving beyond conventional forms of agricultural tourism toward educational tourism spaces associated with green growth and grounded in community knowledge systems. Within this transformation, ecological knowledge, farming experience, occupational memory, local cultural practices, and adaptive knowledge are no longer merely fragmented elements of rural life but are increasingly transformed into learning experiences through storytelling, community interaction, and field-based engagement. The value of these destinations, therefore, is determined not only by tangible resources and infrastructure but increasingly by the capacity of local communities to organize, interpret, and communicate the knowledge embedded in tourism experiences. Drawing on the knowledge ecosystem perspective, this study contributes to explaining the process of “knowledge mapping,” understood as the process through which lived knowledge is transformed into meaningful learning experiences for visitors. Through this process, tourism gradually shifts from “landscape-based consumption” toward “knowledge-oriented engagement,” in which visitors do not simply travel for sightseeing or leisure but participate in processes of social learning through direct engagement with local environments and community life.

Beyond its empirical findings, this study also contributes to the literature by extending the application of knowledge ecosystem theory to educational tourism. It conceptualizes knowledge mapping as the mechanism linking livelihood knowledge, community practices, and learning experiences, thereby providing an analytical perspective for understanding how agricultural destinations can generate educational value through local knowledge rather than through tourism resources alone.

At a deeper level, green growth in tourism is not merely a matter of environmental management or reducing pressure on natural resources but also reflects a broader transformation in how destinations create value. Whereas traditional development models have primarily relied on the expansion of material resource use, value at the surveyed destinations is increasingly generated through the capacity to transform community knowledge, cultural memory, and lived experience into educational and social value. Within this framework, community knowledge can be viewed as a regenerative resource that gains value through sharing and transmission, in contrast to tangible resources that may diminish through overexploitation. These findings suggest that local authorities and tourism stakeholders should move beyond approaches centered solely on tourism products toward the development of “knowledge infrastructure” at destinations, where ecological knowledge, collective memory, adaptive knowledge, and local culture are treated as core resources for designing and facilitating learning experiences. At the same time, mechanisms are needed to strengthen community capacities in storytelling, field-based interpretation, experiential facilitation, and the preservation of ecological and cultural authenticity, thereby reducing the risk of commercialization or excessive staging of local knowledge. Such conditions are essential if agricultural livelihood spaces are to become not merely tourism attractions but also social learning ecosystems capable of fostering environmental awareness and understanding of sustainable development values. When visiting these destinations, visitors do not simply encounter tourism spaces but also engage with living knowledge systems shaped through long-term interactions between people and nature. It is precisely this capacity to transform lived knowledge into meaningful learning experiences that provides a new foundation for value creation in educational tourism associated with green growth in Vinh Long.

This study employed a qualitative approach at three representative agricultural livelihood destinations in Vinh Long. While this design enabled an in-depth understanding of the processes through which livelihood knowledge is transformed into educational tourism experiences, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to all agricultural livelihood destinations in the Mekong Delta. Future research could undertake comparative

studies across different regions or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine more systematically the impacts of educational tourism on visitors' environmental awareness, learning outcomes and sustainable behavior.

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