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## Factors Affecting The Decisions Of Local People To Participate In Community Tourism In The NorthWest of Vietnam

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to find out factors affecting decision making to join in community tourism via qualitative (analysis, synthesis) and quantitative methods. The Northwest of Vietnam is regarded as a region with sufficient and favorable conditions to develop community tourism. Accordingly, determining what factors affect the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism is of great significance in developing tourism and raising the competitiveness of tourism destinations in this region. On the basis of the collected primary and secondary data, the research paper has identified 4 factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism, including: (1) Personal factors, (2) Attractiveness and images of tourism destinations in the Northwest, (3) Supports and investments from the State, local authorities, organization and enterprises in the Northwest, (4) Effects from people around; then proposed solutions to attract local people to participate in community tourism and develop this form of tourism sustainably in the Northwest of Vietnam in the coming time. For instance, we need to exploit the beauty of natural scenes of Northwestern mountains, forest and lakes with local attributes to reform a better community tourism in this region.

**Key words:** Tourism, Community tourism, Local people, Northwest, Vietnam

**JEL:** M2, M10

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has played an increasing important role in Vietnam's economy thanks to its comparative advantages of diverse and abundant resources. The country has become an attractive tourist destination with many appealing tourism forms such as expedition tourism; leisure tourism; community tourism; MICE tourism, etc. Among these forms, the development of community tourism is considered an important orientation towards the development of sustainable tourism for Vietnam in the coming time. With this tourism form, local people can actively participate in tourism activities and get more equal shares of benefits from the development of this form in their locality. Nhat and Khanh (2018) carried out research in Chau Doc city Vietnam through qualitative and quantitative methods by making survey on 400 tourists. The results show that eight factors influencing the tourists' decision of choosing Chau Doc city as a destination, ranked from the strongest to the least impact including access to infrastructure, scenic environment, destination information, leisure activities, economy and politics, cuisine and shopping, history and culture, and tourism motivation.

Community tourism has been promoted in many areas in Vietnam, including Northwestern region. The Northwestern region consists of 12 provinces of Hà Giang, Lào Cai, Yên Bái, Lai Châu, Điện Biên, Sơn La, Hòa Bình, Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Lạng Sơn, Phú Thọ, Tuyên Quang and 21 districts in the west of the provinces of Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An. It can be said that the Northwest plays a decisive role to the ecosystem of the whole Northern region of the country. It has lots of potential in agriculture, forestry, hydro power, mineral, tourism and border economy. The Northwest is home to over 30 ethnic groups with more than 10 million people and a diverse and broad cultural space. Especially with its abundant tourism advantages in natural landscapes (waterfall, forests, highland, terraced fields) and culture (customs, lifestyles of ethnic people), Northwestern provinces have formed many attractive tour programs, especially those in which tourists can explore natural landscapes, participate in eco-tours, adventure tours and expedition tours to discover and experience the culture and lifestyles of Northwestern people. Thanks to these advantages in these natural landscape and cultural identities, the localities in the Northwest are attempting to promote different forms of community tourism with various creative methods and unique tourism products.

However, the process of tourism investment and development of Northwestern localities is still facing lots of difficulties and obstacles which hinder the participation of local people in community tourism. Reality has shown that the Northwest has not yet well developed, it is also the most disadvantaged region of the country; therefore the number of tourists to this region remains quite modest. The effectiveness of tourism economy is poor and only accounts for a small proportion in the regional economic structure. The annual growth rate of Northwestern tourism is just over 10%, much lower than the average rate of the country. Statistics indicates that the number of tourists to the Northwest annually only account for around 7% of the total number in Vietnam. Although this number has increased every year, it is still lower than that in other regions. As for different forms of community tourism, the Northwest has not yet made systematic and scientific plans; consequently, many tourism destinations in the region have developed similar tourism products, unique eco-tourism areas have not yet been set up.

Given this reality, with a view to developing community tourism in the Northwest and encouraging local people to participate in this tourism form, it is of great significance, both theoretically and practically, to determine the factors affecting the decisions to participate in community tourism of local people.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to measure impacts of main factors that affect tourists' decision of participating in community tourism.

