

Employees' voluntary green behavior in small and medium-sized tourism enterprises – a case study of Hanoi

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Abstract: With sustainable development becoming a strategic priority, green inclusive leadership plays a vital role in encouraging environmentally conscious behavior among employees across various sectors. However, research on green behavior and green inclusive leadership remains limited. Based on social identity theory and upper echelons theory, this study examines the impacts of green inclusive leadership, green commitment, and green organizational identity on employees' voluntary green behaviors. Data were collected from 315 employees working in small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in Hanoi City. Using quantitative analysis techniques, including Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), correlation analysis, and linear regression analysis. The results show that green inclusive leadership, green commitment, and green organizational identity have a significant and positive impact on employees' voluntary green behavior. Additionally, green inclusive leadership is found to influence green organizational identity and green commitment positively. This finding not only fills a theoretical gap in the field of green leadership and behavior but also offers practical implications for small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises, including developing a green organizational culture, boosting employee engagement, and advancing sustainable development.

Keywords: *Green commitment, Green inclusive leadership, Green organizational identity, Tourism SMEs, Vietnam, Voluntary green behavior.*

1. Introduction

In the face of climate change and environmental deterioration, the tourism industry encounters both opportunities for sustainable growth and significant risks from environmental impacts. In Vietnam, tourism is a crucial part of local economic development, especially in urban areas like Hanoi, where supply mainly comes from small and medium-sized enterprises, including accommodations, homestays, food and beverage establishments, and small-scale travel services. These enterprises often lack sufficient financial resources and a comprehensive management system, making the environmental behavior of employees a key factor that can greatly influence environmental conservation efforts and the sustainability image of the business [1, 2].

Employee green behavior refers to voluntary actions that go beyond job requirements to reduce negative environmental impacts [1]. Many international studies have identified various predictors of this behavior, such as personal beliefs and attitudes [3], environmental and green leadership models [2], as well as green human resource management and green climate policies within organizations [4]. However, in the context of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises with limited resources, flexible staffing, and low levels of specialization, targeted research is necessary to understand how voluntary green behavior is formed and sustained in the workplace.

Although there is substantial research on employee pro-environmental behavior in large organizations and other industries, such as hospitality, healthcare, and manufacturing, many studies have concentrated on the universal theoretical model (TPB) without thoroughly exploring the relevance and interaction of variables within SME environments. More importantly, most empirical evidence

comes from developed economies or large-scale firms, so its relevance to small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in developing market cities like Hanoi is limited [1-4].

From a governance and policy perspective, small and medium-sized tourism enterprises in Hanoi often lack practical guidance frameworks to encourage voluntary green behavior: many enterprises do not have a clear green human resource policy, lack specialized training, and leaders (business owners or direct managers) are not equipped with the skills to create a climate that supports their actions. As a result, green initiatives are easily fragmented, depend on the personal motivations of some employees, and are difficult to replicate across the enterprise [4, 5].

This study was conducted to address gaps in previous research aimed at enhancing employees' voluntary green behavior and environmental efficiency among tourism enterprises in Vietnam, an emerging economy in Southeast Asia.

2. Theoretical Background and Analysis Framework

2.1. Literature Review

Green inclusive leadership has recently gained increasing attention from researchers. According to the Web of Science, as of March 2025, there are 22 studies on this leadership style. Many of these focus on the relationship between green inclusive leadership and employees' green creativity [6-10], employees' environmentally friendly behavior [11, 12], employees' green innovative behavior [13-15], and the environmental performance of enterprises [16].

The relationship between green inclusive leadership and employee green behavior has also attracted attention from several scholars, although research in this area remains limited. For example, Quan et al. [17], drawing on cognitive-affective system theory, the study outlined two pathways through which green inclusive leadership influences employee green behavior. Based on data from 372 employees in chemical companies, the research found that green inclusive leadership positively influences green behavior, with green goal clarity and green organizational identity serving as mediators, while green human resource management moderates the relationship. Furthermore, Aboramadan et al. [18] examined a sample of 436 direct supervisors and employees in the tourism sector and found a positive link between green inclusive leadership and environmentally sustainable behaviors, with perceived organizational green support serving as a mediating factor. Several other studies have also explored this relationship through the lens of green organizational citizenship behavior, such as Mandal and Pal [19], where employee green creativity acted as a mediator, and Abdou et al. [20], where green work commitment and green organizational identity functioned as mediating variables.

Thus, it can be observed that: (i) studies exploring the relationship between green inclusive leadership and employee green behavior, mainly voluntary green behavior, are still limited and require further investigation; (ii) the service sector, particularly the tourism industry, has not been thoroughly examined in this context, despite growing concerns about environmental pollution and organizational sustainability within this industry. These are the research gaps this study aims to address.

