

Developing Community Tourism in Vietnam

Ngo Sy Trung¹

¹University of Finance - Marketing, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Email: nstrung@ufm.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

Vietnam has a long history of development; a multi-ethnic country with diverse community culture, biodiversity... are advantages and potentials for localities to develop community tourism. On the basis of exploiting and promoting the advantages of natural conditions and indigenous culture, many localities in Vietnam have developed community tourism quite successfully, creating revenue and making important contributions to socio-economic development. This study analyzes the practice of community tourism development in Vietnam, studying the case of Hoa Binh province - a locality with unique, diverse and distinctive landscapes, cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, and typical traditional products. The author builds a theoretical framework with a 3-scale model towards evaluating the practice of community tourism development and analyzing factors affecting the development of community tourism in Hoa Binh province. The survey was conducted with a sample size of N = 240 local government leaders at the commune level and leaders of cultural and tourism organizations in the province. From the research and survey results, the author discusses policy issues for reference and application to Hoa Binh province and many localities in Vietnam.

Keywords: Community tourism; Natural conditions; Indigenous culture; Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a Southeast Asian country with a tropical climate and biological diversity; many scenic spots and cultural diversity with customs, practices, and traditional products of 54 ethnic groups living in the territory. Over the centuries, the Vietnamese ethnic community has been united and fought against invaders, protected the border, gained independence and freedom, and built the country; each ethnic group has its own cultural identity, creating the unity and diversity of Vietnamese culture (Ngan, N.T., 2023).

The diversity of natural conditions, biology, ethnic diversity, and indigenous culture is an advantage for Vietnamese localities to develop tourism, including community tourism. Among the 63 localities of Vietnam, Hoa Binh province is a locality with a long history of development and many scenic spots. Hoa Binh is home to many ethnic minorities, including the Muong (64%), Kinh (26%), Thai (4%), Tay (3%), Dao (2%), Mong (0.3%), and other ethnic groups account for a very low proportion, totaling 0.7% (HB New, 2024).

The diversity of ethnic groups and indigenous cultures, along with many scenic spots, is an advantage for Hoa Binh province to develop community tourism. Accordingly, Hoa Binh province has also issued the Project "Developing community tourism associated with building new rural areas in Hoa Binh province by 2030" with the goal of building facilities for 290 community tourism households by 2030, welcoming more than 1.65 million visitors, and contributing 19.5% of total tourism revenue (HB People's Committee, 2020). This is an issue that attracts the attention of many experts and researchers and is also the reason for the author's interest in this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Around the 1970s, community tourism appeared; initially known from the trend of organizing village visits, learning about culture, customs, festivals, traditions, ecosystems... with the cultural characteristics of a locality/community, usually a locality/community of ethnic minorities. The diversity of community tourism products is associated with the cultural diversity of indigenous people, including ecotourism; village, hamlet, and ethnic tourism... Up to now, community tourism has developed into a type of tourism and has made important

contributions to the socio-economic development of many countries. According to Cuong, D.M. (2019), Vietnam has a lot of potential in terms of natural landscapes, historical values, indigenous culture of ethnic groups, customs and lifestyles, and rich culinary culture of regions, which are the basis for strongly developing community tourism; Community tourism is considered a type of tourism that brings the most sustainable economic development benefits to local residents, not only helping people protect ecological resources and the environment, but also preserving and promoting unique local cultural features.

According to the current popular understanding, community tourism is a type of tourism based on exploiting the advantages of natural conditions, exploiting the typical values in the culture of a certain community; community tourism products are also quite diverse due to the diversity in culture of the communities. Accordingly, community tourism is often understood as the activity of a community participating in tourism; this activity begins spontaneously in places with attractive landscapes and historical relics in which local residents participate to serve the needs of tourists (Cuong, D.M., 2019). According to STC (2024), community tourism is a type of tourism with the participation of local communities in the supply chain and management; this model is formed and developed based on the potential of inherent cultural values and is exploited and organized by local people. More specifically, tourists will experience the lives of local people, be provided with accommodation and participate in community activities. This is also an opportunity for tourists to learn and explore the culture, identity and traditional values of the locality. In the practice of state management in Vietnam, the law clearly stipulates that "community tourism is a type of tourism developed on the basis of cultural values of the community, managed, organized and exploited by the community" (VNA, 2017).