## **MATERIAL AND RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Literature review**

Community tourism and participation of local in community tourism have been topics of concern to many domestic and foreign researchers.

According to research, the participation of local community is considered an effective tool and is expected as an important element to motivate tourism development (Tosun, 2000; Aref and Redzuan, 2008). In concepts, the participation of community in economic development is often interpreted under two approaches: (1) it is the process where the participation affects the process of planning, implementation and development outcomes; (2) it is the mechanism where the capacity of the community is consolidated to solve their problems and promote their self-adaptations (Simmons, 1994; Reed, 1997).

For tourism development, the participation of the local community is considered from the outcomes with the combination of these two approaches towards the goals of more equal distribution of economic benefits for the local community (Brohman, 1996; Aref and Redzuan, 2008). This can be seen as an appropriate approach to explain for the establishment of a mechanism with the actual participation of local people in the sustainable development of tourism.

Regarding the attitudes of the community, some researchers view that the opinions of local people on tourism development in the local community depend on various elements such as the level of tourism development in that locality, the awareness of people of the benefits and sustainability of the tourism destinations (Jamal, T.B; Getz, D, 1995; Phạm Trung Lương, 2002; Phạm Hồng Long, 2012).

Some specific research on community tourism has presented conditions for the development of community tourism as follows: (1) the availability of natural and attractive human resources; (2) the accessibility to destinations of community tourism; (3) the presence of the community; (4) the voluntariness of the community; (5) the demand for community tourism; (3) the plans of community tourism destinations (Bùi Xuân Nhân, Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hương, 2019; Lê Thị Hồng Gái, 2019).

Beside, Javid and Roma (2016) mentioned their research includes both primary and secondary data. Secondary data is used to give insight to the topic and assess conclusions. Primary data is collected by surveying domestic travellers of Azerbaijan. Survey results are analysed by implying descriptive statistics, non-parametric tests and Factor analysis. The research results show that the age, monthly income and marital status of local Azerbaijani travellers affect their travel behaviour especially in the duration of their trip. Destination amenities, tourism infrastructure, environmental features, human resources and price are the important attributes for local tourists in choosing tourism destination.

As such, upon reviewing some distinctive research on community tourism and the participation of the local community in tourism development in general, it can be seen that:

Previous studies have introduced some views of community tourism; there have been some debates on different aspects of the participation of the local community in tourism development. Various elements affect the decisions of local people to participate in tourism development in general and community tourism in particular. The variety of these elements depends on the specific development conditions as well as the contexts of each locality. Therefore, in order to identify factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest, Vietnam needs to conduct exploratory research on affecting factors with different research hypotheses so as to lay the foundations to recommend solutions to attract local people to participate in community tourism and develop community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam.

### **Research methods**

#### **Data collection methods**

Secondary data: Secondary data used in this research include monographs, research projects of different levels, research papers archived in Vietnam National Library, Thuongmai University Library, and statistics of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, UN World Tourism Organization and some domestic as well as foreign websites. The secondary data on factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam were collected from reports and statistics of localities in this region.

Primary data: Primary data were collected from 7 in-depth interviews with 7 tourism experts, 15 local administrators and direct interviews with local people residing in the Northwest of Vietnam. The interviews and surveys were conducted from September 2019 to December 2019.

In this research, the authors employed the methods suggested by Bollen (1998), Hoàng Trọng and Chu Nguyễn Mộng Ngọc (2008) which states that to ensure the appropriateness of the sample size with EFA analysis, the number of observation variables should be at least 4-5 times the number of variables. In this research, there are 19 variables, so the number of observation variables should be 95. Besides, in CFA analysis, if an error of 10% is to be accepted, the sample size should be from 100 to 200 (Friendly, 2008). For the time limitation and anticipation of some unsuitable observations, the researchers chose to survey 250 local people in different localities of the Northwest. Convenient sampling method was used to filter the right research participants as well as to ensure the accessibility of researchers to research participants. However, to raise the reliability of the data analysis, the researchers chose to approach local people in some famous tourist destinations in the Northwest such as Sapa (Lào Cai); Mộc Châu (Sơn La); Đồng Văn (Hà Giang); Mai Châu (Hòa Bình); Lâm Bình (Tuyên Quang), etc. for the interviews based on their accessibility and willingness.