2.2. Underlying Theories

This study is based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Upper Echelon Theory. The main idea of SIT suggests that a person's self-concept derives from their sense of belonging to a specific social group. In other words, individuals go beyond their personal identity to form a social identity that reflects their self-awareness within a particular social setting [21]. This theory has been widely applied and validated in numerous studies examining the relationship between leadership and employee behavior. In the current study, the authors argue that employees working within a socially responsible organization are more likely to identify with green behaviors. From a role-based identity perspective, managers act as role models who inspire subordinates, thereby boosting their commitment and clarifying their green behavioral intentions. From a person-based identity perspective, managers can establish behavioral norms for employees to follow and engage them by shaping a green organizational identity.

Upper Echelons Theory, proposed by Hambrick and Mason [22], states that the experiences, values, and personality traits of organizational leaders greatly influence their perceptions, decisions, and actions. These individual traits of top executives, in turn, impact various organizational outcomes, such as organizational identity or employee behavior.

2.3. Hypothesis Development

Green organizational identity refers to employees' shared understanding and alignment with the organization's environmental goals [23]. According to Zhang et al. [23], voluntary green behavior involves environmentally friendly actions taken by employees without organizational directives or mandatory rules. Organizational identity can boost members' sense of alignment and commitment to the organization's goals, helping them better understand its mission and their role within it. Green organizational identity highlights how much employees embody the organization's green values as part of their own identity, thereby fostering attachment and responsibility toward the organization [14]. This identity influences how employees perceive and interpret their roles and behaviors toward environmental conservation and sustainable development efforts within the organization [23]. When environmental issues become the primary focus of organizational identity, it prompts members to contribute more to environmental efforts [24]. In practice, employees are frequently influenced or infected by their organization's green climate, which encourages green behaviors [17]. Research on green behavior indicates that employees tend to embrace environmental goals and reinforce their organizational identity when their companies actively demonstrate commitment to sustainability through green initiatives [25]. Green organizational identity plays a dual role by both increasing employees' environmental responsibility and encouraging proactive engagement in green behaviors [14]. Additionally, green organizational identity fosters a sense of belonging and purpose, strengthening the sustainability of employee voluntary green actions over time [14]. Based on the above arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₁: Green organizational identity positively influences employee voluntary green behavior.

Green commitment refers to how dedicated and devoted employees are to environmental initiatives at their workplace. It is seen as a psychological state that shows both a sense of attachment and responsibility toward environmental issues at work [26]. Several theories suggest that employees are rational and emotionally sensitive individuals who respond to the events they experience and decide their behavior based on those responses [17]. In the context of green behavior, employees who demonstrate a strong environmental commitment are more likely to form emotional bonds, identify with, and actively participate in pro-environmental actions. Conversely, those with a weaker commitment to environmental causes are less likely to engage in activities related to environmental issues [26]. Green commitment is a personal trait that helps employees align with sustainability goals. Employees with higher levels of green commitment are more likely to value their environmentally responsible actions, thereby strengthening the link between their daily voluntary green behaviors and their sense of job meaning [26]. They are also more willing to put effort into environmental protection, both personally and professionally [27, 28]. Based on the above arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₂: Green commitment positively influences employee voluntary green behavior.

According to Dinibutun [8], green inclusive leadership involves leadership behaviors focused on effectively achieving environmental goals. Leadership plays a crucial role in influencing employee behavior [25]. Aligning with the Upper Echelons Theory, leaders are key drivers of organizational behavior. They can foster an environment that encourages environmentally friendly thinking while also serving as role models for others to follow [7]. The positive impact of inclusive leadership on pro-environmental attitudes is especially clear in environmental settings, where an engaged workforce is vital for reaching sustainable development goals [11]. Green inclusive leaders motivate more employees to engage in environmentally sustainable practices [18], thereby positively shaping their attitudes and behaviors toward environmental responsibility [19]. Therefore, green inclusive

leadership, characterized by openness, frequent communication, and strong employee support, will encourage employees to engage in voluntary green behaviors to achieve environmental goals within tourism enterprises. Based on the above arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₃: Green inclusive leadership positively influences employee voluntary green behavior.