It can be seen that the research viewpoints and legal provisions above emphasize community tourism with the participation of local people as the subject of development, management and benefits from community tourism will remain in the community, at the same time contributing to the local economy. However, according to the general development requirements, the organization of community tourism activities is associated with the exploitation and protection of cultural values and natural environment of the community; both allowing tourists to learn, experience and raise awareness of culture, customs and values of the community, and at the same time requiring tourists to exploit, protect and honor culture, customs and values of the community.

Thus, community tourism is identified with some main characteristics: Local communities are the subjects of developing and managing community tourism; natural conditions and unique indigenous culture are the basic factors for forming and developing community tourism. According to this explanation, local residents organize specific community tourism activities, suitable for the needs of tourists based on the inherent advantages of natural conditions, indigenous culture and in accordance with legal regulations.

Based on those characteristics, the requirements for localities when developing community tourism are: Encouraging and supporting people to exploit community cultural values to develop community tourism products, both helping people develop the economy, preserve culture, and develop local socio-economy; fostering knowledge and supporting people to propagate, promote and promote investment in community tourism; supporting infrastructure and techniques for community tourism development... With that meaning, the scale "Developing community tourism" (DCT) is built to imply the following contents: People are regularly informed and disseminated about natural landscapes, scenic spots, diversity and characteristics of community culture to promote community tourism development (DCT1); People are supported/trained in knowledge about culture, tourism and knowledge, skills in building, developing and managing community tourism (DCT2); People are supported with infrastructure and techniques for community tourism development; are supported in promoting investment in community tourism (DCT3); Community tourism helps local people increase their income and contributes to stabilizing the local economy and society (DCT4).

The above approach and content of community tourism clearly show two factors that are both components and factors that directly affect the development of community tourism, including natural conditions and indigenous culture. In fact, community tourism products are developed by local people on the basis of exploiting the advantages of natural conditions (terrain, scenic spots, forests, mountains, rivers, climate, ecosystems, etc.) and the advantages of indigenous culture (customs, practices, traditional products, production experience, art, etc.). In

addition, there are other factors such as history, cultural institutions, integration, etc. that also affect the development of community tourism. However, with a limited scope of approach to factors of a natural resource nature, this study builds a scale of "Natural conditions" and a scale of "Indigenous culture" to build a theoretical model of factors affecting the development of community tourism.

- Firstly, natural conditions are visual factors that attract tourists and are considered natural resources for developing community tourism. Natural conditions in developing community tourism are also quite diverse, including attractive terrain; historical relics, typical landscapes; forests, mountains, rivers, harmonious climate; diverse, pristine ecosystems. Beautiful, typical and harmonious natural conditions will attract many tourists. However, to attract many tourists sustainably, it is necessary to transform the values of natural conditions into attractive tourism products. With that interpretation, the scale "Natural conditions" (NC) implies the following contents: The locality has advantages in historical relics, typical scenic spots, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (NC1); The locality has a diverse ecosystem, forests, mountains, rivers, and a harmonious climate, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (NC2); The locality and people invest in exploiting the advantages of natural conditions to create many community tourism products, increasingly attracting more tourists (NC3).

- Second, indigenous culture is an experiential element that attracts tourists to learn and explore. Indigenous culture is very diverse, including customs, practices, traditional products, production experience, arts, etc. of indigenous people. In theory, indigenous culture is the raw material for producing community tourism products. Therefore, local authorities and local people need to preserve the original, authentic features of indigenous culture to exploit and promote the core values of the community, creating many community tourism products to meet the needs of tourists to learn and experience. With that interpretation, the scale of "Indigenous culture" (IC) implies the following contents: The locality has ethnic diversity, many residential communities with unique customs and practices that attract tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (IC1); The locality has diversity in traditional products associated with production and artistic experiences of many residential communities, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (IC2); Local people invest in exploiting indigenous cultural advantages to create many community tourism products, increasingly attracting more tourists (IC3).