## THEORETICAL GROUNDS AND PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

### Community tourism

There have been different views and approaches to community tourism. According to Nicole Hausle and Wolfgang Strasdas (2009): “Community tourism is a form of tourism in which local people develop and administrate. The economic benefits gained from tourism are contributed to the local economy”.

Under the concept in ASEAN Standards, “Community tourism is a kind of tourism that seek to empower the community to manage the growth of tourism and gain objectives related to the welfare and sustainable development of the economy, society and environment”.

As such, based on these concepts, community tourism can be understood as “tourism activities possessed, implemented, managed and administrated locally. Community tourism brings tourists experiences of local life while local community participates in tourism activities and gains socio-economic benefits from tourism activities; also takes responsibility for protecting the local resources, environment and culture”.

### Benefits from community tourism

Community tourism exerts many positive impacts on the community, such as: creating opportunities and generating jobs for local community; facilitating local economic development via the selling of tourism products and services; contributing to the preservation and promotion of local cultural values; providing markets for local goods and services; contributing to enhancing the images for the locality as well as the country.

### The roles of local people in community tourism development

Local community plays a significant role in the development of community tourism in a tourism destination, specifically: Firstly, local community makes important contributions to preserving the core tourism resources, which are the cultural identities and traditional handicraft villages. Secondly, in developing tourism products, local community provides services which construct complete tourism products. Thirdly, local community directly participates in planning tourism programs and projects. Tourism projects must satisfy 4 groups of benefits for the investors, the state, the community and the environment. Fourthly, local community should be those responsible for protecting the tourism resources and environment.

As such, local people are the factor to create the attractiveness to tourists and at the same time the subjects to satisfy their demand. Therefore, the participation and supports of the local people in developing community tourism not only brings themselves benefits and environment but also attracts visitors, enhances the quality of tourism services and the images of the destinations in the tourism market.

### Factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam

Upon reviewing related research and documents both domestically and abroad, combining with the results of in-depth interviews, the factors and observation variables affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam are identified as follows:

**Table 1: Factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam**

Components	Observation variables	References
1. Personal factors	[PF1] Love for hometown [PF2] Personal income	Lise (2000); Briedenhann and Wickens (2004); Thakadu (2005);

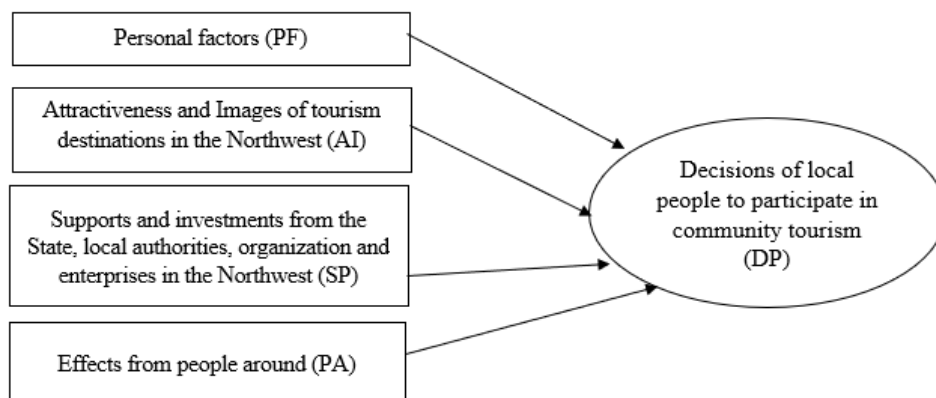
	[PF3] Benefits received from participation [PF4] Interests in tourism [PF5] Educational level [PF6] Knowledge of local tourism resource values	Liu (2006); Kang (2008); Lee, T. H., (2013); Dương Thị Minh Phương (2015); Ngô Thị Liên (2018); Supplemented by experts
2. Attractiveness and Images of tourism destinations in the Northwest	[AI1] Diverse and unique tourism resources (natural and cultural resources) [AI2] Diverse tourism products [AI3] Reasonable prices in tourism destinations [AI4] Good safety and security in tourism destinations [AI5] Sufficient and modern infrastructure and tourism technical facilities [AI6] Easy accessibility to tourism destinations [AI7] Good promotion programs for tourism destinations	Ngô Thị Liên (2018); Hoàng Thị Lan (2019); Supplemented by experts
3. Supports and investments from the State, local authorities, organization and enterprises in the Northwest	[SP1] Tourism development policies in the localities [SP2] Investments in local tourism development [SP3] Incentive policies to attract local people to participate in community tourism	Bramwell and Sharman (2000); Kan (2009); Bandit (2009); Kalsom (2009); Bùi Xuân Nhàn, Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hương (2018); Supplemented by experts
4. Effects from people around	[PA1] Encouragement of families in the participation [PA2] Friends and neighbors participation in community tourism [PA3] Success of people in other localities when participating in community tourism	Supplemented by experts