Scholars have argued that leadership plays a crucial role in environmental sustainability [25]. The positive actions and decisions of leaders are vital in reflecting and shaping an organization's cultural values [23]. In the green context, fostering an environmentally aware and sustainable organizational culture can be achieved through green inclusive leadership. In other words, the presence of green inclusive leadership helps to project a green and environmentally friendly organizational image, create a green organizational climate, and shape a sustainable organizational culture [17]. It also aligns with the person-based identity perspective of Social Identity theory, as previously discussed. When leaders actively engage in, promote, and support sustainable development goals, incorporating these principles into daily operations enhances employees' identification with green values and fosters a green identity within the organization [23]. Furthermore, developing and implementing environmental policies and procedures are crucial steps in fostering and strengthening the formation of a green organizational identity. Based on the above arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₄: Green inclusive leadership positively influences green organizational identity.

Green commitment is unlikely to be achieved by employees if top-level leadership fails to demonstrate dedication, practices, or concern for society and the protection of the natural environment [25]. If employees' perceptions align with their leaders' vision, it will strengthen their sense of attachment and align employee and organizational goals. They can be achieved by improving green inclusive leadership practices, thereby fostering a green organizational identity and promoting positive changes in green behavior [23]. Leader behaviors such as ethical leadership, innovative leadership, and green transformational leadership are strong predictors of employees' green commitment [25, 27, 28]. Therefore, based on the role-based identity perspective within Social Identity theory, it is argued that in tourism enterprises, when green inclusive leaders are open, approachable, and willing to engage in conversations about environmental issues, employees respond by increasing their work engagement in ecological matters, dedicating emotional, cognitive, and physical resources to such efforts. Based on the above arguments, the research hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H₅: Green inclusive leadership positively influences green commitment.

The study model is shown as shown in Figure 1:

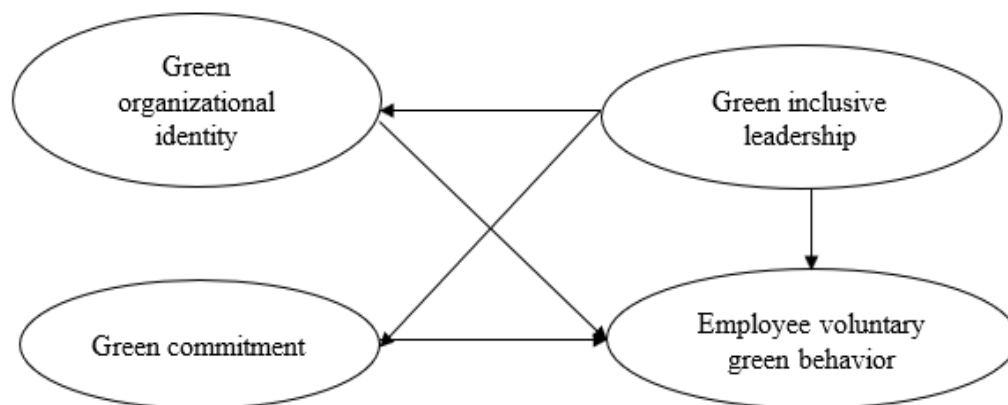


Figure 1.
Research model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement Scales

The measurement scales used in this study were selectively adapted from previous relevant scientific research and adjusted to fit the specific context of this study. Before conducting the formal survey, the scales were thoroughly reviewed and revised based on feedback from five experts, including human resources managers and experienced employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises. After this process, the author proceeded with the formal survey.

Employees were asked to share their opinions on each statement in the survey. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Section 1 included questions about personal details such as gender, age, and tenure. Section 2 featured items measuring green organizational identity, evaluated using a three-item scale developed by Soewarno et al. [24]. Section 3 examined green commitment, measured with a six-item scale from Yang et al. [26]. Section 4 assessed green inclusive leadership using a five-item scale developed by Bhutto et al. [7]. Section 5 evaluated employee voluntary green behavior through a three-item scale from Yang et al. [26]. All measurement items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2. Data Collection

According to Hair et al. [29], when performing an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the ideal sample size should be ten times the number of measurement items. This study includes 17 measurement items, and an appropriate sample size would be over 170. Nevertheless, this study distributed 750 questionnaires to prevent invalid responses. The survey participants were all volunteers. The author approached managers, explained the purpose of the study, and asked for their support in conducting the survey. The survey was mainly carried out during lunch breaks. The survey was conducted between February and May 2025. A total of 750 questionnaires were distributed, and 315 valid responses were collected. Among the respondents, 36.51% were male, while 63.49% were female, which aligns with the gender distribution typical of tourism enterprises. The age group with the highest percentage was 25–35 years old, making up 52.38%, followed by the 36–45 age range at 15.87%. Respondents under 25 accounted for 30.16%, while those over 45 represented the smallest group at 1.59%. Most respondents had a monthly income of 10–15 million VND, at 69.84%.