With the above analysis and interpretation, this study emphasizes that natural conditions and indigenous culture, when exploited to promote their value, will become important resources for community tourism development and become factors that directly influence and decide the development of community tourism. Therefore, the hypothesis for this study is: *Natural conditions (H1), Indigenous culture (H2) are resources and factors that directly influence and decide the development of community tourism.*

Through the overview study, the author built a theoretical framework on community tourism and assessed the factors affecting the development of community tourism. The theoretical framework includes a 3-scale model, 10 observed variables, the author designed a survey form with 10 corresponding questions and measured by a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Theoretical framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Natural conditions	NC					
1	The locality has advantages in historical relics, typical scenic spots, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism	NC1					
2	The locality has a diverse ecosystem, forests, mountains, rivers, and a harmonious climate, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism	NC2					
3	The locality and people invest in exploiting the advantages of natural conditions to create many	NC3					

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
	community tourism products, increasingly attracting more tourists						
II	Indigenous culture	IC					
4	The locality has ethnic diversity, many residential communities with unique customs and practices that attract tourists, favorable for developing community tourism	IC1					
5	The locality has diversity in traditional products associated with production and artistic experiences of many residential communities, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism	IC2					
6	Local people invest in exploiting indigenous cultural advantages to create many community tourism products, increasingly attracting more tourists	IC3					
III	Developing community tourism	DCT					
7	People are regularly informed and disseminated about natural landscapes, scenic spots, diversity and characteristics of community culture to promote community tourism development	DCT1					
8	People are supported/trained in knowledge about culture, tourism and knowledge, skills in building, developing and managing community tourism	DCT2					
9	People are supported with infrastructure and techniques for community tourism development; are supported in promoting investment in community tourism	DCT3					
10	Community tourism helps local people increase their income and contributes to stabilizing the local economy and society	DCT4					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

Research model

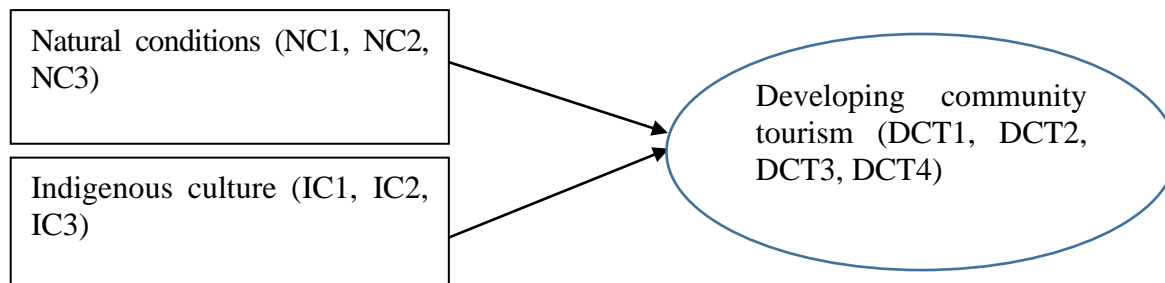


Figure 1. Research model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted to evaluate the practice of community tourism development and factors directly affecting community tourism development based on a survey in Hoa Binh province, Vietnam. To achieve the above objective, the author used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative methods were used

through collecting and analyzing secondary data to build a research model. Quantitative methods were used through collecting and analyzing primary data in the form of a survey of 240 local government leaders at the commune level and leaders of cultural and tourism organizations in Hoa Binh province. The survey was conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

- Preliminary survey: In this study, the author analyzed exploratory factors to test the theoretical model, and performed regression analysis to test the correlation of the scales. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis for a model of 3 scales and 10 observed variables is $N = 10 \times 5 = 50$. First, the author conducted a preliminary survey with a sample size of $N = 80$ local government leaders at the commune level and leaders of cultural and tourism organizations ($N > 50$). The preliminary survey results showed that all 3 scales and 10 observed variables were reliable enough to be used in a larger official survey.