(Source: Collected by authors)

Upon identifying 4 constituent components and 19 observation variables, the authors propose the following multi-regression model to test the factors affecting the decisions of local people in community tourism in the Northwest:

$$DP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * PF + \beta_2 * AI + \beta_3 * SP + \beta_4 * PA + e$$

Of which: DP is the dependent variable while PF, AI, SP, PA are independent variables (explanatory variables).



**Fig.1: Research framework of factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam**

(Source: proposed by the authors)

Research hypotheses:

H1: Personal factors have positive correlation with the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam.

H2: Attractiveness and images of tourism destinations in the Northwest of Vietnam have positive correlation with the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam.

H3: Supports and investments from the State, local authorities, organization and enterprises in the Northwest have positive correlation with the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam.

H4: Effects from people around have positive correlation with the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam.

## RESULTS

### - Factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam

The research used SPSS 20.0 to conduct multi-regression analysis on the proposed research model and collected data. The researchers tested the reliability of measurement scales by Cronbach's Alpha.

Measurement scales are tested by Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha helps to remove observation variables which do not meet the requirements or measurement scales which do not meet the requirements in the research process.

The results indicate that Cronbach's Alpha for observation variables in the measurement scales are all higher than 0.6, Corrected Item – Total Correlation is higher than 0.3. As such, all measurement scales gain reliability, therefore suitable for using in EFA analysis.

EFA results

The results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (using varimax rotation) show that KMO = 0.903 > 0.5, meeting the requirements, three extraction components in Eigenvalue are 1.066 > 1, Total Variance Explained is 87.533% > 50%. With Rotated Component Matrix, all variables have factors loading higher than 0.5. It can be concluded that the measurement scales of observation variables in the analysis meet the requirement and are significant.

Correlation test

Pearson correlation analysis is used to test the appropriateness of components in the regression model. Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is used to quantify the strength in the linear correlations between the two variables.

The absolute value of r indicates the strength of the linear correlations.

r <= 0.3: the correlation is not strong; 0.3 < r < 0.5: the correlation is relatively strong; r >= 0.5: the correlation is strong.

Sig value indicates if the correlations between observation variables have statistical significance. In this model, correlation coefficients r are higher than 0.3 with sig <0.01, which means that independent variables have relations with dependent variables at the significant level of 99% and they are all positive relations.

Regression model

Testing the appropriateness of the proposed model shows the significance value <0.01 (Sig.=0.000<0.01), which indicates that the significance value of 99% can reject the hypothesis that all regression coefficients being 0 means that there is a relation between independent variables and dependent variables. R<sup>2</sup>= 0.948 and R<sup>2</sup> adjusted = 0.947 indicate that 94.7% of the variations in the decisions to participate in community tourism can be explained by independent variables in the research framework. This illustrates that the proposed regression model is appropriate with the collected data. The multi-regression analysis is as follows:

**Table 2. Multi-regression analysis results**

Measurement scales	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t value	Sig.	Multicollinearity	
	Regression ratio	Standard deviation	Beta			Acceptance coefficient	VIF
Constants	.285	.088		3.254	.001		
1. PF	.335	.018	.391	19.009	.000	.567	1.764
2. AI	.159	.023	.116	6.764	.000	.816	1.225
3. SP	.130	.017	.157	7.440	.000	.543	1.843
4. RA	.388	.013	.550	29.184	.000	.677	1.477