3.3. Data Analysis

The processing and analysis of quantitative data were carried out using several techniques, including descriptive statistics, reliability testing with Cronbach's Alpha, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), correlation analysis, and multivariate regression analysis through SPSS 26 software.

4. Results

Cronbach's Alpha values of the scales exceed 0.7, and no observed variables exhibit a corrected item-total correlation below 0.3. Consequently, all scales satisfy the criteria of the Cronbach's Alpha test and are incorporated into the exploratory factor analysis in accordance with the recommendation of Hair et al. [29] (Table 1).

The exploratory factor analysis of the second shows that the factors formed at the Eigenvalue reached 1.790, the KMO reached 0.835 (sig. = 0.00), the total variance explained was 73.193%, and factor loadings were greater than 0.5. These indicators demonstrate that the exploratory factor analysis aligns well with the research data (see Table 2).

Table 1.
The results of Cronbach's Alpha.

Scales	Sign	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected item-total correlation
Green organizational identity (GOI)	GOI1	I am proud of the enterprise's history in environmental management and protection.	0.808	0.674
	GOI2	I feel proud of the enterprise's environmental objectives and missions.		0.573
	GOI3	I think the enterprise complies with environmental management and protection requirements.		0.606
	GOI4	I have created clear environmental missions.		0.627
	GOI5	I have sufficient knowledge of the enterprise's environmental tradition and culture.		0.616
	GOI6	I verify that the enterprise pays attention to environmental management and protection.		0.621
Green commitment (GC)	GC1	I genuinely care about my enterprise's environmental concerns.	0.822	0.607
	GC2	I truly feel like my enterprise's environmental issues are my own.		0.612
	GC3	I feel a duty to support my enterprise's environmental concerns.		0.655
	GC4	I would feel guilty about not supporting my enterprise's environmental efforts.		0.569
	GC5	I highly appreciate my enterprise's environmental efforts.		0.708
Green inclusive leadership (GIL)	GIL1	My leadership team is open to discussing pro-environmental goals at work and exploring new green ways to achieve them.	0.798	0.700
	GIL2	My leadership team is available for consultation on environmental issues at work.		0.689
	GIL3	My leadership team is ready to listen to requests related to handling environmental issues at work.		0.678
Employee voluntary green behavior (VEGB)	EVGB1	I considered the consequences of my actions before doing anything that could impact the environment at my work.	0.801	0.619
	EVGB2	I voluntarily engaged in environmental actions and initiatives as part of my daily work activities.		0.620
	EVGB3	I suggested to my colleagues ways to protect the environment more effectively, even when it isn't my direct responsibility.		0.633

Table 2.
The results of EFA.

Items	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
GLI3	0.898			
GLI1	0.880			
GLI2	0.877			
GOI3		0.883		
GOI5		0.875		
GOI6		0.863		
GOI1		0.856		
GOI2		0.843		
GOI4		0.835		
EVGB2			0.899	
EVGB3			0.882	
EVGB1			0.866	
GC2				0.896
GC1				0.881
GC5				0.870
GC3				0.863
GC4				0.855

Eigenvalue = 1.790, % of Variance = 73.193%, KMO = 0.835, Sig. = 0.000

The results of the correlation test between the independent and dependent variables showed a significance value less than 0.05. Therefore, a linear relationship exists between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Scales that are potentially satisfactory are included in the regression analysis, as recommended by Hair et al. [29] (see Table 3).

Table 3.
Correlation Analysis.

	EVGB	GOI	GC	GLI
EVGB	1			
GOI	0.521***	1		
GC	0.506***	0.213***	1	
GLI	0.517***	0.225**	0.212**	1

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

VEGB = Employee voluntary green behavior, GOI = Green organizational identity, GC = Green commitment, GLI = Green inclusive leadership.

The regression analysis results of the three models are shown in Table 4 as follows:

Table 4.
The results of regression models.

	Adjusted R ²	β	SD	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Model 1: Employee voluntary green behavior							
Constant	0.683	0.121	0.056	2.017	0.003		
GOI		0.468	0.062	2.168	0.001	0.749	1.568
GC		0.361	0.070	2.571	0.021	0.783	1.622
GIL		0.402	0.068	2.791	0.005	0.839	1.691
Model 2: Green organizational identity							
Constant	0.708	0.291	0.067	2.831	0.000		
GIL		0.472	0.071	2.681	0.000	0.805	1.800
Model 3: Green commitment							
Constant	0.689	0.372	0.074	2.918	0.003		
GIL		0.506	0.068	2.871	0.001	0.800	1.982

5. Discussion

The findings of this study offer important insights into how green inclusive leadership influences voluntary employee green behavior. The analysis clearly demonstrates that green inclusive leadership significantly and positively affects employees' voluntary green behavior. This finding supports the growing body of research highlighting the essential role of green inclusive leadership in encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors among employees [7, 17, 20], whether in the service industry [11, 18] or in manufacturing [19].