- Official survey: Based on the satisfactory preliminary survey results, the author conducted an official survey with a sample size of $N = 240$ local government leaders at the commune level and leaders of cultural and tourism organizations in Hoa Binh province ($N > 50$). The survey was conducted selectively and based on the consent of the respondents; the results obtained 240/240 valid response forms, achieving a valid response rate of 100%.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the collected survey data, the author tested Cronbach' Alpha to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to the study of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the scale ensures reliability when reaching Cronbach'alpha value > 0.6 ; observed variables are reliable when reaching Corrected Item-Total Correlation value > 0.3 . The statistical and testing results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Statistical results and testing results of the scale

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Natural conditions (NC)	NC1	240	1	5	4.21	.518	.713	NC1 = .655
	NC2	240	1	5	4.16	.521		NC2 = .641
	NC3	240	1	5	3.95	.612		NC3 = .567
2. Indigenous culture (IC)	IC1	240	1	5	4.13	.529	.698	IC1 = .598
	IC2	240	1	5	4.08	.534		IC2 = .583
	IC3	240	1	5	3.94	.624		IC3 = .552
3. Developing community tourism (DCT)	DCT1	240	1	5	4.11	.544	.706	DCT1 = .586
	DCT2	240	1	5	4.09	.605		DCT2 = .557
	DCT3	240	1	5	3.99	.637		DCT3 = .488
	DCT4	240	1	5	4.01	.564		DCT4 = .496
Valid N (listwise)		240						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that the observed variables of the scale "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC), "Developing community tourism" (DCT) are all rated at an average level of Mean ≥ 3.94 , statistically significant according to the Likert scale (1-5) determined. Accordingly, local leaders and cultural and tourism organizations all assessed that Hoa Binh province has advantages in natural conditions and indigenous culture to develop community tourism: The locality has advantages in historical relics, typical landscapes; has a diverse ecosystem, forests, mountains, rivers, and a harmonious climate; has ethnic diversity, many communities with typical customs and practices; has a diversity of traditional products associated with the production and artistic experiences of many communities, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism. Along with that, the development of community tourism is basically carried out through regular propaganda and dissemination of natural landscapes, scenic spots, diversity and characteristics of community culture; support/enrichment of

knowledge about culture, tourism and knowledge, skills in building, developing and managing community tourism; support for infrastructure and techniques for community tourism development; support for investment promotion in community tourism. As a result, the development of community tourism has helped local people increase their income and contributed to stabilizing the local economy and society.

The author's survey results are similar to the comments and assessments of many researchers and localities. According to Minh, B. (2021), community tourism is a trend that many localities in Hoa Binh province focus on investing and exploiting; this type brings many benefits in economic restructuring, sustainable economic development, creating more jobs and improving and enhancing the lives of indigenous peoples; at the same time, contributing to protecting the ecological environment, preserving and promoting the unique cultural features of ethnic groups. According to Government New (2024), in 2023, Hoa Binh welcomed 3.8 million visitors, an increase of 21.5% over the same period, achieving 108.6% of the plan, of which 450 thousand international visitors, reaching 100% of the plan; Total revenue from tourists reached 4,000 billion VND, up 10.7% over the same period last year, achieving 102.6% of the annual plan; in the first 6 months of 2024, the whole Hoa Binh province welcomed about 2.6 million visitors, up 9.9% over the same period last year, reaching 61.9% of the annual plan, of which 260 thousand were international visitors and 2,340 thousand were domestic visitors.

However, in specific aspects, the observed variables have the lowest average values, including Mean (NC3) = 3.95, Mean (IC3) = 3.94, showing that local leaders and cultural and tourism organizations all assess that the exploitation of advantages in natural conditions and indigenous culture has not been effective, and has not created optimal products to meet the needs of tourists to learn and experience. This poses a new challenge for local leaders in promoting the development of cultural products and community tourism products to both preserve and promote indigenous cultural values, as a foundation to promote sustainable development of local community tourism.

With the reliability test value meeting the standard, the scales and observed variables continue to be used for exploratory factor analysis to test the research model. The author analyzes exploratory factors with Varimax rotation to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent value, and discriminant value of the scales to have more basis for drawing research conclusions about the suitability of the initial theoretical model. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.745
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	2127.170
df	45
Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.024	40.239	40.239	4.024	40.239	40.239	2.752	27.524	27.524
2	2.782	27.817	68.056	2.782	27.817	68.056	2.744	27.438	54.962
3	1.389	13.886	81.942	1.389	13.886	81.942	2.698	26.980	81.942
4	.697	6.968	88.910						
5	.384	3.843	92.753						
6	.223	2.226	94.979						
7	.184	1.837	96.816						
8	.134	1.344	98.160						
9	.125	1.251	99.411						