(Source: results processed by SPSS 20.0 by researchers)

As such, the regression model to determine the impacts of factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam can be reformulated as follows:

$$DP = 0.392*PF + 0.118*AI + 0.156*SP + 0.552*PA$$

## DISCUSSION

### We propose solutions for developing tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam as follows:

On the basis of the analysis of the real situation and the testing results of factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam, the authors propose some solutions to developing community tourism in this region in the coming time as follows:

Firstly, it is necessary to invest in infrastructure and tourism technical facilities in the Northwest of Vietnam. Priorities should be placed on repairing and building roads leading to tourism destinations, the link roads between different tourism destinations in the region to facilitate the accessibility of tourists to the Northwest as well as the combinations of inter-region tours and diversify tourism products.

Secondly, it is necessary to restore, upgrade and preserve tourism resources in the Northwest to create good impressions of the images and brands of the destinations. The restoration, upgrading and preservation of natural and cultural heritages must go in line with tourism development, creating prerequisites for local people to participate in developing community tourism to attract tourists to the region so that the Northwest will attract more attention and have more opportunities for development.

Thirdly, it is necessary to research a master plan for the entire region and plans for tourism destinations and routes of each locality as well as the whole region so as to identify the unique features and identities of each locality to build up the strong links. The Northwest is home to 30 ethnic groups, so when building community tourism destinations, each province should choose an ethnic group of strong identities to base on. These community tourism destinations should be built on the systematic plans to avoid the overlapping of tourism products. In the short term, the Northwestern provinces need to research and build up their key tourism destinations with typical features of each province such as Sa Pa (Lào Cai), Mộc Châu Highland (Sơn La), Đổng Văn Rock Highland (Hà Giang), Ba Bể Lake (Bắc Cạn), etc. Each tourism destination should promote its typical and distinctive resources to provide its own tourism products.

Fourthly, it is necessary to raise the awareness of local people of community tourism. To this end, there should be strong efforts from the local authorities of the Northwestern provinces in propagandizing this form of tourism to local people; providing training courses on the models and skills needed for community tourism development; overcoming difficulties facing local people in communicating with tourists, especially foreign tourists. It is also necessary to communicate with local people about projects and programs implemented in the Northwest, the advantages to develop tourism and the benefits received from community tourism so that local people will know of the tourism potential and actively participate in developing community tourism in their localities as well as the entire Northwest region.

Fifthly, local authorities in the Northwest should design training programs and offer training services in tourism administration and community tourism for local cadre, who will in turn transfer this knowledge and information to local households. What local people desire is the right pathways and orientations for community tourism in their localities, so if these desires are satisfied, they will voluntarily participate in community tourism, contributing to developing community tourism in their localities in particular and the entire region in general.

Sixthly, it is necessary to divide benefits each side receives (which means entities participating in community tourism, including: local authorities, enterprises and local people) so as to avoid possible conflicts and disputes when participating in community tourism development. Local people in the Northwest still have poor education, limited knowledge of legal as well as economic issues, so it is necessary to build up their trust so that they will be more willing to participate in community tourism development.

Seventhly, it is necessary to encourage local people to support each other in the process of providing tourism services. Each local household and individual should work towards the common benefits of the community and be ready to support people around, especially those who do not have experience in community tourism so that they can have promising starts. This will help consolidate people's trust and motivations to further develop community tourism in each locality as well as the entire region.

Last but not least, we need to exploit the beauty of natural scenes of Northwestern mountains, forest and lakes with local attributes to reform a better community tourism in this region.

Finally, we need to identify why Northwest tourism is worth to visit and what make it beauty different from other mountain tourism in the South.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the collected primary and secondary data, the research has proposed a research framework and tested it via a multi-regression model. The research findings indicate 4 factors affecting the decisions of local people to participate in community tourism in the Northwest of Vietnam, including: Personal factors; Attractiveness and Images of tourism destinations in the Northwest; Supports and investments from the State, local authorities, organization and enterprises in the Northwest; Effects from people around. The research paper has proposed 7 solutions to encourage people in the Northwest to participate in community tourism and develop sustainable tourism in the Northwest in particular and in Vietnam in general.

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