The results also align with Social Identity Theory and Upper Echelons Theory. Employees often concentrate heavily on tasks assigned by their superiors and aim to meet those expectations. As a result, behaviors that go beyond official responsibilities, especially those done for the collective or the enterprise, require a strong “push” from leaders who are open to discussions about eco-friendly goals and new green methods.

The study also shows how green inclusive leadership affects green organizational identity and green commitment. These results align with two parts of Social Identity theory, role-based identity and person-based identity, which emphasize the advantages of green, inclusive leadership from both organizational and employee perspectives. The connection between green inclusive leadership and green organizational identity is logical because such leaders incorporate environmental protection into the organizational culture through their decision-making. In other words, green inclusive leadership can help shape an organization's environmental culture and eco-friendly goals [17].

Furthermore, the effect of green inclusive leadership on employees' green commitment is supported by real-world observations. Leaders' words and actions significantly influence organizational members, helping to build emotional connections and strengthen commitment to green values within the organization. Since green inclusive leaders focus on protecting the environment for future generations, they also motivate employees to be more environmentally aware and proactive about their surroundings.

Additionally, green organizational identity and green commitment positively influence voluntary employee green behavior. Employees' emotional connection to how their organization handles environmental issues encourages them to see environmental protection as part of their personal responsibilities, leading them to engage in green actions [17]. Furthermore, employees committed to improving environmental issues within their organization tend to have a more positive attitude toward green behavior [25].

According to Social Identity theory, the perception of belonging to a group boosts self-esteem and psychological satisfaction, which, in turn, increases employee effort. Therefore, employees committed to environmental protection are more likely to feel greater self-worth when working for a tourism enterprise that emphasizes environmental sustainability.

6. Conclusion and Implications

In the context of the rapid green transformation occurring across various sectors, including services, tourism enterprises must encourage more environmentally friendly behaviors among employees to quickly reach their environmental goals and move toward sustainability.

This study collected data from 304 employees to identify factors influencing employee voluntary green behavior. The main goal was to propose management strategies to promote voluntary green behavior among employees in tourism enterprises in Hanoi City. Based on the analysis, the study concludes that green inclusive leadership, green commitment, and green organizational identity significantly enhance employees' voluntary green behavior. Additionally, green inclusive leadership also has a positive impact on green commitment and green organizational identity. These findings further confirm the importance of both Social Identity Theory and Upper Echelons Theory, emphasizing the essential role of green inclusive leadership by managers in promoting positive organizational outcomes. This study enhances both theoretical understanding and practical application in the expanding literature on how green inclusive leadership influences employees' voluntary green behaviors within the service sector. The findings of this study indicate several practical ways to encourage voluntary green behavior among employees in tourism enterprises.

First, enterprises must prioritize the effectiveness of green inclusive leadership in shaping green behavior among employees. More importantly, enterprises should design and implement initiatives to develop green, inclusive leadership, enhance leaders' knowledge and skills in environmental protection, and introduce concepts of green leadership, environmental responsibility, and sustainability. It will enable leaders to become more open-minded, accept differences, and embrace green thinking. Moreover, leaders should improve their two-way interactions with employees. As part of the communication process, they should recognize and appreciate employees' efforts and contributions to environmental protection, while also encouraging open dialogue in which employees feel comfortable sharing their suggestions and opinions.

Second, employees should be well-informed about the enterprise's environmental goals and responsibilities, with these clearly embedded in their job expectations. Enterprises should promote a green mindset and foster a strong environmental consciousness among staff, aligning employee values with the enterprise's environmental philosophy. This alignment can encourage greater participation in environmental protection efforts and foster more environmentally responsible behavior.

Finally, it is essential to provide training on green concepts and practices to help employees adapt their operations and transform them into environmentally friendly processes that promote sustainability. Tourism enterprises should implement green reward systems, environmental training

programs, and workshops to enhance employees' knowledge and commitment to environmental issues. Additionally, leaders should include environmentally related questions in the recruitment process to evaluate candidates' green commitment and behavior, ensuring that the enterprise attracts individuals who align with its environmental values.

Besides the contributions of this research, several limitations should be considered. First, its convenience sampling method and the fact that it was only conducted in Hanoi City may not represent the broader population's views. Future research should consider employing probability sampling techniques to better ensure the representativeness of employees across tourism enterprises. Moreover, incorporating potential moderating variables, such as internal social media and employees' environmental passion, could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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