10	.059	.589	100.000						
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
Scales	Observed variables	1	2	3
1. Natural conditions (NC)	NC1	.813		
	NC2	.809		
	NC3	.798		
2. Indigenous culture (IC)	IC1		.804	
	IC2		.816	
	IC3		.783	
3. Developing community tourism (DCT)	DCT1			.803
	DCT2			.805
	DCT3			.796
	DCT4			.784
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

Source: Author's survey results

In quantitative research, according to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), exploratory factor analysis was performed in accordance with the data set through the values: $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level of Sig. < 0.05 ; Eigenvalue ≥ 1 ; Total Variance Explained $\geq 50\%$; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5 . Data in Table 3 and Table 4 show that:

- KMO coefficient = $0.745 > 0.5$, confirming that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level of Sig. = $0.000 < 0.05$, showing that the observed variables have a linear correlation with the representative factor. Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = $81.942\% > 50\%$ (Table 3), showing that 81.942% of the variation of the representative factors is explained by the observed variables; the observed variables all have Factor Loading > 0.5 (Table 4), showing that the observed variables have good statistical significance. The theoretical research model initially proposed is consistent with the survey research practice.

- The observed variables were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to the 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues > 1 (Table 3), continuing to confirm the suitability of the initial research model. And the initial research model was kept intact, including: 02 independent variables "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC) and 01 dependent variable "Developing community tourism" (DCT) with a total of 10 observed variables with good statistical significance, which can perform multivariate linear regression analysis to examine the relationship of the scales in the model. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which is the basis for the author to draw research conclusions.

Table 5. Multivariate regression results

Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			

1	(Constant)	1.104	.204		12.843	.000	
	Natural conditions (NC)	.573	.373	.592	10.961	.000	1.826
	Indigenous culture (IC)	.427	.294	.481	9.278	.000	1.834
a. Dependent Variable: Developing community tourism (DCT)							
Adjusted R Square: 0.764; Durbin-Watson: 2.103							

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows:

+ R Square = 0.764, confirming that the scales "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC) explain 76.4% of the variation in the scale "Developing community tourism" (DCT); VIF = 1.826 and VIF = 1.834 ($1 < VIF < 2$), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.103 ($1 < d < 3$), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation, confirming that the scales "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC) are independent and have the same impact on the scale "Developing community tourism" (DCT), confirming the suitability of the theoretical research model with the survey data set.

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC) are both statistically significant Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have positive values: B(NC) = 0.573 and B(IC) = 0.427, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC) and 01 dependent variable "Developing community tourism" (DCT); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; the initial research model continues to be confirmed to be appropriate.

Based on the generalized regression model of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009): $Y = B_0 + B_1 \cdot X_1 + B_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots + B_i \cdot X_i$, the author determined the multivariate regression model of this study as follows: $DCT = 1.104 + 0.573 \cdot NC + 0.427 \cdot IC$

Based on the regression coefficient (B), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variables in decreasing order is: "Natural conditions" (NC), "Indigenous culture" (IC). That contributes to further confirming the empirical research results in Vietnam, that natural conditions and indigenous culture are resources that have a direct impact on the development of community tourism. Practice in Hoa Binh province shows that both of the above resources are advantages for developing community tourism, are factors that have a direct impact, promoting the development of community tourism. However, the exploitation of the advantages of natural conditions and indigenous culture has not been effective, and has not created optimal products to meet the needs of tourists to learn and experience. This poses a new challenge for local leaders of Hoa Binh province in promoting the development of cultural products and community tourism products to both preserve and promote indigenous cultural values, as a foundation to promote sustainable development of local community tourism.

From the above research results, the author discusses policy issues in Vietnam: Hoa Binh province and many localities have advantages in natural conditions and indigenous culture to develop community tourism, it is necessary to promote the development of diverse cultural products to become diverse resources for developing community tourism products. Because Vietnam's economy is growing strongly, with a population of 100.3 million people (People's New, 2023), the need to enjoy culture and experience culture in the form of community tourism is increasing. Therefore, exploiting the advantages of natural conditions and indigenous culture to transform into many cultural products, cultural tourism products is very necessary and has strategic significance for the development of each locality.

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